

**Written evidence submitted by Commander N D MacCartan-Ward DSC AFC**

- i. This Inquiry provides the much-needed opportunity to address the *raison d'être*, constitution and mobility of our individual Armed Services within the context of being able to protect the UK homeland base and to project military power rapidly and effectively in response to emergent crises in the wider region.
- ii. This Submission addresses these factors and, in doing so, suggests that:
  - a. The “hollowing out” of the Army with its heavy armour weapons systems is justified due to their lack of strategic mobility on the global stage.
  - b. The “hollowing out” of the Royal Navy over recent decades has been unjustified in the context of declared Strategic Maritime Policy and needs to be reversed urgently if we are to be considered a Tier One Fighting Force that is globally capable of providing effective support to our Allies.
  - c. There is justification for the “hollowing out” of the U.K.’s large combat fleet of land-based Tactical Fighter Aircraft due to their inability to protect the UK homeland base from long-range air attack and their lack of strategic mobility in strength. The Future Combat Air System (FCAS), the Tempest Project, is the latest “Cuckoo’s egg to be laid in U.K.’s defence procurement nest”. The Committee may wish to demand a full view of the formal Ministry of Defence Requirement document underpinning the Tempest project. The Specification there-in should explicitly require the Tempest aircraft to be fully capable of operating from our carriers - thereby giving it the necessary strategic utility. If that is not the case, this collaborative project must be suspended until a valid formal Requirement is forthcoming.

**INTRODUCTION.**

1. Military logic and thinking-outside-the-box of “traditional wisdom” must be applied when addressing the areas of interest iterated by the Committee. The Strategic *raison d'être*, mobility and utility of each Armed Force must be scrutinised. We can then assess its ability or otherwise to respond to crises effectively at a moment’s notice. This capability, or lack of it, may then be balanced against the principal perceived threats to our global commercial, trade and energy supplies upon which our prosperity and that of our Allies depends.

2. The UK in conjunction with our NATO and other Allies must be able to project sufficient flexible military maritime power throughout the Global Commons to deter and, if necessary, respond to those that would harm our offshore national interests, threaten the security of our homeland base and/or threaten the safety of our Overseas Territories. The ability or otherwise to project such power should be the fundamental guideline to the constitution of and investment in weapons platforms and systems for each Armed Force.

### **ASSUMPTIONS.**

3. In any direct confrontation with Russia, the principal conventional threat to the UK would be long-range, air-to-surface missiles launched primarily by waves of Russian strategic bombers rounding the North Cape.
4. Investing in the capability to project robust military maritime power throughout the Global Commons serves two purposes:
  - It strengthens the U.K.'s ability to provide realistic protection of the UK homeland base from air and sea attack.
  - It demonstrates a significant U.K. contribution to the global defence of the offshore interests of fellow NATO partners and our Allies.

### **ARE THE ARMED FORCES SUFFICIENTLY CAPABLE, RESOURCED AND READY TO PROTECT THE UK AND OUR ALLIES? WHAT ARE THE MAIN GAPS IN CAPABILITY AND/OR READINESS, AND WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO FILL THESE GAPS?**

#### **Protecting the UK Homeland Base and our Allies: The Royal Navy.**

5. Protecting the UK homeland base and our Allies from direct attack can best be assured by adherence to measured investment in weapons platforms and systems that directly support declared Strategic Maritime Policy. This is part of the *raison d'être* and mission of our Navy; which includes working with our Allies utilising mobility, flexibility and visible deployed power to ensure the safe passage of our trade and energy supplies throughout the Global Commons.
6. A well-armed, well-resourced Navy would have the ability to deploy a Carrier Battle Group and its air defence weapons systems up-threat from the UK and provide a 24/7 defensive barrier against, for example, Russian missile-armed strategic bombers that would otherwise be able to approach our shores with impunity to within the delivery range of their long-range missiles (1200 nautical miles). It would also add weight to the deterrence and combat power of the joint Allied initiative in the Indo Pacific region.

7. Unfortunately, over the past few decades our Navy has suffered a Draconian reduction in size - a “hollowing out” that does not reflect U.K.’s declared Strategic Maritime Policy or the perceived global threats that we now face.
8. Our global commitments and alliances represent an urgent need for a larger Fleet with well-armed weapons systems beneath the sea surface, on the surface and above the surface. The introduction to service of our two new carriers is a step in the right direction. But failing to provide them with their own robust complement of F-35B STOVL fighter aircraft (their principal offensive and defensive weapon system) denies them the full capability for rapid and flexible response to emergent crises whether in the Atlantic, the Middle East or the Indo Pacific region.
9. This shortfall merits immediate correction.

