



NEWS RELEASE

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DEFENCE CAMPAIGNERS WARN DAVID CAMERON NOT TO TAKE RISKS WITH THE NATION'S SECURITY

“Are you a Chamberlain or a Churchill?” UKNDA asks the Prime Minister

The UK National Defence Association (UKNDA) has issued a direct appeal to the Prime Minister not to cut Britain's Armed Forces.

A major report on Defence funding, issued today by the UKNDA as a contribution to the current Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), warns David Cameron not to take risks with the nation's security by reducing British military capabilities.

The UKNDA poses the question: “Does the Prime Minister wish to be remembered as a Chamberlain or a Churchill?”

Calling for the Armed Forces to be safeguarded from public expenditure cuts, the UKNDA argues in its report that “Defence is different” because the nation's security is the essential underpinning of all other activities, and that it should therefore be treated differently from other government departments.

Decisions on Armed Forces funding must not be rushed through without proper consultation or examination of the consequences, says the report. “Capital items take up to 15 years to design and build, but have an effective life of 30 years or more. Hasty cutting of major Defence programmes will create gaps in our capabilities that are irreversible.”

The report's authors – Vice-Admiral Sir Jeremy Blackham, Air Commodore Andrew Lambert and Allen Sykes – point out that “the last time a Conservative government held a hasty and ill-

considered Defence Review, it precipitated an invasion of the Falklands, cost six ships, 34 aircraft, 258 lives and £3bn – and then had to be rewritten!”

Acknowledging that there is considerable scope to make efficiency savings at the Ministry of Defence, including improvements in procurement and reductions in staffing, the report says that any money saved should be ploughed back into the Armed Forces, not used to offset spending by other departments.

“There is a strong case for reinvesting these savings within Defence, just as the Pentagon is doing with its \$100bn of cuts over five years,” says the report.

Adequate Defence is entirely affordable

“In the present economic crisis it is widely but wrongly believed that a proper Defence provision is impossibly expensive and hence unaffordable,” says the report. “This is not so. Countries with effective Defence capabilities spend 3%-3½% of GDP, with America at 4.8%. Britain spent 4% in 1990, nearly 3% in 1997, but spends barely 2.3% now on the core budget.

“How much we spend to ensure our security is genuinely a matter of choice, but that choice must be based on the extent and severity of the threats that we face. In short, the greater the threats, the greater our defences should be. As a principle, we should commit to a responsible figure, arguably about 3%.

“Compared with Welfare / Social Protection (£223bn), Education (£88bn) and the NHS (£120bn), Defence (£37bn) provides value for money, and is vital to the safe enjoyment of all other goods and services.

“Inadequate Defence would also directly threaten our economic stability and prosperity as well. Think, for example, what would happen to the economy if our oil supplies were attacked. Defence funding is a matter of government priorities, not affordability.”

In a Foreword to the report, former Shadow Defence Secretary Bernard Jenkin MP urges the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury to “buy into the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office” and not to force Defence to pay for past excessive spending by other departments. “While the MOD has much work to do to get its own house in order, it would be wrong to sacrifice the Defence budget to pay for the previous government’s wasteful spending elsewhere.

“During the period of the Labour government, Defence was the Cinderella of the public services. While the NHS budget rose by 125 per cent in real terms, and education by 73 per cent, the Defence budget, despite funding two wars on a scale not seen since the 1950s, increased by only 25 per cent in real terms. At the same time, the US defence budget grew by 79 per cent in real terms.”

Backing from military experts

The findings and recommendations of the UKNDA report are endorsed by a number of senior military experts including the former Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral The Lord Boyce, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian Oswald, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Benjamin Bathurst, Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon, Gen Sir Michael Rose, Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squire, Lt-Gen Sir Henry Beverley, military historian Andrew Roberts, journalist Simon Heffer, and by Randolph Churchill, great-grandson of Sir Winston Churchill.

The report concludes by stressing that the government must take a long-term strategic view and apply the lessons of history.

“Short-term economies entail running risks with very serious long-term consequences. The costs of adequate Defence are entirely affordable in the national context. If the Prime Minister and the National Security Council decide to hazard our future security, they must accept full responsibility, come clean with the risks and explain how they will be mitigated. Then Parliament and the voters can be their judge.”

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Notes to Editors:

The United Kingdom National Defence Association (UKNDA) was formed in 2007 to campaign in support of Britain's Armed Forces. The Patrons of the UKNDA include three former Chiefs of the Defence Staff – Admiral The Lord Boyce, Marshal of the RAF The Lord Craig, and General The Lord Guthrie. Tri-Service and politically independent, the UKNDA aims to ensure that Britain's fighting men and women are properly trained, equipped, sustained and cared for. The Association's founder-President, Winston S. Churchill, former MP and war correspondent (and grandson of Britain's WWII Prime Minister), died on March 2, 2010.

For more information on the UKNDA, go to **www.uknda.org**