

**Written evidence submitted to the Defence Committee**

**Q1. What are the biggest challenges to integration – both across Government and with Allies?**

In Defence, when we talk of integrated action, we mean using the full range of military and non-military capabilities to change (or maintain) the understanding and behaviour of audiences necessary to achieve a successful outcome. Achieving the integration ambition for Defence, as set out by CDS in the Integrated Operating Concept 2025, will be a significant undertaking. As Defence's Integrator, Strategic Command is leading efforts to realise an Integrated Force by 2030.

The key challenges to achieving our objectives are the inherent complexity in integrating across platforms, force elements, and multiple agencies and partners; rapidly pulling through technology into capability; and ensuring our solutions are effectively future-proofed.

Integration forms a fundamental aspect of our operating concept and 'theory of winning'. We have established a Multi-Domain Integration Change Programme to deliver integration across Defence, Government and with our Allies. In addition, we are reviewing our R&D System to ensure the relevant technologies we have invested in make it to the front line quicker. The investment focusses on current, enduring and future threats and capability challenges where the integration of emerging technologies can give the UK a decisive edge.

**Q2. The IR commits the National Security Adviser to “reviewing national security mechanisms and processes” to ensure the IR objectives are implemented. It has been suggested that NSIGs will be replaced by “a set of geographic and thematic sub-strategies” as a result of this review. How many sub-strategies are there and how many have a Defence element?**

As the IR made clear, Defence and the Armed Forces are a vital part of the national security machinery and as such will have critical role in the delivery of the IR. The Defence Command Paper published in March sets this out in some detail. As with the previous NSIG structures, we are not offering a running public commentary on the number or focus of the priority sub-strategies or their SROs. The Defence Secretary is a core member of the NSC which will oversee IR implementation in the round.

**(a) For comparison, how many of the NSIGs had an official from MOD attending?**

NSIG attendance varies according to the issue under discussion; the MOD is always represented when issues of relevance are discussed.

**(b) The system of Senior Responsible Officials who are responsible for sub-strategies sounds a lot like the Fusion Doctrine. What, in practical terms, will make the 'integration' proposed in the Integrated Review achieve more than the previous Fusion Doctrine?**

The new operating model for IR implementation builds on Fusion Doctrine. The Cabinet Office will work with SROs to recognise and reinforce the strengths of the NSIG structures and processes and foster collaboration and joint working across government, outside government and internationally.

**(c) How many of the Senior Responsible Officials are MOD officials? On which sub-strategies?**

As set out above, we are not making the full list of IR sub-strategies & SROs public.

- (d) There are a number of trade-offs in the document – achieving the balance between security and prosperity, promoting democracy and human rights whilst working with regimes which do not recognise them – which will require strong strategic direction from the NSC. Does the NSC have the necessary support to properly assess and make the long-term decisions required?**

Yes. One of the objectives of the review of national security structures and processes is to ensure the Cabinet Office maintains the “strategy muscle” developed through the IR. The NSC will meet monthly, and will continue to consider the long-term threats, challenges and opportunities of strategic significance as well as taking decisions on subjects of immediate import. A new Cabinet Office strategy team will support the NSC to drive effective implementation of the review as well as leading strategic thinking on issues that will shape the decades ahead, including by engaging more comprehensively with academia, thinktanks and other external partners in the UK and overseas.

**Q3. Funding for Defence (specifically on equipment) has increased, but so has the range of Defence tasks. What is the order of prioritisation of those tasks?**

- (a) Do the benefits of “persistent engagement” outweigh the costs of presenting a greater number of targets to adversaries?**  
**(b) The British Armed Forces played a vital role in HMG’s effort against COVID. Would they have been able to do this as effectively if they had also been engaged in a conflict where there were significant UK boots on the ground?**  
**(c) How can you avoid Defence becoming overstretched?**

As outlined in the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper, we will rebalance our force to provide a more proactive, forward deployed, persistent presence, whilst maintaining the deterrent effect that comes with being ready for managing crises at scale. In an era of constant competition, we must ensure increased forward presence both to compete with and campaign against our adversaries’ sub-threshold activities, and to understand, shape and influence the global landscape.

A more persistently engaged force will increase the UK’s ability to understand, pre-empt and manage crises before they escalate. It will put us in the best possible position for intelligent and successful intervention/warfighting, if and when required. It will enable us to identify issues, manage escalation, strengthen alliances and prevent conflict; keeping the UK safe long before threats approach our shores or our people. Building flexibility and capability to reconfigure and surge will also allow transition to war, if necessary. We will carefully manage our policies, processes and well-honed planning mechanisms to preclude over-stretch.

The COVID-19 pandemic remains a top priority for Defence with a force of up to 5,250 Service personnel at readiness to support the Government’s COVID-19 response and wider resilience tasks. The security and health of Britain will continue to be the Government’s priority and Defence will continue to contribute to national resilience and high readiness.