### **Protecting the UK Homeland Base and our Allies: The Army.**

10. Currently, our standing Army does not appear to have a *raison d’être* that is consistent with:
  - a. a robust capability to defend the UK homeland base, or with
  - b. declared National Strategic Policy.
11. For example, it is not configured with defensive surface-to-air missile systems such as Iron Dome and Patriot that could intercept Russian long-range air-to-surface missiles targeting key installations such as our military airfields, naval bases, ports, power stations, etcetera. The initial lack of air defence missile systems in Ukraine and the carnage it led to is worthy of note.
12. Our Island Nation infrastructure is particularly susceptible to such attack.
13. It is suggested therefore that investment in proven surface-to-air defensive weapon systems should now take the place of the current major investment in heavy tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers that have:
  - a. Zero capability against this Russian threat, and
  - b. Little or no strategic mobility.
14. This suggestion does not imply any failure to support the NATO Alliance. On the contrary, it recognises the need for the UK, individual NATO members and other Allies to address their unique geographical, territorial and sovereign status and to plan their military investment and resources accordingly. A large standing army of “boots on the ground” and a well-funded Tactical Air Force would appear to be a national security priority for those States enjoying a territorial border close to or with Russia. That is not the case with the UK.

15. The UK, as an Island Nation and far from the eastern front, should not commit significant amounts of our defence budget on bolstering the capability of these landlocked NATO Allies through the maintenance of heavily armoured units and a large standing army that cannot be easily and rapidly deployed to the eastern front or beyond in times of crisis. The Ukraine war has demonstrated how difficult and time-consuming is such deployment (even from within the European mainland).
16. It follows on from paragraphs 10 to 15, above, that we in this Island Nation, geographically distant from the Russian front would be less than wise to invest our limited financial resources in substantial land-based weapons platforms and systems that are not strategically mobile enough to respond rapidly, if at all, to crises away from our homeland base.
17. U.K.'s strategically mobile "boots on the ground" capability is vested almost entirely in the Royal Marines, and they should therefore receive appropriate investment.

#### **Protecting the UK Homeland Base and our Allies: The Royal Air Force.**

18. The land-based Strategic Bombers of the US Air Force permanently stationed within the UK provide a capability that is beyond the financial reach of U.K.'s defence budget. They supplant any associated strategic *raison d'être* that might be claimed by the RAF who can only aspire to being a Tactical as opposed to a Strategic Air Force - without the latter's reach and deployability in strength during global crises.
19. U.K.'s only Strategic (as opposed to Tactical) fighter air defence and offence capability is vested in the F-35B air groups planned for embarkation in our two aircraft carriers. This strategic capability is currently and seriously under-funded and under-resourced.
20. The Committee might wish to note a lack of investment balance within the NATO Alliance regarding the procurement of short-range Tactical fighter aircraft. Why did Britain's RAF initially order 232 Typhoon tactical fighter jets whilst the more economically powerful German nation bordering on Russia ordered just 60?
21. The lack of strategic utility and the hundreds of billions of pounds invested in the Typhoon and its predecessor Tornado (more than 300 procured) represent a veritable "Cuckoo in the nest of other properly justified military procurement programs". Today, the multi-billion-pound Future Combat Air System (FCAS), the Tempest Project, is the latest cuckoo's egg to be laid in that nest. This collaborative Project has been conceived without any transparent military justification - and the secrecy surrounding its design specifications indicates that

it will have no more strategic capability and utility than its non-carrier-capable Tornado and Typhoon predecessors: a serious waste of defence budget funds.

22. In the light of the significance of para 21, above, the Committee may wish to demand a full in-house review of the formal Ministry of Defence Requirement document underpinning the Tempest Project, if there is one. In all logic, this should be a "Naval and Air Staff Requirement (NASR)" and the Specification there-in should explicitly require the Tempest aircraft to be fully capable of operating from our carriers - thereby giving it the necessary strategic capability.
23. As intimated at paragraphs 5 to 8, above, U.K.'s land-based Tactical fighter aircraft do not have the range and endurance on task to provide an effective 24/7 air defence barrier that would deter or prevent Russian strategic bombers from launching their air-to-surface missiles at UK targets (the principal *raison d'être* of the RAF). Those who claim that its fighter aircraft radius of action can be readily increased using air-to-air refuelling (AAR) are deliberately misleading the government.
24. U.K.'s now limited AAR capability was seriously downgraded with the introduction of the £13 billion Voyager project - a small number (12) of ultra expensive aircraft, of which less than half a dozen would be available for global and local AAR military tasks.
25. To provide an effective 24/7 barrier against the Russian air threat with its long-range (1200 nautical miles) missiles in times of high tension, land-based Tactical fighter aircraft would need to maintain a robust Combat Air Patrol presence (two pairs of Typhoons) at least 1000 nautical miles from the UK base. Each Typhoon would have a transit time to and from its CAP station of two hours each way and a time on task of two hours - a six-hour flight time for each aircraft at a cost of £75,000 per hour, equalling £450,000 per aircraft sortie, and £1.8 million per CAP cycle (£75,000 x 6 x 2 x 2). 12 rotations of the CAP each 24 hours would cost £21.6 million per day. Every 14-day period of high tension would therefore cost £302.4 million - and for eight weeks of high tension, approximately £1.2 billion. Such costs are prohibitive and do not include the vital AAR support for making a 24/7 barrier possible. Needless to say, UK does not have nearly enough AAR capability or enough Typhoon pilots to generate and sustain an effective barrier.
26. Carrier battle groups, with F-35B fighter aircraft embarked, provide the cost-effective answer to this long-range air defence need, as realised and provided successfully throughout the Cold War with the Soviets.
27. In the light of all the above, it is evident that the main *raison d'être* of the RAF, i.e. the robust air defence of the UK homeland base, cannot be fulfilled with its collection of relatively short range, land-based Tactical fighter aircraft. Hence the

need to divert funding to the balanced implementation of U.K.'s Strategic Maritime Policy.

