

Defence Committee

The UK contribution to European Security

Sixth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 520

Defence Committee

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Summary

The Russian invasion of Ukraine; the collapse of arms control treaties and threats of nuclear proliferation and use; incursions into European airspace; espionage, assassination and sabotage across the continent and in the UK—the current threat to European security is significant. The UK remains a leading European military power, but its ability to sustain that leadership is under pressure. NATO continues to be the cornerstone of UK defence policy, yet the Alliance faces challenges from Russian aggression; shifting US priorities; and systemic threats posed by China, Iran and North Korea. The UK must urgently strengthen its conventional and nuclear capabilities, improve interoperability with Allies, strengthen its defence industrial base and ensure it can defend the UK homeland and overseas territories. The war in Ukraine is a war to defend Europe and protect civil society against Russian aggression. The Government needs to be clear-eyed about this fact, and rapidly accelerate the state of the UK's defence readiness.

The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and National Security Strategy (NSS) set out ambitious goals but lack detail on prioritisation and capability trade-offs. The Defence Investment Plan, due later this year, must address these gaps. The Government's commitment to a "NATO First" approach is welcome but must be matched by delivery—including support for UK personnel deployed to NATO roles and investment in areas where the UK can lead.

The UK's defence industrial base is not yet configured for sustained collective defence. It faces challenges in capacity, skills, innovation, procurement, and financing. The SDR and Defence Industrial Strategy outline a reform agenda, but implementation will be key. The Government must ensure that defence finance is accessible, predictable, and resilient—including for SMEs and start-ups.

The UK lacks a plan for defending the homeland and overseas territories with little progress on the Home Defence Programme. The Prime Minister's 'national conversation on defence and security', highlighted in the SDR, is yet to start. The proposed Defence Readiness Bill, vital to empower Government in the event of crisis or conflict, has not yet been written. The Government must improve cross-departmental coordination, clarify responsibilities, and engage the public meaningfully in preparedness efforts.

The Committee makes recommendations throughout this Report to strengthen the UK's defence posture, industrial resilience, and strategic leadership. These include annual updates on SDR implementation, urgent reform of security vetting, and the appointment of a Minister for Homeland Security. The UK must act decisively to ensure it remains secure at home and a credible leader abroad.

1 Introduction and context

The inquiry

1. We launched this inquiry in December 2024 and have subsequently held 7 evidence sessions. This Report also draws on information received during other evidence sessions and visits. We start by thanking all of those who have contributed to our work. We visited Estonia, Finland, France, Ukraine and the United States of America as part of this inquiry. In addition, we have visited several NATO installations: Joint Forces Command Norfolk; Air Command at Ramstein; and Maritime Command at Northwood. Our thanks are due to all those who spoke to us during these visits, as well as those who helped to organise them. The visits provided us with greater insight into the debate within US policy circles, decision making within NATO and the experience and preparedness of countries on the Russian border.
2. This report has been produced with a focus on the UK's contribution to European security through the lens of:
 - UK engagement with multilateral, European national and supranational entities;
 - the capacity and capability of the British defence industrial base; and
 - national resilience.
3. However, it is important to acknowledge the wider context. There is increasing instability and uncertainty facing both the UK and its European Allies. Both the Government¹ and the recent Strategic Defence Review (SDR) have noted the increase in threat to the UK.² The National Security Strategy, also published in June 2025, warned that UK statecraft needed to adapt to fiercer competition and to allies, partners, and competitors taking a more transactional approach on “migration, defence, trade, energy, technology

1 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

2 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

and raw materials” whilst identifying, anticipating, addressing and tackling risks “to the British people and homeland (including the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies).”³

Russia-Ukraine war

4. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine is the catalyst for much of the instability and uncertainty the UK faces, and the Government has acknowledged that support for Ukraine is vital “to restore stability and security to the Euro-Atlantic area”.⁴ Ukrainians are fighting not just for their homeland but also in defence of other parts of Europe. Recent Russian incursions into other European countries’ airspace have shown that President Putin’s aggression does not stop at the Ukrainian border with NATO.⁵ We must be clear that peace in that conflict is only achieved for Europe if it is a peace on Ukrainian terms. We must reject entirely the Russian concept of peace which includes Ukrainian sacrifice of territory and so-called neutrality.⁶
5. The UK is at the forefront of the coalition of the willing alongside France and is playing a leading role amongst European Allies. The UK can only provide this leadership based on its military capabilities—as Dr Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer of the German Marshall Fund, a US think tank, told us “France and the UK today are leading the overall deterrence security guarantee conversations, because these are the two European nuclear powers”.⁷
6. However, the support for Russia by other potential adversaries of the UK (China, Iran and North Korea) ought to be regarded as a single systemic challenge.⁸ While it is recognised as such in the 2025 National Security Strategy,⁹ Europe has failed to agree on a cohesive approach, particularly in

3 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

4 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

5 Financial Times, [What is Putin’s game plan against Nato’s eastern flank?](#), 10 September 2025; BBC News, [Romania becomes second Nato country to report Russian drones in airspace](#), 14 September 2025; BBC News, [Estonia seeks urgent Nato consultation after Russian jets violate airspace](#), 19 September 2025; BBC News, [Copenhagen airport drone sighting: Russia’s involvement cannot be ruled out, Danish PM says](#), 23 September 2025

6 Financial Times, [Donald Trump-Vladimir Putin Budapest summit axed following Moscow memo](#), 31 October 2025

7 [Q88](#)

8 [Q1](#); Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q41](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

9 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

relation to China.¹⁰ The National Security Strategy has emphasised the need for consistency and alignment with partners and recommended an increase in UK capabilities related to China across the national security system.¹¹

7.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should ensure that it accelerates and further deepens defence and security cooperation with the EU and European partners, particularly France, on the threat posed by Russia and the countries that enable it, notably China. As a nuclear power, it is incumbent upon the UK to lead discussions within Europe on forming a coherent response.

US prioritisation

8. The United States plays a key role in European security, with NATO relying on US capabilities (particularly strategic enablers such as “intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition; air-to-ground surveillance; command, control, and communications; strategic air and sea lift; [and] air-to-air refuelling”)—an issue first recognised at the 2002 Prague summit.¹² Throughout the 21st Century, the US has consistently communicated its expectations that Europe needs to do more to protect itself.¹³
9. The 2025 National Security Strategy recognises that co-operation with the US relies on Europe spending more on defence as well as improving both the interoperability and the compatibility within the European defence industrial base.¹⁴ The US view was described by Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman of King’s College London as being that “Europe needs to do more ... and ... [the US] need to work with them to do more”.¹⁵ US priorities will be clarified in the forthcoming National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the resultant Global Force Posture Review. We heard in Washington that President Trump’s priorities were the Indo-Pacific and defence of the US homeland. Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) had been issued in line with these priorities which superseded the Biden Administration’s National Defense Strategy (NDS). Recent reports, however, have indicated that the NDS has been delayed beyond 2025 by the decision to prioritise “the homeland and

10 [Q1](#)

11 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

12 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), [Europe’s Missing Piece: The Case for Air Domain Enablers](#), 17 April 2023

13 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

14 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

15 [Q91](#)

Western Hemisphere”, followed by the Indo-Pacific.¹⁶ It is highly unlikely in any event that European defence and security will remain a priority within the NDS.

10. At present, the US has not made any decisions about withdrawing personnel or equipment from Europe. However, we heard from both Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman and Dr Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer that it is a highly likely event, and the key question will be the pace and scale of that withdrawal.¹⁷ Dr de Hoop Scheffer explained that Europeans are still hyper-dependent on the United States in critical areas such as “intel, satellites, transportation of troops and air-to-air refuelling”. She thought that some of these capability gaps could be filled within three years, but that Europeans needed to invest now and address the underlying tempo issue in order to build up and fill key capability gaps within the next five years.¹⁸
11. Whilst the UK and many European Allies have significantly increased focus on defence posture since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022—whether that be through increasing funding, force structure or simply public messaging—it is clear that both resourcing and capacity for European alternatives to US provision are still a challenge.¹⁹ If Europe fails to respond in a timely manner, there may well be a crisis elsewhere in the world which results in the US withdrawing capabilities from Europe overnight and Europe being left vulnerable.²⁰ Dr Rowan Allport of the Human Security Centre, a UK think tank, explained that “the plausible worst-case scenario for [European] NATO right now is the potential for the US to be at war with China, or at least heavily engaged in a crisis with China, and Russia comes in and tries to take advantage of that situation”.²¹
12. The NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) sets out capability targets for each country to provide and is based on the premise that no Ally should provide more than 50% of any capability.²² However, currently NATO as a whole has an overreliance on US capabilities.²³ Dr Robert Johnson of Oxford University told us that other NATO members expected the UK to provide military leadership, referencing the need for strategic enablers such as “space, electronic warfare or intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance” noting that they had worked on the assumption, as had the UK, that “if anything really serious happened, the rest of NATO would

16 Politico, [Pentagon plan prioritizes homeland over China threat](#), 5 September 2025

17 [Q80](#); [Q81](#); [Q83](#); [Q91](#)

18 [Q87](#)

19 [Q78](#); [Q102](#)

20 [Q120](#)

21 [Q117](#)

22 RUSI, [Recording: Reflections on the 2025 NATO Summit](#), 27 June 2025

23 [Q30](#)

come along and provide those supports and facilities”.²⁴ William Freer of the Council on Geostrategy, a UK think tank, emphasised the importance of the UK prioritising the development of capabilities where NATO is wholly or significantly reliant on the US but ensuring that it does so in co-operation with its European Allies, necessitating an honest and realistic agreement about which countries can do what.²⁵

13. At the launch of the European Commission’s ‘ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030’, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Kaja Kallas acknowledged that the EU Member States have “capability gaps in air and missile defence, artillery systems, ammunition and missiles, drones and counter-drone systems, military mobility, AI and quantum, electronic warfare, and strategic enablers”.²⁶ There are certain areas where the UK could potentially lead: we heard that the UK has the third largest capability in AI²⁷ and a good Space sector²⁸—both of which are recognised by the SDR and the 2025 National Security Strategy as areas where the UK should invest and strengthen ties with partners, such as the US, the EU and NATO.²⁹ The then Chief of Defence Staff told us that UK Defence recognises that it needs “to modernise and embrace technology in a much stronger way”.³⁰ He acknowledged that with new technologies, including drones, whilst there was training ongoing, these capabilities did not yet exist in the UK Armed Forces³¹ but suggested that there would be investment in drones and autonomy forthcoming.³²

14. **CONCLUSION**

Europe is over-reliant on US defence capabilities. Despite indications from successive US Presidents that Europe needs to step up, European NATO members have failed to invest in key strategic enablers.

24 [Q174](#)

25 [Q122](#)

26 Defense News, [EU’s 2030 defense plan pushes for more joint spending at home](#), 19 March 2025

27 [Q32](#)

28 [Q48](#)

29 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

30 Oral evidence taken on 10 June 2025 [Q3](#) [Chief of Defence Staff]

31 Oral evidence taken on 10 June 2025 [Q23](#) [Chief of Defence Staff]

32 Oral evidence taken on 10 June 2025 [Q38](#) [Chief of Defence Staff]

15.

