



Defence Committee

From the Chair:

Tan Dhesi MP

Tuesday 3 March 2026

Rt Hon John Healey MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence

Subject: The Strategic Defence Review and the Defence Investment Plan

Dear Secretary of State,

We note that in the terms of reference for the SDR, the Reviewers were asked to “determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence” and “identify where reprioritisation of roles, capabilities, activities and support may be made in the current Defence programme, to allow new investment ...”¹ We also note that in July 2024, the Defence Minister told the House of Lords that the “strategic defence review is a root-and-branch review to look at the capabilities that our Armed Forces will need as they meet the threats of a changing world. It will look at defence in the round—and, of course, it will look at programmes across the whole of defence.”² In November of 2024, you told the House that the SDR would produce “assessments of threats and capability recommendations”.³

Despite this, in January the CDS told us that “although the SDR, as we have both agreed, did lay out priorities for improvement and modernisation, and for filling in hollowness that it reflected on, it did not give us specific areas in which we should disinvest or seek to slow down investment” and that “the job of th[e SDR] team was to develop proposals for how we would improve and modernise defence. They did not ask them to do the detailed planning. That is why that document talks about a defence investment plan.”⁴ You also told us that the priorities were “set out quite clearly in the Strategic Defence Review, including in the 62 recommendations we have accepted”, that the SDR recognised “that there were priorities that the previous Government might have pursued reflected in the defence programme and the programme of record, for instance, a global Britain role or a kit that was just not recognising the very rapid technological change” but that “disinvestment decisions as well as investment decisions,

¹ [Strategic Defence Review 2024-2025: Terms of reference - GOV.UK](#)

² [Tempest Global Combat Air Programme - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

³ [Defence: 2.5% GDP Spending Commitment - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

⁴ Q119; 125



Defence Committee

... are for us, not the strategic reviewers".⁵ As a result, we believe that there are questions for the Department to answer explaining the process and decision-making around a Defence Investment Plan. We would therefore ask that the Department provide us with the answer to the following questions.

- The SDR does not appear to recommend what the Armed Forces should no longer do, with no clear suggestion of what roles, capabilities, activities and support should be de-prioritised or deleted—what have you interpreted as being the down arrows within the SDR?
- Was it always your intention that capability decisions would not lie with the SDR Reviewers and if so, what consideration was given to the impact of having an external Review on the potential for delay to necessary capability choices?
- At what point was the decision taken to create a Defence Investment Plan, replacing the Defence Equipment Plan?
- Were the SDR Reviewers given figures for a fiscal envelope which took account of the costs of Afghan resettlement following the data breach?
- Were any significant potential costs to the MOD budget discovered after providing the SDR Reviewers with the fiscal envelope upon which they based their costing calculations?
- Is it the policy of the Ministry of Defence to wait until everything is agreed before publishing the Defence Investment Plan, rather than taking the previous approach to the Defence Equipment Plan which made adjustments annually as required?

We would appreciate a response by 2 April. I am cc'ing this letter to Lord Robertson of Port Ellen in his role as Chair of the International Relations and Defence Committee in the House of Lords.

Yours sincerely,

Tan Dhesi MP

⁵ Q118; 131