## **ARE THE UK ARMED FORCES A 'TIER ONE FIGHTING FORCE'? DO THEY NEED TO BE?**

28. The quality of our military personnel, soldiers, sailors and airmen remains equivalent to that expected of a Tier One Fighting Force. But they are not being provided with adequate weapons platforms and systems that ensure the mobility and flexibility needed for UK to respond effectively and urgently to emergent crises, whether in conjunction with or independently from our trusted Allies.
29. To date, our Whitehall masters have:
- a. Paid lip service to our declared Strategic Maritime Policy, centred as it is on our two new aircraft carriers and their associated battle groups (including Royal Fleet Auxiliary logistics support). Instead, they have overseen the “hollowing out” of our Royal Navy Fleet upon which that Policy depends.
  - b. Perpetuated the myth that UK needs a large standing army supported by heavy armour and have invested in associated weapons systems that have zero Strategic Mobility and, therefore, a much-diminished *raison d'être* and mission (resulting in a justifiable “hollowing out” procedure that is not yet complete).
  - c. Invested misguidedly (and continue to do so at major cost - including the militarily unjustifiable Tempest Project) in large fleets of relatively short range, land-based Tactical Fighter Aircraft that have:
    - i. Little or no global capability to respond rapidly and in strength to emergent crises outside the NATO area, and
    - ii. Too limited radii of action to be able to provide a robust 24/7 air defence of the UK Homeland base.
30. With respect to the independent/unilateral global projection of military power, it is reasonable to accept that the UK is not equipped to be a Tier One Fighting Force. However, if properly equipped and working in close conjunction with our allies (particularly the U.S. Navy), the Royal Navy can and would provide a Tier One contribution to the policing and stability of the Global Commons.

## **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARMY HAVING BEEN “HOLLOWED OUT AND UNDERFUNDED”?**

31. The “hollowing out and underfunding” of the Army is testament to the fact that maintenance of a large boots on the ground standing army supported by expensive heavy armour weapons systems, neither of which can be rapidly deployed offshore in times of crisis, and which therefore have little if any Strategic relevance, has become an anachronistic burden to our national

security initiative. When complete, it should have released important defence budget funding for the implementation of U.K.'s declared Strategic Maritime Policy and the measured expansion of our Fleet Weapons System Capability. As such, this "hollowing out" would be of direct benefit to our National Security.

32. The Committee will wish to recognise that the consequence of the recent "hollowing out and underfunding" of the Royal Navy, on which the realisation of our declared Policy depends, has diminished U.K.'s ability to protect the UK and our Allies and to deter those that might otherwise harm our joint global interests. It is this that has brought into question whether the UK continues to be a Tier One Military Force.

### **WHICH OF THESE CONSEQUENCES NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED MOST URGENTLY?**

33. The "hollowing out and underfunding" of the Royal Navy needs to be addressed and reversed as a priority in support of and in keeping with U.K.'s declared Strategic Maritime Policy and the global threats that now face us.
34. The "hollowing out" of U.K.'s standing Army needs to continue, and its modern *raison d'être* established. Its anachronistic investment in heavy armour weapons systems is not representative of any utility or capability to respond urgently to emergent crises offshore. Nor do these weapons systems have any relevance to the desired robust protection of the UK homeland base.
35. The *raison d'être* of and the major investment in the RAF's Tactical Fighter Force needs to come under detailed scrutiny. It must be "hollowed out" to reflect:
- a. Its limited capability to protect the UK base from sophisticated long-range air attack.
  - b. Its inability to be rapidly deployed in strength when emergent global crises so demand.

### **ARE THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS SUFFICIENT TO ADDRESS ANY SHORTFALLS?**

36. Current Government procurement plans:
- a. Do not support declared Strategic Maritime Policy adequately.
  - b. Do not recognise the inability of the Army and the Royal Air Force to respond rapidly and with strength to emergent crises throughout the Global Commons (and to some degree within Europe). Their ability to contribute to the effective and timely projection of British political and military power and influence is limited.
  - c. Appear to sacrifice urgent military need in favour of providing lucrative weapons systems contracts to U.K.'s Defence Contractors.

37. The lack of urgency and commitment to build a stronger Navy is misguided in that it

reduces the U.K.'s ability:

- a. To provide robust protection of the UK homeland base, and
- b. To project military power when reacting to instability in the wider region.

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