**Q4. Why is information now more important than mass in order to protect deployed personnel?**

This is not a binary choice. The impact and protection of our personnel are underpinned by our partnerships with allies, information capabilities and new technologies, as well as force concentration which, when acting together, are force multipliers. Information, autonomy and

Artificial Intelligence have the potential to enhance the speed and efficiency of our work, increasing the tempo of our decision making and enhancing the mass, reach, persistence and effectiveness of our Armed Forces

The hugely increased global access to and use of information has become a key battleground. Remaining at the forefront of this environment will be crucial to win the battle of the narratives. We will therefore be investing billions in the capabilities of our Armed Forces at a time when speed, information and readiness are critical factors for deterrence and battle-winning edge. A modernised Defence will ensure that we can develop and field game-changing military capabilities at the pace and scale needed to secure future battlefield advantage and protect our people. By ensuring security is baked-in to our technology, Defence's systems and assets will be secure by design, and resilient to attack from opponents.

**Q5. Are you confident that the capabilities committed to in the IR and 'Defence in a Competitive Age' will allow Defence to achieve the objectives as set out in the IR? What further capabilities might be required?**

**(a) The IR and 'Defence in a Competitive Age' talk about the importance of operating with Allies. What are the UK capability gaps which you are relying on Allies to fill?**

Our investments will ensure that the UK Armed Forces will be more potent now and in the future. We will be investing billions in the capabilities of our Armed Forces at a time when speed and readiness are replacing mass as the critical factors for deterrence and battle-winning edge. As a leading advocate for the development of innovative, adaptive capabilities the UK will be investing in emerging technologies, utilising the strengths of the UK's world-class industrial and technology base. The increased investment in Defence ensures we remain one of the largest Defence spenders in Europe and that we have the military capability we need.

Our global alliances and partnerships are of strategic importance for national security and prosperity. Where possible, we will always seek to work alongside allies to maximise effect and to better burden share. Our future force structure is built around meeting our NATO commitments as fully as possible and the decisions taken through the IR allow us to dedicate our resources to the capabilities most relevant to future conflicts. We will increase the capability to intervene at speed if our interests are threatened, and our commitment to NATO - including to collective defence under Article 5 - is unwavering. It is this hard power that underpins our collective security.

**Q6. How confident are you that Defence is going to be able to achieve the transition to technological integration at the speed of relevance? What are the biggest challenges to doing so?**

**(a) One of the key overarching objectives of the IR is "sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology", when and how will we achieve this in Defence terms?**

We have taken a hard-headed and unsentimental view of those capabilities that are less relevant to the changing threat, while investing in those that are increasingly relevant. These decisions balance operational risk and the risk associated with the transition between capabilities, and where possible provide mitigations such as alternative methods of delivery and preserving the right people and skillsets through training, exchanges and temporary

reassignment. Keeping the UK's place at the leading edge of science and technology is fundamental to the modernisation of our Armed Forces and essential to our prosperity and competitiveness in the digital age.

S&T Strategic Advantage means ensuring we cultivate and make best use of the UK's status as a global science power. This will enable us to maintain an enduring technological edge over our adversaries, exploit emerging technologies and enjoy a competitive and innovative defence sector that contributes to UK prosperity. Defence will help achieve this by investing at least £6.6 billion in the next four years in advanced and next-generation R&D. This is part of £14.6 billion R&D investment across government in 2021/22, and supports plans to increase R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

**Q7. In order to ensure that Grey Zone activity does not escalate into warfighting, you will have to maintain a credible force. Is there a danger that, during this transition to integration and whilst these technological capabilities are being developed, over, say, the next 10 years, UK Armed Forces are at risk from conventional warfare?**

- (a) Given the proposed reduction in the size of the Army how will current and future training needs of the Armed Forces be maintained and improved?**
- (b) Has there been any reduction in the amount of training given to personnel post-Covid? What about exercises, in terms of UK-only, NATO-led and multinational exercising?**

The Defence Secretary does not accept the premise of the question. Conventional warfare could break out at any time. The UK Armed Forces will be ready and credible as we undertake major modernisation. As we have done for many years, we rely on our Allies and partners to support and defend our mutual interests. As set out in the Defence Command Paper, warfighting remains the cornerstone of deterrence and the bedrock our Armed Forces – our globally deployed Armed Forces will be able to rapidly reconfigure if crisis or threats evolve and we remain prepared for high intensity warfighting together with our NATO allies.

Despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, we continue to ensure that we have the correctly trained people, the requisite equipment and we continue to conduct exercises with key partners and allies.