RECOMMENDATION

The US needs to see European investment in defence capabilities for there to be any chance of an orderly transition of responsibilities. The Government should assess where the UK can lead in terms of replacing US capabilities in the event of them being withdrawn and establishing how it can best support EU capability development programmes, particularly those referenced in ‘ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030’, thereby increasing the crossover between NATO and EU capability development. The Government must ensure that it plays a leading role and expends every effort to hold the NATO Alliance together.

The Strategic Defence Review

16. In June 2025, while our inquiry was under way, the Government published its Strategic Defence Review.³³ The Government accepted and committed to implementing the external reviewers’ 62 recommendations.³⁴ Recommendation 26 welcomed the launch of the Prime Minister’s “national conversation on defence and security” and recommended that it be:

centred on a two-year series of public outreach events across the UK, explaining current threats and future trends, the role wider society must play in the UK’s security and resilience, and the rationale for investing more in defence and security as an insurance policy.³⁵

In evidence to us on the SDR, Lord Robertson, the Lead Reviewer, told us that the population have to be engaged and must understand the threats that both the UK and wider Europe currently face.³⁶ Speaking elsewhere, he emphasised that it had “to be led from the top, and there must be no restraint on military and other people articulating the case to the country.”³⁷

33 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

34 HC Deb, 2 June 2025, [Col.51](#)

35 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

36 Oral evidence taken on 11 June 2025, [Q53](#) [Lord Robertson]

37 HL Deb, 18 Jul 2025, [col. 2115](#)

17. The Ministry of Defence’s view of its own role within the national conversation is limited to:

- working with the Department for Education to promote understanding of the Armed Forces among young people in schools and expanding in-school and community-based cadet forces across the country by 30% by 2030, alongside a greater focus within the cadets on developing STEM skills and exploring modern technology.
- giving the Defence Academy and other defence training centres greater commercial freedoms to operate and, by 2026, the Defence Academy establishing a plan for inviting company leaders, from FTSE 100 companies and wider, onto defence courses as appropriate.³⁸

This does not match the Defence Secretary’s vision that national resilience depends on an informed public, requiring a “national conversation” about threats.³⁹ He highlighted growing risks such as war, cyber-attacks, sabotage, and damage to infrastructure like undersea cables, stating this effort must be “led from the centre.” There also seems to be a disconnect between this vision and Cabinet Office initiatives. Notably, neither the 2025 National Security Strategy nor the Resilience Action Plan mention the national conversation, despite stressing the importance of public communication on risk preparedness. Chapter 4 revisits cross-government coordination and public engagement.

18. RECOMMENDATION

The public need to understand not only the necessity of defence but also their role in it. We are therefore very supportive of the concept of a national conversation on defence and recommend that the Government (and MOD in particular) seek to increase public awareness of recent attacks against the UK, including sabotage, and cyber-attacks, through regular public briefings. However, the MOD should not lead the national conversation—the responsibility for this must be personally led by the Prime Minister and held across the most senior levels of Government, recognising that this is a Cabinet-wide endeavour. In its response to this Report, the Government should set out the cross-Government measures it intends to take as part of the national conversation, including expected timeframes and responsibilities.

38 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

39 HC Deb, 2 June, [col. 53](#)

19. The SDR envisioned that UK Defence by 2035 would be a “leading tech-enabled defence power, with an Integrated Force that deters, fights, and wins through constant innovation at wartime pace”.⁴⁰ When questioned on modernisation of the Armed Forces, the Secretary of State pointed to an announced increase in the budget for autonomy and noted that the introduction of new technology (“AI, autonomy, drones”) fielded in conjunction with the “heavy metal we already have” was a key part of the forthcoming transformation of the UK Armed Forces.⁴¹ When asked whether the UK could currently deploy sufficient capabilities to defend the eastern border of NATO, the Vice Chief of Defence Staff was clear that the UK was ready to fight, but she acknowledged that “there are risks in our ability to do that”.⁴² The SDR Reviewers have noted that the programme of transformation could be speeded up if greater investment were available sooner.⁴³ When questioned as to where he would like to see more investment at faster pace, the then Chief of Defence Staff cited AI, autonomy and drones (alongside ammunition factories).⁴⁴
20. Whilst the SDR sets out actions which the Government has agreed to take (alongside a timetable for some of those actions) it does not contain specific capability requirements or significant changes to the design of the UK Armed Forces. These will not appear until the release of the Defence Investment Plan, expected to be published in Autumn 2025.⁴⁵ This means that despite its terms of reference suggesting it would identify where “reprioritisation of roles, capabilities, activities, and support may be made in the current Defence programme”, the SDR provides no indication of what UK Defence should no longer do. Furthermore, the SDR has highlighted the importance of adopting new technologies at scale and pace, something we have also heard from the Secretary of State,⁴⁶ the then Chief of Defence Staff⁴⁷ and General Sir Richard Barrons (one of the SDR Reviewers).⁴⁸ Yet we will not know where the investment in specific new technologies has been directed—or the intended rate of adoption—until the Defence Investment Plan is finalised.⁴⁹ Therefore, we are not yet able to examine the balance of investment in regards to new capabilities nor, significantly, are we able

40 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

41 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q56](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

42 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q76](#) [Vice Chief of Defence Staff]

43 Oral evidence taken on 11 June 2025, [Q43](#) [General Sir Richard Barrons]

44 Oral evidence taken on 10 June 2025 [Q40](#) [Chief of Defence Staff]

45 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

46 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q15](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

47 Oral evidence taken on 10 June 2025 [Q22–3](#) [Chief of Defence Staff]

48 Oral evidence taken on 11 June 2025, [Q19](#) [General Sir Richard Barrons]

49 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q96](#) [Ministry of Defence Permanent Secretary]

to judge where the ‘down arrows’ are. This is not just an issue for us but for Defence as a whole, with policy and capability decisions delayed as a result.⁵⁰

21.

CONCLUSION

We are producing this Report prior to the publication of the Defence Investment Plan and as a result without the full picture of the future force posture. We timed this inquiry on the understanding that by now there would be an indication of broad prioritisation, if not specific investment decisions—because these hard choices were not in the published SDR and have not been announced since, we cannot examine them yet: we expect to do so as soon as possible. In order for the UK to play the appropriate leading role in European security, it must address its readiness for contemporary war and start adopting new technology at scale and pace. Time is short, given the urgency of the threat and the work required to respond appropriately.

22.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government review the Defence Industrial Plan and the forthcoming Defence Investment Plan, in light of our recommendations and conclusions in this chapter.

50 Financial Times, [Defence companies sound warning to the UK](#), 9 October 2025

2 Defending Europe in the near term

23. In opening the 2025 National Security Strategy, the Prime Minister emphasised that “collective security, led by NATO, remains the cornerstone of our strategy”. However, whilst the document pointed to the importance of alliances, partnerships and institutions, it also acknowledged that “transactionalism will increase” leading states to rely “more on pragmatic bilateral deals and minilateral groupings to achieve their objectives”. Economic and military measures will be “more commonly used as means of leverage and bargaining” as a result of this transactionalism.⁵¹ We examine the UK’s current approach within a European context below.

The UK’s contribution to NATO

24. The 2025 National Security Strategy committed to the “explicit prioritisation of NATO in our defence planning” meaning that “NATO will be foremost in how the armed forces plan, invest, train and equip themselves”.⁵² The UK contributes a significant proportion of its Armed Forces to NATO. The MOD told us that that UK forces “form a core component of NATO deterrence and operational activities” and that the UK “remains proud to contribute to every NATO operation and mission”. It also emphasised that the UK is “the only European ally to declare its nuclear forces to NATO and the Alliance’s nuclear deterrence posture relies on those strategic nuclear capabilities provided by the UK and US to act as the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance.”⁵³
25. Dr Rowan Allport of the Human Security Centre explained the breadth of the UK contribution:

you have the nuclear deterrent, of course, declared to the defence of NATO, which is chiefly a political component. Then you have the special forces, the conventional forces, cyber and what have you, intelligence

51 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

52 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

53 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES028](#)]

gathering and diplomacy. Then you have the lesser-known non-military components—the economic and industrial—and the geographical and infrastructural.⁵⁴

Ed Arnold of RUSI and William Freer of the Council on Geostrategy also highlighted the importance of the nuclear contribution with the latter explaining that it was “by far the most significant contribution the UK makes to NATO collective deterrence”.⁵⁵ However, Professor Sir Andrew Dorman of King’s College London questioned whether the UK should consider investing in a second delivery method given that “a single nuclear boat at sea would be insufficient to deter both Russia and China.”⁵⁶ Dr Rowan Allport and William Freer debated the merits of a British sub-strategic nuclear capability but both warned that money spent on additional nuclear capability would mean less funding for the conventional force.⁵⁷ William Freer suggested the UK could potentially “explore a British-led nuclear sharing programme” as an alternative.⁵⁸ Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman of King’s College London questioned whether the UK could purchase the F-35A⁵⁹ in order to join the NATO nuclear mission.⁶⁰

26. The risk of nuclear warfare has risen considerably in recent years.⁶¹ The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) recognised that “Russia’s increasing reliance on nuclear coercion will be the central challenge for the UK and its NATO Allies in the coming decades.” It pointed to Russia’s modernisation and expansion of its nuclear capabilities, China’s “unprecedented nuclear expansion” and the “potential collaboration and opportunism among these and other nuclear challengers—of the type seen in Ukraine” as adding “further complexity to deterrence, escalation dynamics, and allied assurance”. It recommended that the UK should facilitate greater coherence between the conventional and nuclear components of NATO by:

- Investing in long-range precision strike and Integrated Air and Missile Defence;
- using UK and NATO-led training and exercises to address “potential escalation and conflict scenarios with nuclear-armed states”; and

54 [Q115](#)

55 [Q31](#); Council on Geostrategy [[UKCES0025](#)]

56 Professor Andrew Dorman [[UKCES0020](#)] - at present the UK’s continuous at sea deterrent (CASD) posture ensures that a single nuclear SSBN (capable of launching a Trident nuclear missile) is at sea at all times.

57 [Q145](#)

58 [Q145](#)

59 The F-35A is certified to carry the US B-61 nuclear air launched bombs. Four of the Five countries which are part of the NATO nuclear mission use or have ordered the F-35A for the mission.

60 [Q89](#)

61 Council on Foreign Relations, [The Risk of Nuclear War Continues to Rise](#), 28 January 2025

- exploring the possibility of enhanced UK participation in NATO’s nuclear mission.⁶²

In the run up to the NATO summit in June 2025, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would purchase 12 F-35As and join NATO’s nuclear mission.⁶³ When the Secretary of State was asked why the Government had not instead invested in a sovereign air-launched nuclear capability, he acknowledged that it was an option but explained that the choice to join NATO’s nuclear mission was the best way to strengthen nuclear deterrence.⁶⁴

27. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is clear that the nuclear threat has increased in the recent past. The UK already declares its nuclear deterrent to the defence of NATO, the single most significant contribution it can make. Whilst we have not received sufficient evidence to recommend investing in a second sovereign delivery method for nuclear deterrence, we wish to understand why the Government dismissed this option—we recommend it set out its reasoning in detail in response to this Report.

