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THE PRIME MINISTER

18 November 2010

Dear Commander Muxworthy

Thank you for your letter and the UKNDA's thoughtful submission to the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The Defence Secretary will respond to your paper in more detail. But I wanted to give you my own perspectives now that the SDSR has been concluded.

Sorting out the mess in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) that we inherited has been the most challenging thing I have had to do since the election. Undertaking a review of our defence and security needs after a gap of 12 years without any such analysis would have been hard enough. Having to do it at a time of great economic difficulties for our country, when we are engaged in a major conflict in Afghanistan and when the MOD faced a black hole of £38bn in its forward plans made it exceptionally demanding. It was not possible to reconcile all these difficulties in one Review. And I know that some of the tough choices we have had to make are not at all welcome. I did not come into politics to make cuts to our armed forces and I do not intend to make a habit of it.

But I have to say we had no choice but to make some changes to future defence plans. I am determined to ensure that our armed forces are properly equipped and structured both to deliver success in Afghanistan and to enable them to meet future challenges. The MOD must also ensure in future that ways, ends and means are brought into alignment. We must ensure we place defence on a sound footing for the future and divest ourselves of the capabilities which we are unlikely to need in a world which demands precision weaponry and where the battle space increasingly embraces the unmanned and cyber domains.

Thank you again for your helpful paper.

Yours sincerely
David Cameron

Commander John Muxworthy RN