**Q8. Strategic Command has been charged with delivering a Digital Backbone to allow information to be shared within an integrated UK force and its Allies. Will this be a 'cloud' through which classified information can be accessed?**

- (a) Historically, we have experienced problems with different systems/platforms not being able to communicate with each other, when will we have a fully functioning Military battlefield ready intranet?**
- (b) How will you look to protect your data whilst ensuring it is also readily available to all of those who need it?**

The Digital Strategy for Defence is fully in line with the vision set out in the Integrated Review, and the measures announced in the Defence Command Paper. These highlighted investment in transformative and digital capabilities that will enable multi-domain integration and ensure that we are able to compete more effectively in space and cyberspace; delivery of a Digital Backbone driving significant savings by replacing ageing, unreliable digital infrastructure; and the exploitation of data through the cloud, and across secure networks, to enable better and faster decisions across Government and with NATO and key allies. We will ensure that data is appropriately protected.

A Digital Backbone exploiting Cloud technology will provide the foundation for us to build and deliver the services and future capabilities we need across all classification levels. Cloud will enable and deliver on-demand services and applications that are easily accessible and rapidly-scalable; in turn, this will enable users to safely access and process data rapidly and securely on the battlefield, as well as enabling users in the business space to run systems, such as finance software, on the move. We will also invest in Next Generation Networks, allowing seamless access to data and enabling easier collaboration with our allies and partners.

**Q9. We understand that there had been a plan to do a test mobilisation of the Regular Reserve, is that forthcoming and what is the timeline for it?**

A response on this will be forthcoming shortly.

**Q10. Will Scarborough host the big event for next year's Armed Forces week?**

Scarborough will host the National Event in 2022 as part of 2022 Armed Forces Day Celebrations. Whilst it was originally planned to held later this year, understandable challenges led the local authority to request that we defer the event until next year. Communities throughout the UK continue to recognise the sometime incalculable worth of our Armed Forces and wish to champion their cause.

The National Event in Scarborough will now be held on Saturday 25 June 2022.

**Q11. Were requirements on training levels written into the contracts for the most recent warship contracts? (please specify which warships and levels of training per contract)**

**Type 26**

The Type 26 Manufacture Phase 1 (Batch 1) contract provides for training levels sufficient to cover the operation, maintenance, diagnosis and repair of equipment fitted to Type 26, across the target audience. Fulfilling this obligation involved BAE Systems developing and applying a procurement strategy to address an identified training gap.

The contract enabled Training Needs Analysis and the design and production of Initial and Steady State Training courses (with associated media). This forms a Training Solution which integrates effectively into the existing Royal Navy Training System, in conjunction with Royal Navy Training Authorities and Career Managers, and which under the terms of the contract will be appropriately maintained and updated.

**Type 31**

The T31 competition specifically included Integrated Logistical Support (ILS). The bidders were evaluated on their overall ILS submission, and this included training for the RN crew. The winning bidder, Babcock, included the provision of an Initial Training Solution based on a combination of existing training courses supplied by the equipment manufacturers, e.g. the main propulsion diesels, combined with bespoke system level and familiarisation training generated by Babcock. Delivery of the Initial Training Solution will provide Ships Staff with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to safely operate the vessels capabilities. Babcock also committed to a range of deliverables that will enable the department to

consider options for how best to implement a Steady State Training Solution post the build phase from 2028 onwards.

### **Offshore Patrol Vessels**

Hydrographic and Patrol Support Contracts have either been recently awarded or extended. This covers HMS PROTECTOR and all ships of the ECHO, Batch 1 RIVER and Batch 2 RIVER classes. Specific training is covered under the three contracts for all special to type equipment that falls outside the Authority's remit. In essence this is specialist training for operation and maintenance of the vessels that is not covered by RN training due to the nature of these platforms.

The range of training is from whole ship operation/maintenance (e.g. Ice Navigation, DNV Classification Training, Lloyds Register Classification Training) down to operator/maintainer training for individual pieces of equipment. The number of people required to take each course varies, depending on the roles of the individuals however this is defined in the contract. The throughput numbers for each year change depending on rotations and when people have last completed the required courses and their expiry dates.

### **Q 12. What is the change in the percentage of RN personnel at sea following the First Sea Lord efforts to get enough of his workforce on ship posts? How many unfilled at sea roles are there, and how has this changed following First Sea Lord's efforts?**

For the first time in over five years, the size of the Royal Navy (RN) is growing. The RN is currently operating very close to full strength, benefiting from a significant workforce change programme to re-balance personnel working ashore and afloat and fulfilling all of our operational commitments.

By April 2021 the HQ Change Programme has seen a 40% reduction of HQ posts, optimising shore base positions through civilianisation where appropriate as part of the programme out to 2023.

As part of Programme HECATE, over future years, the RN's intention is to increase the numbers of personnel across all operational units to 95% and July 2021 saw the highest number of sailors at sea.

Further work is currently in hand on the challenges from the IR which will see a further reduction of several hundred shore roles and the transfer to sea-going operations including dual-crewing models as part of the drive to increase operational sustainability.

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2021**