28. In evidence to us on 2 July, the Secretary of State emphasised that he intended the UK to develop and demonstrate “stronger leadership within NATO”.⁶⁵ This was echoed by the then Minister for Armed Forces⁶⁶ who told us that the Government had “been very deliberate and clear in stepping up our role within NATO and European leadership”.⁶⁷ Both Armida van Rij of Chatham House⁶⁸ and William Freer emphasised that the UK was seen as a leader amongst European nations but warned that the current low numbers (resulting in a lack of mass) in the UK Armed Forces were undermining that leadership position.⁶⁹ Dr Robert Johnson of Oxford University warned that some NATO Allies had concerns about the UK’s leadership, noting that at a recent conference with Allies:

62 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

63 Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, [UK to purchase F-35As and join NATO nuclear mission as Government steps up national security and delivers defence dividend](#), 24 June 2025

64 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q30–1](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

65 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q31](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

66 Following the September reshuffle, the Minister is now Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry.

67 [Q306](#)

68 Armida van Rij has subsequently taken up a new role as a Senior Research Fellow with the Centre for European Reform.

69 [Q20](#); [Q123](#)

there was a great deal of anxiety about the UK not providing the military, naval and air leadership that all of them felt the UK, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a nuclear-armed power, should provide. I will not name names, but one of the Americans there was quite categorical that the UK is not a tier 1 military power in the way that its armed forces are currently configured.⁷⁰

29. He went on to say that “the UK is falling far short of its claimed leadership position” as if it wanted “to defend its NATO partners in Europe and, indeed, in Canada and the United States, it simply does not have the mass, let alone the munitions, at the moment to do the job”⁷¹ before suggesting that in response to a requirement for a rapid reaction force, the UK could likely only deploy 2,000 soldiers, 5–6 ships and 30 aircraft.⁷² Ed Arnold has also criticised the UK’s leadership within NATO, noting that it is failing to reach previously agreed capability targets within the NDPP explaining that “[t]he UK is already towards the bottom of the NDPP progress reports, and the government is being disingenuous to suggest that all is harmonious between UK capability targets and NATO.”⁷³

30. In addition to ensuring that it can provide the capabilities it has committed to provide to NATO, the UK, like all NATO Member States, is also required to “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack” under Article 3 of the Washington Treaty.⁷⁴ Ed Arnold explained that:

The way that the new NATO family of plans works—the regional plans—is that effectively they extrapolate up from article 3 national plans into these three regional plans and a reinforcement plan.⁷⁵

31. Dr Robert Johnson told us that the Government was “working towards” meeting its Article 3 commitments but that Departments and agencies were not resourced for it.⁷⁶ The then Minister for Armed Forces acknowledged that the UK was not currently meeting its Article 3 commitments and pointed to the recommendations of the SDR on resolving the issue.⁷⁷ We explore our concerns around the UK’s Article 3 plan later in the Report (Chapter 4).

70 [Q174](#)

71 [Q176](#)

72 [Q178–181](#)

73 Ed Arnold (RUSI), [All About Trump: the 2025 NATO Hague Summit](#), 26 June 2025

74 NATO, [The North Atlantic Treaty](#), 4 April 1949

75 [Q12](#)

76 [Q193](#); [Q196](#)

77 [Q308](#)

NATO First

- 32.** The SDR sets out what Defence’s NATO First approach would mean: prioritising the UK’s “ability to contribute to NATO plans (including for defending the UK)”; ensuring that NATO is part of all “policy, doctrine and concepts development, education, and talent management” and ensuring that the range of UK activities (including operations, exercises, industrial strategy, and defence engagement) “prioritises and enhances NATO objectives and integration”. It explains that the UK must:
- Put NATO at the heart of how it plans to fight in the Euro-Atlantic area.
 - Put NATO at the centre of its force development, meeting “ambitious NATO capability targets”.⁷⁸
 - Meet the civil defence and resilience planning obligations under Article 3 to “strengthen deterrence and assure the UK’s ability to project power in support of NATO”.
 - Support NATO’s development in areas critical to warfighting including: new concepts; adopting innovative technology within capability planning; and influencing standards and operating practices.
 - Engage fully in NATO-led efforts to strengthen transatlantic industrial cooperation, supporting NATO’s role as a convenor and standard-setter and ensuring that NATO standards are adopted by default within UK capability development.⁷⁹

The SDR recommended that Defence generates “a roadmap for delivering this deeper interoperability with NATO Allies and for leading the way on shared approaches and standards by January 2026. Implementation should commence no later than July 2026”.⁸⁰

78 NATO defence ministers agreed a new set of capability targets on 5 June 2025. These targets are classified.

79 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

80 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

Box 1: UK personnel at NATO

The UK holds key leadership roles in NATO and has an allocation of 1,053 posts within the organisation (8% of which were unfilled in mid-2025).⁸¹ We were privileged to meet UK personnel deployed to NATO during our visits in relation to this inquiry. These were impressive, dedicated people but it was clear that many of them (and their families) had experienced inconvenience and in some cases hardship as a result of deploying to NATO installations. Sometimes this was simply an administrative burden but in other cases, medical care and the careers of spouses and partners had been disrupted. The introduction of VAT on private school fees was also raised. There is a need to ensure that NATO is considered a key posting which the SDR points to when it highlights incorporating a NATO First approach within talent management.⁸² The then Minister for the Armed Forces talked about the need to set a demand signal⁸³—when asked about improving the offer, he acknowledged that it was necessary to demonstrate that NATO roles are valued across the Services:

An important part of bringing that commitment to life is the focus on saying, “These are important roles. We are going to value them more, and we have a deliberate policy of improving the offer. We have made some steps on that but there is more to do.”⁸⁴

33.

CONCLUSION

The Government has stated its intention to implement a NATO First approach. For this to be meaningful, it must implement SDR recommendations aimed at ensuring that the UK is a better Ally. Witnesses have highlighted a lack of mass, delays in developing promised capabilities in line with NDPP timelines, and a failure by the UK to meet its Article 3 commitments.

81 [PQ 589 4](#)

82 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

83 [Q289–291](#)

84 [Q280](#)

34.

RECOMMENDATION

We were concerned to hear that the UK's lack of mass is denuding its leadership in NATO. In addition, the lack of resourcing dedicated to the UK meeting its Article 3 commitments is a further failure of leadership. We recommend that the Government addresses these criticisms in detail in its response to this report, setting out the actions it is taking to resolve these issues with a timeline for implementation.

35.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should set out its plan for implementing the SDR. We recommend that the Government publishes an annual update on its implementation of the SDR commitments. In addition, we will continue to seek regular classified updates on its progress against those commitments related to NATO and how it is improving the offer to personnel deployed to NATO.

Integrated Air and Missile Defence

36. In recent years, technological developments have increased the use and impact of air and missile threats.⁸⁵ Professor Peter Roberts explained that the threat is “huge and has proliferated enormously”: many of the capabilities had existed in some form or another for decades but that what was new was the increase in “speed, scale and mass”. He explained that faster and more capable missiles were being used a lot more often and by a wider range of actors.⁸⁶ He pointed to the regular use of ballistic missiles in Ukraine and the use of sophisticated technologies by the Houthis (a non-state actor) to target Saudi Arabia’s critical national infrastructure as examples of how the threat had developed.⁸⁷
37. There is a significant lack of European Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) with shortfalls in capabilities on land and at sea,⁸⁸ a lack of common architecture for integration of air and missile defence systems and capabilities across Europe⁸⁹ and the threat amplified by both the increased threat landscape and the need to continue supporting Ukraine.⁹⁰ Professor

85 Professor Peter Roberts described the range of these as being “small drones with real-time video targeting, all the way through to cruise missiles, hyper ballistic missiles, fighter aircraft, bomber aircraft, long-range hypersonic missiles, ballistic missiles, exoatmospheric targeting and skipping missiles, which skip on the edge of the atmosphere”.

86 [Q146](#)

87 [Q146](#)

88 Human Security Centre [[UKCES0002](#)]

89 Lockheed Martin UK [[UKCES0013](#)]

90 UK NATO Industrial Advisory Group Delegation [[UKCES0023](#)]

Roberts pointed to the Aegis Ashore⁹¹ facilities in Romania and Poland as helping to protect Europe. Alongside this he cited investment in parts of IAMD by “Germany, Norway, Sweden, Spain and Italy, among others” as recognition of the threat. He told us that the “UK by comparison has next to nothing”,⁹² a view which appears to be shared by others within industry and UK think tanks.⁹³ However, he suggested that in terms of ability to build a capability, the UK had some advantages, including partnerships with countries which had significant expertise in this area.⁹⁴

38. The threat is not just to the military. There have been incidents (both historical and recent) of drones endangering aircraft and shutting down UK airports⁹⁵ and we have seen similar events recently in Europe which are viewed as being grey zone attacks.⁹⁶ The response goes beyond a military responsibility: for instance following the Gatwick and Heathrow shutdowns, it was the Home Office (in conjunction with the Department for Transport) which produced the Government’s “Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Strategy” and in 2024, the Department for Transport produced guidance on countering drone threats to shipping.⁹⁷ The Home Office is responsible for the bodies which investigate illegal use of drones.⁹⁸
39. Professor Peter Roberts highlighted that any future threat would likely significantly affect the civilian population: whereas the UK prioritised attacking military targets, Russia would view civilian national infrastructure as being equally valuable. For Professor Roberts, building a system to respond to the threat was only part of the solution. He told us that engaging the public was key:

91 Military installations which contain equipment (such as radars and interceptor missiles) to defend against medium and intermediate range missiles

92 [Q147](#)

93 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, [Defending UK airspace](#), POSTnote 751, 8 August 2025; House of Commons Library, [UK defence in 2025: Integrated air and missile defence](#), Research Briefing 10249, 13 June 2025

94 [Q164](#)

95 BBC News, [Drone ‘risked plane collision’ over central London](#), 22 August 2025; BBC News, [Gatwick Airport: Drones ground flights](#) 20 December 2018; BBC News, [Heathrow airport drone investigated by police and military](#), 9 January 2019

96 CNN, [Drones disrupt airports in what Danish officials call ‘hybrid attack.’ What happened and how can it be stopped?](#), 26 September 2025; BBC News, [Munich airport resumes flights after suspected drones force closure](#), 4 October 2025; The Independent, [Mystery drones are causing havoc across Europe. Here’s what we know](#), 4 October 2025

97 Home Office, [Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Strategy](#), 21 October 2019; Department for Transport, [Countering drone threats to shipping](#), 20 May 2024

98 PQ [603 5](#)

There has been no political will to make the difficult decisions, or to be honest with the public and say, “We’re not going to stop missiles coming and hitting you. A set of you are going to die, hospitals are going to go under, and you will be without food, water, sewers and electricity.”⁹⁹

40. This view was echoed by Lord Robertson when he gave evidence to us on the SDR, for which he was the Lead Reviewer. He pointed to its proposal for a national conversation on security and defence, noting that

We are not safe. That is the reality of today. People think they are safe; they are not safe. People thought they were safe in eastern Ukraine, and very suddenly they were not.¹⁰⁰

41. The SDR acknowledged the need to invest in IAMD.¹⁰¹ When we asked the then Minister for the Armed Forces about plans to improve the UK’s IAMD, he told us that “we have been very clear that we want to invest more into integrated air missile defence.” He pointed to detection capabilities and integrating with Allies as being the key priorities but wouldn’t go further, explaining that the Defence Investment Plan would contain the capability decisions and prioritisation.¹⁰² This leaves IAMD as another area where we are currently unable to assess the Government’s approach in any detail.

42. **RECOMMENDATION**

The lack of clarity about the Government’s approach to Integrated Air and Missile Defence, given the absence of European IAMD capability, is an area of critical importance that requires urgent action.

Minilateral and bilateral engagement

43. The UK is part of a number of ‘minilateral’ groupings within Europe, including the E3¹⁰³ and the E5,¹⁰⁴ the Northern Group¹⁰⁵ and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).¹⁰⁶ In evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Government described these bilateral and multi-lateral activities as like “interlocking

99 [Q148](#)

100 Oral evidence taken on 11 June 2025, [Q53](#) [Lord Robertson]

101 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

102 [Q336](#)

103 France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

104 France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom.

105 Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

106 Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden with the UK as the framework nation.

strands of a muscle”.¹⁰⁷ Armida van Rij told us that these relationships should be thought about as cumulative—rather than trade-offs—because they cumulatively amount to better, stronger and more European security.¹⁰⁸

44. Key bilateral relationships with France and Germany have both been strengthened recently through defence co-operation agreements.¹⁰⁹ These sit alongside other relationships such as the defence roadmap with Estonia, GCAP with Italy, ongoing negotiations to update the defence and security treaty with Poland, and security guarantees agreed with Finland and Sweden. We also heard that relationships with Norway and Netherlands are being strengthened.¹¹⁰
45. However, we heard that the proliferation of such agreements post-Brexit was partly because defence is a national competence outside the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). There are concerns that “[i]f all these individual nations start calling on the UK for the support that we have signed up to, very quickly you could reach overstretch.”¹¹¹ When we raised this with the then Minister for the Armed Forces, we were told that the UK’s minilateral and bilateral relationships are all additive to NATO deterrence with resources managed through the ‘strategic effect cycle’ (SEC) to match ambition to resource. This covered any situation in which the UK was unable to fulfil pledges. If an unexpected call on resource occurred the SEC was to be adapted according to the priority determined by Ministers.¹¹²

46. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should provide the Committee with a briefing on the Strategic Effect Cycle.

47. **CONCLUSION**

It is not always clear how the UK’s many minilateral and bilateral defence relationships feed into the Government’s broader strategy or if the Department and Ministers have an assessment of their relative prioritisation.

107 Oral evidence taken by Foreign Affairs Committee on 8 September 2025, [Q89](#) [Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories at Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)]

108 [Q15](#)

109 [Q15](#); [Lancaster House 2.0](#), HCWS77, 11 July 2025

110 Northrop Grumman UK [[UKCES0010](#)]; [Q18](#); [Q20](#); [Q23](#)

111 [Q15](#); [Q21](#)

112 [Q293](#)

48.

RECOMMENDATION

If certain relationships are vital to achieving Government goals then the Government should ensure that there is sufficient political attention and resourcing for these relationships. Given the calls on resources, we recommend the Government ensure it assesses the impact and outcomes of current structures and agreements before starting new rounds of negotiations.

The Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)

49. Successive Defence Committees have examined the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) over the past decade.¹¹³ The JEF is described by the MOD as being “an increasingly important vehicle for security in its core regions of the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea”,¹¹⁴ a sentiment echoed in the 2025 National Security Strategy which committed to “deliver renewed deterrence in the increasingly contested High North and Northern Europe, track potential threats to undersea infrastructure and monitor Russia’s shadow fleets” through the JEF.¹¹⁵
50. As the framework nation for the JEF, the UK has a leadership role. We heard from Ed Arnold and Dr Robert Johnson that there had been some criticism of the UK’s perceived lack of leadership and the JEF’s failure to respond quickly to the severing of subsea cables in the Baltic Sea.¹¹⁶ Ed Arnold warned that although the JEF had just signed a 10 year vision, the coming decade was likely to prove “far more challenging” than the previous one—therefore the JEF would need to receive more “political attention” and should be able to take on more military tasks in northern Europe.¹¹⁷ Despite this, countries within the JEF consider both UK leadership and the framework itself to be “significant and far more advantageous ... than other frameworks”.¹¹⁸ We also heard, on our visit to Estonia and Finland, of the importance which both nations place on the JEF framework.

113 Defence Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2013–14, [Future Army 2020](#), HC 576; Defence Committee; Twelfth Report of Session 2017–19, [On Thin Ice: UK Defence in the Arctic](#), HC 388; Defence Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2022–23, [Special Relationships? US, UK and NATO](#), HC 184; Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2024–25, [Defence in the Grey Zone](#), HC 405

114 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0028](#)]

115 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

116 [Q11](#); [Q13](#); Dr Robert Johnson [[UKCES0030](#)]

117 [Q11](#)

118 [Q13](#)

51. In our ‘Defence in the Grey Zone’ Report we recommended that the Government “consider enhancing the JEF’s deployable capability”.¹¹⁹ In its Response, the Government failed to address the point on capabilities, instead noting that

All capability requirements will be considered as part of the Defence Investment Plan, which will be completed in autumn 2025, so we cannot commit to specific capabilities at this stage.¹²⁰

52. **CONCLUSION**

The UK’s role as a framework nation in JEF means that it has to ensure it is leading both politically and militarily including by ensuring that it has the capabilities required for exercises and operations in the High North and Polar regions. The UK must ensure that the JEF is able to respond at pace and protect its member nations (and in particular their critical national infrastructure installations) given the increasing threat posed in the High North and the Baltic Sea. We intend to examine the Defence Investment Plan for the inclusion of capabilities which would facilitate military tasks in northern Europe.

The UK-EU relationship

53. The EU’s development into a security and defence actor has increased significantly since Brexit, particularly in the defence industrial space.¹²¹ The Centre for Britain and Europe at the University of Surrey told us that, outside the EU, the UK had not “been able to engage as effectively with the growing amount of EU initiatives focused on security and defence”.¹²² Armida van Rij also acknowledged that Brexit “certainly made it more difficult to co-operate on foreign security and defence policies” and suggested that the UK needed to ensure a better defence relationship with the EU, because it would enable the development of “capabilities, which will help keep Europe, as a continent, safe and secure”.¹²³ A further consequence of Brexit, highlighted by the then Minister for Armed Forces, was that loss of freedom of movement made it much more difficult for family members of personnel deployed within the EU to work whilst accompanying them.¹²⁴

119 Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2024–25, [Defence in the Grey Zone](#), HC 405, para 45

120 Defence Committee, Fifth Special Report of Session 2024–26, [Defence in the Grey Zone: Government Response](#), HC 1326

121 British Chamber of Commerce | EU & Belgium [[UKCES0011](#)]; MBDA [[UKCES0016](#)]; Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey [[UKCES0017](#)]; Legatum Institute [[UKCES0021](#)]

122 Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey [[UKCES0017](#)]

123 [Q19–20](#)

124 [Q287](#)

54. At present, the UK engages with the EU on defence through: bilateral relationships with member states (covered in the section above); the newly agreed security and defence partnership with the EU; and the EU's engagement with NATO.

The security and defence partnership with the EU

55. On 19 May 2025, the Government announced a security and defence partnership with the EU.¹²⁵ It is a non-binding political framework of cooperation and contains “little detail on how various initiatives will be implemented”. The initiatives include dialogue and consultation mechanisms and “flexible and scalable engagement” on areas of shared interest.¹²⁶ On defence, the possibility of UK participation in CSDP¹²⁷ exercises and operations will be explored, as will potential UK contribution to the EU's European Peace Facility.¹²⁸ Furthermore, the UK and EU will explore the establishment of an Administrative Agreement between the European Defence Agency and the UK.¹²⁹ The partnership text also referred to the UK's application to join the PESCO¹³⁰ Military Mobility project,¹³¹ on which progress has stalled pending agreement on Gibraltar.¹³² Alongside the partnership text, the ‘Common Understanding’ was published which included the

125 FCDO and Ministry of Defence, [Security and defence partnership between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#), 19 May 2025

126 House of Commons Library, [The UK-EU reset: Next steps after the May 2025 summit](#), Research Briefing 10312, 29 July 2025

127 The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) provides the EU with the ability, drawing on both civilian and military assets, to undertake missions and operations to support stabilisation goals—including military training, anti-piracy operations, border assistance, and support for law enforcement and judicial reforms in post-conflict regions.

128 The EPF is an off-budget instrument worth EUR 17 billion for the 2021–2027 period, which can fund the common costs of military CSDP missions and operations. The EPF can also be used to finance the provision of training and military equipment (including lethal equipment) for EU partner countries.

129 House of Commons Library, [The UK-EU reset: Next steps after the May 2025 summit](#), Research Briefing 10312, 29 July 2025

130 Permanent Structured Cooperation (abbreviated as PESCO) is an intergovernmental, voluntary mechanism under which EU member states agree to make mutual commitments to increase defence spending and improve their military capabilities through various projects.

131 This aims to enable the unhindered movement of military personnel and assets within the borders of the EU. This entails avoiding long bureaucratic procedures to move through or over EU member states, be it via rail, road, air or sea.

132 House of Commons Library, [The UK-EU reset: Next steps after the May 2025 summit](#), Research Briefing 10312, 29 July 2025; [Q29](#)

commitment that both parties “should swiftly explore any possibilities for mutually beneficial enhanced cooperation created by the SAFE instrument¹³³ once adopted, in accordance with their respective legal frameworks”.¹³⁴

56. In June 2025, the then Minister for Armed Forces told the House that “[i]mplementation discussions will begin shortly, exploring the possibility of establishing an Administrative Arrangement between the UK and the European Defence Agency, as well as cooperation in individual PESCO projects.”¹³⁵ In regards to engagement on CSDP (which will require the UK to enter into a framework participation agreement, such as those which already exist between the EU and the United States, Canada, Norway and Australia), the House was told in June that discussions were taking place on “the terms and modalities for implementation” for UK potential participation in EU crisis management operations; information exchange and secondments at the “working level”.¹³⁶
57. When the Foreign Affairs Committee recently sought an update on progress on UK participation in SAFE, the Minister for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories explained that the Government hoped that UK industry would therefore then be able to participate in the first round of bids in November and there was ambition to make swift progress but that the Government needed to “ensure that there is value for money and that it meets our strategic objectives as set out in the SDR.”¹³⁷ The then Minister for European Union Relations told the Committee that the UK and EU could enter detailed negotiations once the European Council had approved the European Commission’s proposed mandate.¹³⁸ The mandate was approved on 18 September.¹³⁹ Countries have to submit their applications (including the list of major contractors) by 30 November; substantive UK defence industry involvement in SAFE-funded projects is likely to become progressively more difficult if a deal isn’t struck before then.

133 According to the House of Commons Library, under this mechanism the European Commission will borrow up to €150 billion on capital markets, which will be distributed to EU member states in the form of long-term loans to rapidly scale up investments in critical defence capabilities through joint procurement from the European defence industry. Loans will be disbursed to interested member states, and on the basis of national plans. Ukraine and countries in the European Free Trade Association, the European Economic Area and those with whom the EU has a defence partnership are eligible to participate. The regulation formally establishing SAFE was adopted on 27 May 2025.

134 Cabinet Office, [UK-EU Summit - Common Understanding](#), 19 May 2025

135 PQ [597 7](#)

136 House of Commons Library, [The UK-EU reset: Next steps after the May 2025 summit](#), Research Briefing 10312, 29 July 2025

137 Oral evidence taken by Foreign Affairs Committee on 8 September 2025, [Q101](#)

138 Oral evidence taken by Foreign Affairs Committee on 8 September 2025, [Q102](#)

139 Council of the EU, [Defence investment: Council authorises negotiations with UK and Canada on their participation in SAFE](#), 18 September 2025

58. Dr Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer of the German Marshall Fund told us that the UK and EU strengthening their co-operation was “not a luxury. It is not an option. It truly is a necessity.”¹⁴⁰ Prior to its agreement, Armida van Rij told us that the most essential aspect of a partnership agreement would be “defence industrial co-operation between the UK and the EU” explaining that anything else was simply “a nice-to-have”.¹⁴¹ She went on to say that:

at the moment it is odd that certain accession countries have more access to the EU than a country like the UK, a former member with all the assets in the defence and security space that it has. There are quite a few smaller member states pushing for third country participation, i.e. including the UK and the US, in various defence initiatives. Some member states are keen to engage the UK on that front and we should not forget that.¹⁴²

59. In addition, Space Forge; the British Chambers of Commerce (EU & Belgium); Spirit AeroSystems Belfast; Airbus; MBDA; the Centre for Britain and Europe at the University of Surrey; and BAE all cited the importance of UK involvement in EU-led capability development programmes¹⁴³ with BAE concluding that:

On balance, the EU’s initiatives would be strengthened by UK participation, and conversely from a UK perspective there is a long-term risk that continued exclusion will reduce opportunities to cooperate in design and development projects with partners from EU Member States.¹⁴⁴

60. However, we also heard that some current aspects of EU policy (namely export controls and intellectual property rights) made third country participation unattractive and that some member states would seek to push back on UK involvement.¹⁴⁵

140 [Q104](#)

141 [Q28](#)

142 [Q28](#)

143 Space Forge [[UKCES0007](#)]; British Chamber of Commerce | EU & Belgium [[UKCES0011](#)]; Spirit AeroSystems Belfast [[UKCES0014](#)]; Airbus [[UKCES0015](#)]; Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey [[UKCES0017](#)]; BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]

144 BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]

145 [Q29](#); London Politica [[UKCES0005](#)]; British Chamber of Commerce | EU & Belgium [[UKCES0011](#)]; Legatum Institute [[UKCES0021](#)]; BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]

61.

CONCLUSION

The UK's security and defence partnership with the EU is a welcome recognition of the importance of both parties to the defence of Europe. At present, the partnership is somewhat aspirational, awaiting the outcome of negotiations on a Framework Participation Agreement; access to SAFE; and movement on the UK's Administrative Arrangement to join the PESCO Military Mobility project.

62.

RECOMMENDATION

It is vital that British defence industry is not sidelined or excluded from working with their European counterparts—that will be the key measure (in relation to defence) of success when assessing the Government's relationship with the EU. The Government will need to ensure that its ongoing defence relationship with the EU produces benefits which are demonstrable and adequately explained to the UK public.

The EU-NATO relationship

63. Armida van Rij described the EU-NATO relationship as “a lot of co-ordination but less co-operation”¹⁴⁶ whilst Ed Arnold suggested that it had improved significantly since 2022 but described NATO-EU joint declarations as being “quite vanilla”.¹⁴⁷ Both pointed to a lack of intelligence sharing between the two organisations as an issue although Armida van Rij explained that NATO was hesitant to share intelligence with the EU as “because some EU countries are not deemed to have good enough intelligence agencies and they are worried about leaks to Russia directly”.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, there are political difficulties given the NATO membership of Türkiye (and Greece) and the EU membership of Cyprus (and Greece).¹⁴⁹ Armida van Rij highlighted that despite those high level issues, working level co-operation exists, pointing to “joint taskforces and co-operation on hybrid issues, military mobility, space, cyber, climate change and defence, disinformation”.¹⁵⁰ Both she and Ed Arnold thought that the appointment of a former head of government of an EU country as NATO Secretary General would improve the relationship.¹⁵¹

146 [Q8](#)

147 [Q7](#)

148 [Q8](#); [Q9](#)

149 [Q8](#)

150 [Q8](#)

151 [Q7](#)

64. In written evidence, both the Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey and the UK Delegation to the NATO Industrial Advisory Group cited EU-NATO relations as an area where the UK could play a positive role.¹⁵² The MOD also views this as a role for the UK, telling us that it encourages co-operation on current and future threats as well as support for Ukraine and that increased engagement with EU defence activities will aid this endeavour.¹⁵³
65. The May 2025 security and defence partnership text includes the commitment that “[t]he EU and the UK will explore further opportunities for coordination, co-operation and synergies in support of capacity building for partners in the field of security and defence including in the context of EU-NATO co-operation in this field.”¹⁵⁴ The 2025 National Security Strategy also commits the UK to “work towards the most effective cooperation between NATO and the EU.”¹⁵⁵
66. **RECOMMENDATION**
The UK Government has endorsed greater EU-NATO working but should now identify specific measures through which it could best support the improvement of the relationship between the EU and NATO. This could include making it a discussion point in engagements with NATO and EU leaders and developing new ways of working (such as the sharing of classified information) with the European Commission that could potentially be adopted by NATO if successful.

152 Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey [[UKCES0017](#)]; UK NATO Industrial Advisory Group Delegation [[UKCES0023](#)]

153 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0028](#)]

154 FCDO and Ministry of Defence, [Security and defence partnership between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#), 19 May 2025

155 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

3 Reforming the UK defence industrial base

67. The important role that the industrial base plays in deterrence was a theme within many submissions to this inquiry.¹⁵⁶ However, there are challenges—BAE explained that underinvestment had led to “low rate” defence production with centralisation and reductions in capacity alongside the rationalisation of supply chains (resulting in bottlenecks and long lead times with few alternative options available). Furthermore, demand remained “disaggregated and is slow to translate into orders”.¹⁵⁷ Both MBDA (the European multi-national missile maker) and the UK NATO Industrial Action Group (NIAG) Delegation told us that there was significant risk in the ability of the industrial base to respond to and sustain the increased demands of collective defence but that “this risk is not well quantified or qualified at present”.¹⁵⁸ Charles Bauman of London Politica wrote that recent conflicts had “underscored the need for expanded production capacity and a more proactive industrial policy” which could drive innovation and ensure “the workforce, supply chains, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can meet wartime demands.”¹⁵⁹
68. The Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) recognised that in the new era of threat, innovation and industry are vital components of deterrence. It noted the “imperative of maintaining sufficient inventories of munitions and spares, the fast replenishment and resupply by industry, and a rapid, continual cycle of innovation between industry and the front line”¹⁶⁰ and that UK defence industry was vital to the effort to “ensure the resilience of our supply chains, the strength to resist threats or disruptive events, and the ability to scale-up and surge capacity as needed at any time to meet any potential threat ...[and] innovate at wartime pace.”¹⁶¹

156 Dr Matthew Powell [UKCES0004]; London Politica [UKCES0005]; Spirit AeroSystems Belfast [UKCES0014]; Airbus [UKCES0015]; Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey [UKCES0017]; AERALIS [UKCES0019]; BAE Systems [UKCES0022]; UK NATO Industrial Advisory Group Delegation [UKCES0023]; GE Aerospace [UKCES0024]

157 BAE Systems [UKCES0022]

158 MBDA [UKCES0016]; UK NATO Industrial Advisory Group Delegation [UKCES0023]

159 London Politica [UKCES0005]

160 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

161 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

69. In the context of NATO, the Secretary General has spoken of the urgent need to increase European defence industrial capacity and widen the defence industrial base, noting that both Russia and China are rapidly increasing their armed forces' capabilities.¹⁶² This is compounded by the over-reliance on the US for the supply of munitions—Kevin Craven of ADS described it as the “biggest critical area”, noting that it would take the whole of Europe to produce the equivalent of the US supply.¹⁶³ Dr Rowan Allport told us that the UK had previously relied on the US as a munitions “storage bin” rather than holding sufficient stockpiles domestically.¹⁶⁴ Recent reports have suggested that the US may be less inclined to sell munitions in the future as the Administration deals with its own shortages.¹⁶⁵ Munitions supply is an area recognised by the MOD as being in need of investment since 2023.¹⁶⁶ This Government has committed to “build at least six new munitions and energetics factories and procure up to 7,000 UK-built long-range weapons”¹⁶⁷ and in August, the Defence Secretary told us that the forthcoming Defence Investment Plan would set out the UK approach to munitions production and stockpiles.¹⁶⁸
70. Taking the F-35B as a case in point, there are delays in the integration of UK munitions onto the F-35B, with the integration of the Meteor missile pushed out to the early 2030s¹⁶⁹ and the programme and integration of the Spear Capability 3 air-to-surface weapon currently under review, with in-service capability (if it goes ahead) unlikely before the 2030s.¹⁷⁰ This means that the only sovereign missile system currently able to be carried by the F-35B is the ASRAAM.¹⁷¹ This contrasts with the ability of Israel to integrate domestic-produced electronic warfare systems, sensors, and communications technology onto its version of the F-35 (the Adir).¹⁷²

162 NATO, [Building a better NATO](#) (speech by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at Chatham House), 9 June 2025

163 [Q61](#)

164 [Q121](#)

165 The Atlantic, [The U.S. Is Quietly Pausing Some Arms Sales to Europe](#), 19 September 2025

166 The IR23 had announced £1.95 billion to replenish stockpiles in 2023–24 and 2024–25 “and to increase them in line with a reassessment of appropriate levels ... and to invest in the resilience of the UK’s munitions infrastructure”¹⁴² and DCP23 a further £2.5 billion on “replenishing—and augmenting—” munitions and stockpiles “through the coming decade”. See: Cabinet Office, [Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world](#), 13 March 2023

167 [Q330](#); Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

168 Letter from the Secretary of State for Defence to the Chair regarding the Defence munitions strategy, [6 August 2025](#)

169 [PQ 520 7](#)

170 [PQ 735 7](#)

171 [PQ 722 2](#)

172 The National Security Journal, [F-35I Adir: Israel Has a Stealth Fighter Jet Built for an Iran War](#), 13 June 2025

Current state of the defence industrial base

71. We heard in evidence of multiple challenges facing the defence industrial base. In relation to the capacity of the industrial base (and its ability to grow), skills and workforce challenges were cited as a barrier¹⁷³ as well as the length of time to receive security clearances (including the need to get multiple clearances to work on projects for different Government departments).¹⁷⁴
72. We have previously highlighted our own concerns about the gap between the Typhoon and GCAP aircraft resulting in the loss of “the industrial capacity to design and manufacture combat aircraft within the UK”.¹⁷⁵ In response to the concerns we raised, the MOD told us that, in the case of any gap in the Typhoon production lines, BAE Systems will have to “deploy staff across the wider Typhoon programme and other complex combat air programmes in their business ... [to] maintain jobs and skills and mitigate against the risk of losing an expert manufacturing workforce.”¹⁷⁶ However, those are short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions. The Government recently announced the sale of 20 Typhoon aircraft to Türkiye which it said would secure 20,000 jobs in the UK Typhoon programme. The first delivery of Typhoon aircraft is expected in 2030.¹⁷⁷
73. Standardisation and interoperability are vital components of collective defence and yet despite NATO standards, this remains a real issue for NATO and, by extension, for Ukraine.¹⁷⁸ We have heard on visits that the provision of military capabilities from NATO nations to Ukraine had led to a “zoo” of equipment where different standards and interfaces were employed by capabilities which served the same purpose, resulting in inefficiency: individual training was required on each system and there were long logistics trails as each system required different parts and different ammunition. At the start of the war there were 13 European variants of the 155 shell though that has now been reduced to three.¹⁷⁹ TechUK highlighted that interoperability was also key in relation to software:

173 BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]; [Q46](#)

174 [Q49](#)

175 Defence Committee, Third Report of Session 2024–25, [The Global Combat Air Programme](#), HC 598, para 83–4

176 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0032](#)]

177 Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, [20,000 UK jobs secured as Türkiye buys 20 Typhoon jets in biggest fighter jet deal in a generation](#), 27 October 2025

178 [Q185](#)

179 [Q69](#) [Kevin Craven]

there are too many silos of, “The only place where you can get that all the way down throughout the supply chain is this one source”. If that source says no, you are stuck, but, if you had more standards in this space, particularly across the tech space, you could chop and change, and interchange things.¹⁸⁰

BAE said that the “[i]mplementation of NATO standards and the pursuit of interoperability has not been uniform, and is constrained by a lack of data and lengthy processes.”¹⁸¹ A lack of standardisation leads to fragmentation in the European industrial base which reduces capacity.¹⁸²

74. ADS pointed to the MOD’s behaviour as a customer resulting in equipment not being produced in “the most efficient and effective way.”¹⁸³ Previous Defence and Public Accounts Committees have criticised MOD procurement systems with the PAC finding that the “system for delivering major equipment capabilities is broken and is repeatedly wasting taxpayers’ money”—and our predecessor Committee supported that conclusion.¹⁸⁴ The Oliver Wyman & CBI-led Defence & Economic Growth Taskforce report, published in July 2025 contained recommendations focusing on “strengthening demand signals and revitalising public dialogue” around defence.¹⁸⁵ Fenella McGerty of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a UK think tank, suggested that “the lack of long-term demand signals and long-term planning” from the MOD was the greatest issue for firms seeking investment to scale up.¹⁸⁶ Rob Murray of the Defence, Security and Resilience (DSR) Bank told us that the “manner in which the United Kingdom issues contracts is incredibly inefficient”,¹⁸⁷ whilst BAE and Nicholas Nelson of Archangel cited the lack of predictability in contracting, with officials agreeing to provide contracts or funding which then failed to appear for many months (if at all).¹⁸⁸ The overall issue of defence finance is an area which the inquiry examined in detail and is covered in its own section below.

75. Innovation at pace is another area where the UK defence industrial base has struggled. Research and Development (R&D) spending is now largely drawn from commercial companies.¹⁸⁹ The last time there was parity between public and private spending on R&D was in the 1990s—the private

180 [Q61](#)

181 BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]

182 [Q102](#)

183 [Q33](#)

184 Defence Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2022–23, [It is broke—and it’s time to fix it: The UK’s defence procurement system](#), HC 1099

185 Oliver Wyman & CBI, [Defence & Economic Growth Taskforce](#), 8 July 2025

186 [Q237](#)

187 [Q248](#)

188 BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]; [Q257](#)

189 BAE Systems [[UKCES0022](#)]

sector currently spends over twelve times more.¹⁹⁰ Early on in the inquiry, we heard that if a company had an innovative product which it wanted to showcase, there were 80 points of entry to the MOD, with no “Front Door”, meaning that companies could be sent from one to another without any indication where the best point of entry might be.¹⁹¹ The burden on SMEs (a greater source of innovation than larger, Prime, companies) is significant, in terms of identifying opportunities, ensuring compliance with security classification requirements and testing and evaluating the product in line with MOD developing requirements whilst maintaining cashflow during the long contracting period.¹⁹²

Government action

- 76.** General Sir Richard Barrons summarised the importance of the industrial base when giving evidence on the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) for which he was a Reviewer, saying that industrial partnership comprised at least half of what the review recommended, and noting that if the Ministry of Defence “do not energise the industrial partnership that we have laid out in conjunction with them, they will not deliver this review.”¹⁹³
- 77.** The 2025 National Security Strategy committed to “rebuild the defence industrial base”, “achieving greater resilience in stockpiles” and enabling “warfighting readiness”. It acknowledged that this would require taking a “more activist” approach.¹⁹⁴
- 78.** The Government has made commitments on increasing defence spending in this Parliament and the next.¹⁹⁵ Through the SDR, the National Security Strategy and statements, the Government has announced policy developments and entities intended to improve the defence industrial ecosystem. The SDR contained a model for the segmented approach to procurement, building on the previous Government’s Integrated Procurement Model. Other developments include the creation of:
- UK Defence Innovation;
 - the SME Support Centre;
 - the Office for Defence Exports; and

190 [Q256](#)

191 [Q41](#)

192 [Q42](#); [Q51](#); [Q56](#); [Q205](#); [Q215](#); [Q233](#); [Q257](#)

193 Oral evidence taken on 11 June 2025, [Q45](#) [General Sir Richard Barrons]

194 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

195 [Q305](#); [Q307](#); Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q3](#); [7](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

- Defence Technical Colleges.¹⁹⁶

- 79.** The MOD will spend at least 10% of its equipment procurement budget on novel technologies, has announced investment in autonomous systems, including drones and will develop “a new Digital Targeting Web to better connect armed forces weapons systems and allow battlefield decisions for targeting enemy threats using new AI and software”.¹⁹⁷ In addition, the ongoing programme of Defence Reform is intended to change the MOD’s relationship with industry, led by the new National Armaments Director.¹⁹⁸
- 80.** The June 2025 National Security Strategy highlighted that the Government’s Trade Strategy would “set out plans for more robust Trade Defence tools to tackle unfair trading practices and ensure that businesses are better supported in a more challenging and geopolitical global trading environment”. It pointed to the Steel Industry (Special Measures) Act 2025, which prevented the pre-emptive closure of the UK’s last remaining domestic steel blast furnace in the UK, as an example of “the more activist approach to safeguarding sovereign capability” the Government was prepared to take.¹⁹⁹ The July 2025 Financial Services Strategy produced by HM Treasury said a newly announced Defence Investors’ Advisory Group would “provide recommendations to the Defence Secretary on how barriers to defence financing can be removed while making the sector more attractive for private investment”, which would form the basis of the Defence Finance and Investment Strategy due to be published by March 2026.²⁰⁰
- 81.** In September 2025, the Defence Industrial Strategy was published. It addresses issues which have been raised during the course of our inquiry, including:
- skills shortages;
 - improved access and support for SMEs;

196 HM Treasury, [Spring Statement 2025](#), 26 March 2025; Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, [New measures to boost small businesses benefitting from UK’s defence investment](#), 3 March 2025; Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025; Department for Business and Trade, [The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy](#), CP1337, 23 June 2025

197 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025; Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

198 Ministry of Defence, [Major defence reforms launched, with new National Armaments Director to tackle waste and boost industry](#), 25 October 2024

199 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

200 HM Treasury, [The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy: Financial Services Growth & Competitiveness Strategy](#), 15 July 2025

- greater Government support for exports;
- improving innovation (through increasing pace, agility and access to funding whilst also addressing regulatory barriers and increasing access to test and evaluation resources²⁰¹);
- acquisition reform through improving the demand signal to industry, reducing and standardising the time to contract (including through the use of digital tools), oversight of the supply chain and improving the MOD approach to contracting;
- working and collaborating with partners including industry, NATO, the USA, EU, and Ukraine.

82. The Government also intends to increase the resilience of the UK defence industrial base by:

- making readiness and resilience a priority policy area;
- ensuring capacity to surge and adaptability to manage a changing threat;
- removing productivity barriers in the defence nuclear enterprise and delivering the nuclear deterrent; and
- improving supply chain resilience, assuring availability of critical raw materials and enablers, and securing the defence industrial base against theft, attacks and disruption.

We explore this in more detail below.

83. However, many of the announced measures are not yet in operation. ADS highlighted the need for “effective implementation” as the “game-changing” priority for the DIS, noting that the previous such strategy²⁰² in 2021 “had some very sensible suggestions, the majority of which were not implemented”.²⁰³ This has also been recognised by Government—the 2025 DIS acknowledges that “previous defence industrial strategies have failed where ideas are prioritised over implementation”.²⁰⁴ Seeking to

201 Through the use of MOD “T&E [Test and Evaluation] ranges across the UK, including sites in Scotland and Wales, which we will seek to make more accessible to SMEs by exploring and addressing barriers to access” and to “support smaller firms, for whom geographically remote and highly capable test ranges may be prohibitively expensive, [MOD] will invest in more mobile test technologies”. See: Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

202 Ministry of Defence, [The Defence and Security Industrial Strategy](#), CP 410, March 2021

203 [Q62](#)

204 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

address this, it lists both the metrics of success²⁰⁵ and the responsibility for the implementation of individual policies.²⁰⁶ Overall implementation and effective delivery will be overseen by the newly appointed National Armaments Director²⁰⁷ with support from the new Defence Industrial Joint Council.²⁰⁸

84. CONCLUSION

The defence industrial base has been subject to numerous reviews, plans and strategies, all of which have identified recommendations. However, many of those have only been partially implemented. Whilst the Government appears to be committed to solving some of the most intractable issues, it is too early at this point to judge the progress of these measures let alone their effectiveness.

85. CONCLUSION

There is widespread recognition of the need to address the issues facing defence industry. We welcome the expansion of the defence industrial base and the engagement of HM Treasury and the Department for Business and Trade in finding solutions. However, Ministers will need to closely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the proposed policies, assisted by our scrutiny. This is an area of vital importance—delivery must be judged by outcomes, not simply changes to processes.

86. RECOMMENDATION

The National Armaments Director is a key post for implementation of policy changes in both the SDR and the Defence Industrial Strategy. As such, we believe that the Department ought to prioritise his giving evidence to Parliament. We recommend that the Government ensure that he appears before us as soon as possible.

205 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

206 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

207 Ministry of Defence, [National Armaments Director to drive forward defence reform and bolster national arsenal](#), 13 October 2025

208 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

Ongoing concerns

Vetting

- 87.** The many policy announcements, reports and strategies from Government have failed to address the concerns we heard in relation to security vetting. The length of time it takes to get cleared in order to start a role has led to ADS creating its own vetting unit (which now manages 7,000 security clearances a year and is the fifth largest private provider of security clearances) in order to allow for the continued functioning of the defence industry.²⁰⁹ Whilst that problem exists throughout defence industrial base, there are specific (related) issues which particularly impact start-ups and SMEs:
- Some defence projects are classified, meaning individuals cannot even be told they exist unless they already hold the appropriate security clearance. However, to obtain that clearance, a person must first be assigned to a project that requires it—creating a catch-22.²¹⁰
 - To access the information required to bid for work on a classified project, an individual not only needs personal security clearance, but also needs to work for an organisation with suitable corporate clearance on a site certified as appropriate for securely accessing classified material.²¹¹
 - Clearances from other parts of Government are not transferable, meaning that companies which work across Government (i.e. national security via both the Home Office and Defence) are not able to reuse existing clearances but must undergo the process again.²¹²

The Defence Industrial Strategy does contain suggestions for utilising national hubs to address testing and evaluating issues which could potentially have crossover by creating a secure area which could be accessed by security-cleared individuals to bid and work on classified projects.²¹³

209 [Q49–51](#)

210 [Q38](#)

211 [Q233](#)

212 [Q49](#)

213 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

88.

RECOMMENDATION

The long-standing issues with security vetting must be addressed. In response to this Report we expect the Government to set out how it intends to reduce waiting times. In addition, we recommend that the Government explore having a single clearance process used across all Government departments and agencies. Furthermore, we suggest that the Government considers adapting its regional testing and evaluation ranges into hubs so that cleared individuals without access to suitable certified premises can use these hubs to take part in classified procurement, as well as for testing and evaluation.

Defence inflation

89. Increasing defence spending without increasing defence industrial capacity could simply lead to inflation. The Ministry of Defence recognises that inflation in defence is higher than across the whole economy or in consumer goods.²¹⁴ In recent years, defence inflation has been subject to pressure both as a result of COVID and the war in Ukraine.²¹⁵ In April 2025, the then Chief of Defence Staff explained to the Public Accounts Committee that there is an imbalance of demand and supply. He pointed to the cost of 155 shells which had risen substantially in the past three years (as a result of there being insufficient capacity to supply the countries trying to give shells to Ukraine). He explained that although allied countries could alleviate this by ensuring that they weren't bidding against each other, the only sustainable solution was to invest to increase industrial capacity.²¹⁶
90. Rob Murray of the DSR Bank explained that if the UK is "not able to expand production capacity, in small companies all the way through to large ones, ultimately all this money that comes through results in more expensive defence because it results in inflation".²¹⁷ Fenella McGerty went further, suggesting that although there had been remarkable growth in European defence spending over the last three years, it had "come at a pace that is not effective for defence industrial investment". She warned that if the agreed increase to NATO funding (to 5% of GDP by 2030) is not through incremental increases over the next five years, and if Governments fail to

214 Ministry of Defence, [Evidence Summary - The Drivers of Defence Cost Inflation](#), February 2022

215 Ministry of Defence, [Evidence Summary - The Drivers of Defence Cost Inflation](#), February 2022

216 Oral evidence taken by the Public Accounts Committee on 28 April 2025, [Q44](#) [Chief of Defence Staff]

217 [Q254](#)

allocate funding in a measured way, communicate to industry when funding is coming in and when the annual allocation is happening then “up to \$1.3 trillion in defence funding could be lost”.²¹⁸

91. When we raised this with the MOD, the then Minister for Armed Forces pointed to co-ordination amongst the NATO national armaments directors to ensure that the UK demand signal is co-ordinated with Allies rather than multiple countries trying to buy the same thing at the same time.²¹⁹ We were told that the solution was to undertake acquisition reform (including pulling through innovative technology at pace); to improve financial structures and attract investment; and to match “supply growth with demand growth” by strengthening the demand signal (through commitments in the SDR, the DIS and the Defence Investment Plan).²²⁰ It is too early to tell whether these measures will suffice—for instance, it is clear that demand signals will not exist until the Defence Investment Plan is published. This is resulting in “a say/do gap between rhetoric and the continued lack of MoD spend”.²²¹

92. **CONCLUSION**

The evidence is that readiness is suffering because of in-year pressures on budgets at a crucial time of preparation to meet potential conflict. It is vital that the additional funds allocated to defence by the Government do not get swallowed by defence inflation. Both we and the Government recognise the importance of public support (and sacrifice) for the difficult choices which must be made to finance the defence posture required by the current threat. Any money wasted due to an inability to increase capacity will have a significant impact on public opinion.

93. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should measure, benchmark and publish the capacity of the defence industrial base, reporting actual numbers and percentage increases to Parliament on an annual basis as part of its resilience reporting.

Defence Finance

94. Throughout the inquiry we have heard of problems around the financing of the defence industry. They have ranged from firms’ access to payments systems, such as setting up bank accounts, their ability to borrow and

218 [Q242](#)

219 [Q343](#)

220 [Q338–9](#)

221 Financial Times, [Defence companies sound warning to the UK](#), 9 October 2025

their ability to fund via issuing equity.²²² Not all of these issues are defence industrial sector specific: for instance, the Treasury Committee in 2023 acknowledged that many UK businesses attempting to grow “struggle to access the capital necessary for them to progress to the next level”²²³ and found in 2024 that “2.7% of accounts held by small businesses have been closed by their banks” in the previous year.²²⁴ However, both we and the Government recognise the ongoing impact these problems have had on the defence industrial base.²²⁵

95. Alongside the evidence which we have received, there have been numerous reports published during the period of our inquiry which have examined the issues within defence financing, their causes and potential policy levers.²²⁶ We took evidence on several policy proposals and heard that the scale of the issue was such that it required both broad and urgent interventions.²²⁷ In particular, we examined the proposed Defence, Security and Resilience Bank (a multilateral funding institution designed to support NATO countries and their allies in funding defence projects), which the then Minister for Armed Forces told us was “one of many initiatives in a space that we are quite excited about ... We need to reduce the options to the ones that can deliver the most and be supported as much as possible on a multinational basis.”²²⁸ However, the Treasury announced in September that the “DSRB proposals are not backed by the UK government”²²⁹ without identifying any other preferred solutions.
96. In the past, at the extreme, when the market no longer provided the required services to vital sectors of industry, the State has had to provide an alternative. We saw this with Huntingdon Life Sciences when, in 2001, the Government provided banking services to avoid it being driven out of business by animal rights protesters.²³⁰ In 2012, the then Government set up the Green Investment Bank to encourage private investment into the green economy. The Bank was later sold in order to reduce public debt but in the

222 [Q47](#); [Q54](#); [Q237](#); [Q238](#)

223 Treasury Committee, Nineteenth Report of Session 2022–23, [Venture Capital](#), HC 134

224 Treasury Committee, [New de-banking figures show more than 140,000 business accounts closed by major banks](#), 27 February 2024

225 [Q357](#)

226 The CityUK & ADS, [Finance and investment for UK defence: A TheCityUK and ADS Group joint position paper](#), May 2025; Alex Baker MP and Luke Charters MP, [Rewiring British Defence Financing](#), June 2025; Oliver Wyman & the CBI [Defence & Economic Growth Taskforce Report](#), July 2025

227 [Q261–278](#)

228 [Q344](#)

229 Reuters, [Britain rules out backing for global defence bank](#), 4 September 2025

230 BBC News, [Government lifeline for lab test firm](#) 2 July 2001; [Huntingdon Life Sciences](#), HCWS601, 20 July 2001

years it was operational, it had attracted £8.6 billion of private capital for the £3.4 billion it invested.²³¹ It continues to make profits for its private owners following the sale.²³²

97. Both the SDR and the National Security Strategy called for an examination of new funding models in relation to defence financing.²³³ The 2025 National Security Strategy suggested that the Government were “increasing investment in priority sectors through a new National Wealth Fund (NWF) investment for defence companies”,²³⁴ however, when subsequently questioned by the Treasury Committee, the then CEO of the National Wealth Fund (which can already fund dual-use technology projects) told the Committee that he saw no benefit in including defence²³⁵ as a strategic priority area.²³⁶ The National Security Strategy also announced that the Government was scaling up the National Security Strategic Investment Fund but this focuses on “early-stage dual-use technology ecosystem” rather than all of defence.²³⁷
98. The Government told us that the Defence Finance and Investment Strategy (DFIS) will be published by March 2026. It will examine “the entire spectrum of defence companies, from start-ups through to primes, and provide recommendations to the Defence Secretary on how barriers to investment in defence can be removed while making the sector more attractive for private investment, including venture capital, private equity and pension funds.” The DFIS will be reviewed throughout its development by the Defence Investors’ Advisory Group.²³⁸

231 Public Accounts Committee, Twenty-Fifth Report of Session 2017–19, [The sale of the Green Investment Bank](#), HC 468

232 The Sunday Times, [Green Investment Bank sold by government sees profits surge for new owners](#), 2 January 2022

233 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025; Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

234 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

235 Alongside clean energy, digital tech, advanced manufacturing and transport.

236 Oral evidence taken by the Treasury Committee on 1 July 2025, [Q209](#) [CEO of the National Wealth Fund]

237 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

238 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0032](#)]

99. CONCLUSION

Access to finance for defence industry is a significant issue as evidenced by the numerous publications and policy proposals from this year alone. We are frustrated that, given widespread recognition of the issue, no proposed solutions are likely to emerge before March 2026, with implementation likely to take much longer. The wider issues which face defence financing appear to be both myriad and complex. But Government ought to be able to identify which of these problems are specific to defence industry as opposed to resulting from wider systemic failings.

100. RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government uses the Defence Finance and Investment Strategy to set out the data it holds and the conclusions it has drawn alongside its approach to resolving the issues with each type of funding difficulty. In the strategy the Government will need to set out how much state intervention it is willing to commit to and for how long. It should accompany the strategy with a timetabled implementation plan, detailing which Department is responsible for each action. As a minimum, the Government ought urgently to create a method of payments services provision in areas where no market participants are willing to provide their services. However, we recommend the Government rapidly conclude and publish its assessment of the viability of creating a defence-specific fund within the British Business Bank and also explore the potential to create other mechanisms. Furthermore, the Government should commit to making the Defence Investors' Advisory Group available to give evidence to Parliament—whether that be to us, to the Treasury Committee, the Business and Trade Committee or a joint session—once the strategy is published.

Industrial resilience

- 101.** The SDR, the 2025 National Security Strategy and the Defence Industrial Strategy all recognise the importance of the resilience of the defence industrial base. The National Security Strategy highlights the breadth of work that needs to take place to ensure its resilience, expanding it from its traditional sphere to include “academia, dual-use civilian-military companies, financial services, technologists and trade unions”. It also recognises that to ensure resilience, partnerships with industry, private finance and like-minded states are vital.²³⁹ Both the National Security Strategy and the Cabinet Office’s Resilience Action Plan highlighted the

²³⁹ Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

Government's Industrial, Trade and Critical Minerals strategies as well as the establishment of a "Supply Chain Centre" as being part of this work. In addition, the Resilience Action Plan highlighted the potential for legislation to be introduced which might allow the Government to intervene in private companies should national security or an emergency require it to act at pace.²⁴⁰

102. The Defence Industrial Strategy lists "a resilient UK industrial base" as one of its priority outcomes, with the Government's vision being that "the defence industry is protected and resilient to malign activity; resilient to supply chain shock and disruption; able to adapt and surge to meet emerging priorities and demand; and underpins and enables operational independence".²⁴¹ The DIS states that the Government will take measures to "strengthen the resilience and prosperity of our thriving UK industrial base, assure our critical supply chains, champion innovation at wartime pace, and put in place the plans and powers required to surge our capacity as a government-industry partnership, to ensure we are able to meet any future threat at any time", complementing the actions being taken under the Resilience Action Plan to increase resilience in "Critical National Infrastructure and supply chains".²⁴² These measures are:

- The National Armaments Director Group will be responsible for defence industrial resilience, which will be delivered through collaboration with industry—engaging with those in defence and adjacent industries to identify barriers to scaling and vulnerabilities, holding regular wargames with industry and incorporating the lessons across MOD policies, activities and plans.
- The MOD will invest "to maintain the production, innovation, skills and investment levels needed to lay the industrial foundation for production to be scaled up at speed if needed", reform regulations where possible to lessen administrative burden and explore legislative options used by allies such as the US and France to leverage industrial bases in times of crisis.
- The MOD will increase its oversight of the supply chain and share best practice with allies and partners "including through greater international involvement in wargaming and planning exercises, and ongoing alignment of strategy". The Defence Supply Chain Capability Programme will improve understanding and management of the end-to-end defence supply chain.

240 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

241 Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

242 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

- The MOD will work on assuring supply of critical materials through “reshoring, nearshoring and friendshoring opportunities for critical materials’ processing” and improving “critical mineral recovery and reclamation” processes within the UK.
- The MOD will use defence procurement to prioritise UK-based businesses, social value and offsets in order to create resilience in defence supply chains.
- The MOD will utilise the CNI mapping project carried out under the Resilience Action Plan to identify risks to key suppliers and improve awareness and management of risks.
- The MOD is “further developing” its existing capacity “to identify and counter a wider range of economic security threats” such as the utilisation by adversarial nations of “research collaboration, employment of defence and technical experts from the UK, procurement, exports, and the use of business partnerships and technical support contracts that include the transfer of specialist defence knowledge” to “harvest critical technologies, gain access to pioneering innovation and R&D efforts, access or influence our CNI and create supply chain dependencies leaving us exposed to disruption”.
- The MOD will continue to deliver nuclear deterrence (through building Dreadnought, maintaining Vanguard and upgrading capabilities when required) and remove barriers to productivity across the defence nuclear enterprise.

Disruption from protest and sabotage

- 103.** The Defence Industrial Strategy contains a number of measures specifically to protect against malign activity.²⁴³ However, as part of ensuring the defence industrial base is resilient, it also needs to be protected from direct (as opposed to supply chain or essential service) disruption. There have been a number of attacks by protest groups against defence manufacturers and UK Armed Forces installations, most notably the 20 June 2025 penetration of RAF Brize Norton by Palestine Action which resulted in damage to RAF Voyager aircraft. The MOD has said “[n]ot only was this action epically stupid; it was a direct attack on our national security.”²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Including strengthen supply chain data and enhance resilience; build resilience of Critical Raw Materials for UK defence; promote resilience through defence procurement; collaboratively manage security and resilience risks to the defence industry (which covers reliance on essential services and critical national infrastructure); and assure economic security in the defence sector. See Ministry of Defence, [Defence Industrial Strategy: Making Defence an Engine for Growth](#), Cm 1388, 8 September 2025

²⁴⁴ HC Deb, 23 June 2025, [col. 884](#); [col.895](#)

The MOD has improved security at key sites²⁴⁵ but given that protests and sabotage have disrupted defence production facilities,²⁴⁶ there have been convictions for the sabotage of businesses shipping supplies to Ukraine²⁴⁷ and MI5 have warned that Russia “is on a sustained mission to generate mayhem on British and European streets: we’ve seen arson, sabotage and more”,²⁴⁸ this is clearly a growing threat. The Secretary of State told us that there is a review ongoing examining “the vulnerabilities and asking what sort of assurance we would need in place to reduce those vulnerabilities and the risks, and then the specific governance questions”.²⁴⁹ However, the responsibility for intelligence collection, assessment of the likelihood of attack and investigation of such activities lies outside of the MOD’s responsibilities—the then Minister for Armed Forces told the House that “conversations between the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office, police forces and those in our defence supply chain happen regularly” to discuss developments and concerns.²⁵⁰

104. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome cross-Government work on industrial resilience which we view as area of increasing importance. The measures proposed have the potential to strengthen the defence (and wider UK) industrial base if implemented. However, we are disappointed that the Defence Industrial Strategy failed to recognise and address the threat of disruption from protest and sabotage.

245 [MOD Security Review](#), HCWS913, 8 September 2025

246 Financial Times, [Protests should be banned near UK defence and energy sites, review concludes](#), 9 May 2024

247 BBC News, [Three men found guilty of Wagner Group-linked arson attack in London](#), 8 July 2025

248 MI5 - The Security Service, [Director General Ken McCallum gives latest threat update](#), 8 October 2024

249 Oral evidence taken on 2 July 2025, [Q73](#) [Secretary of State for Defence]

250 HC Deb, 23 June 2025, [col. 895](#)

4 Defending the homeland

- 105.** The June 2025 National Security Strategy warned that the UK is “in an era in which we face confrontation with those who are threatening our security” and is “directly threatened by hostile activities including assassination, intimidation, espionage, sabotage, cyber attacks and other forms of democratic interference”. It also pointed to the importance of economic security, highlighting that economic coercion “will become more common as other states weaponise trade or use export controls and supply chain dependencies to gain advantage.”²⁵¹ It went on to note that “critical national infrastructure—including undersea cables, energy pipelines, transportation and logistics hubs—will continue to be a target” and that it could “become more difficult to identify hostile state activity as they make use of terrorist and criminal groups as their proxies”.²⁵² As we highlighted in our Defence in the Grey Zone Report, the use of proxies (and therefore the difficulty of attribution) makes such attacks “more difficult to deter” and also makes it challenging to determine an adequate and appropriate response.²⁵³

Resilience

Homeland defence

- 106.** As a member of NATO, the UK is required to deter and defend attacks on the UK homeland—both grey zone attacks²⁵⁴ and acts of war. Strong home defence would also ensure the UK is able to engage in conflict on the European continent under NATO command. The UK further has responsibility for the defence of its 14 Overseas Territories²⁵⁵ which the Government say

251 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

252 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

253 Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2024–25, [Defence in the Grey Zone](#), HC 405, para 9

254 The role of the military in defending and deterring grey zone (attacks below the threshold of active conflict) is covered in: Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2024–25, [Defence in the Grey Zone](#), HC 405.

255 FCDO, [The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability](#), Cm 8374, November 2012

“provide the UK and our allies with strategically-located bases which support a wide range of security capabilities.”²⁵⁶ Article 3 of the NATO Treaty states that:

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.²⁵⁷

However, doubts exist about the UK’s ability to do so. Professor Peter Roberts of Exeter University told us that the UK is “very much reliant on NATO to do almost everything with regard to our protection, which includes fielding a credible military force”.²⁵⁸ Dr Robert Johnson of Oxford University (and formerly the head of the Secretary of State’s Office for Net Assessment in the Ministry of Defence) told us that the UK would struggle to deal with: a sub-threshold series of crises; a minor conflict involving a European Ally; or a full Article 5 conflict. He went on to explain that whilst the Government could likely eventually manage the first scenario, for the latter two, the UK does “not have the capabilities that we require, so we need to start thinking about our national resilience.”²⁵⁹ This is reflected in the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) which seeks to set out “the deep reform needed to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad—now and for the years to come.”²⁶⁰

- 107.** In July 2025 the then Minister for the Armed Forces told us that “article 3 has not been upheld in the way that we would like it to be ... we have been very clear that we are not satisfied with article 3 in the UK”.²⁶¹ This is recognised in the SDR’s sixth chapter entitled ‘Home Defence and Resilience: A Whole-of-Society Approach’. It stated that the Government must:

256 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

257 NATO, [The North Atlantic Treaty](#), 4 April 1949

258 [Q165](#)

259 [Q177](#)

260 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

261 [Q308-9](#)

Build national resilience to threats below and above the threshold of an armed attack through a concerted, collective effort involving—among others—industry, the finance sector, civil society, academia, education, and communities.

Increase national warfighting readiness so that, if needed, the UK can transition to, scale for, and sustain a war against a ‘peer’ adversary—an obligation to NATO under Article III of the Washington Treaty.²⁶²

- 108.** NATO relies on Article 3 national plans (sometimes referred to as a national defence plan or a war book) which set out what the nation expects to need for defence and therefore what that nation can provide to the wider NATO effort, including the frontline. These requirements are extrapolated upwards in order to form NATO’s regional plans which assign national roles and capabilities to the defence of Europe in the event of a crisis or war.²⁶³ However, Sky News reported in April 2024 that the UK had no such plan.²⁶⁴ Dr Robert Johnson explained that:

Preparation, including national mobilisation plans and a ‘war book’ for resilience crises is essential. Such measures at home make the UK more useful to NATO as a deployable force.²⁶⁵

He recounted how, whilst he was in post in the MOD, the Department had overseen a cross-departmental wargame which had highlighted a number of issues. The Cabinet Office (the Department in charge of creating the plan) had committed to providing a national plan by November 2024.²⁶⁶

- 109.** The MOD told us (in January 2025) that the “Government is currently reviewing its approach to national resilience across the range of risks that the UK faces” before going on to note that the (Cabinet Office-led) Home Defence Programme “brings together a cross-government plan for our security, preparedness, and resilience as a nation to deter threats to and defend the UK homeland” and will meet “the UK’s obligations under Article 3 of NATO’s founding treaty.”²⁶⁷
- 110.** The SDR and National Security Strategy (both published in June 2025) and the Resilience Action Plan (published in July 2025) all refer to the Home Defence Programme as a future endeavour, with the SDR recommending the MOD ensure that “plans made under the Home Defence Programme meet

262 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

263 [Q12](#); Defence Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2022–23, [Special Relationships? US, UK and NATO](#), HC 184, para 54–5

264 Sky News, [Is the UK preparing for war amid threats of conflict?](#), 3 April 2024

265 Dr Robert Johnson [[UKCES0030](#)]

266 [Q194](#)

267 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0028](#)]

Defence's needs in the event of escalation to war, including mobilisation of Reserves and industry, and ensuring Defence has ready access to private-sector infrastructure for operations."²⁶⁸ The MOD has told us that it is working with the Cabinet Office to ensure that the defence part and the civilian part of the plan are aligned, describing it as "an evolving and enduring programme of work".²⁶⁹

- 111.** It is difficult for us to assess progress as the Home Defence Programme is "internal-to-government"²⁷⁰ meaning that it will not be published. The decision not to communicate its intent and contents beyond Government suggests that it does not treat the public, industry or civil society as partners in delivering outcomes, despite the acknowledgement by the Government in the Resilience Action Plan that "government cannot do it alone. Resilience has to be a shared responsibility between individuals, communities, businesses, local, devolved, and national government, and public services across the UK."²⁷¹ Dr Robert Johnson criticised the decision not to share information with the public, suggesting that there ought to be a public-facing document alongside any classified plans.²⁷²

Legislation

- 112.** The 2025 National Security Strategy recognised "the vital importance of long-term actions to build national resilience against external shocks or threats", emphasising that this meant reducing reliance on others and "ensuring our supply chains, energy security and access to critical goods can be maintained even in times of crisis".²⁷³ It pointed to the (then forthcoming) Resilience Action Plan and the Home Defence Programme as being parts of this work, with the latter "focus[ing] on the protection of critical national infrastructure and countering sabotage during a crisis (potentially modelled on the Reserves)".²⁷⁴
- 113.** The SDR recommended the introduction of a 'Defence Readiness Bill' as a central plank of Government efforts to build national resilience. This Bill would give the Government "powers in reserve to respond effectively in the event of escalation towards a war involving the UK or its allies" and would facilitate external scrutiny of the UK's ability to defend itself. In

268 Ministry of Defence, [The Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad](#), 2 June 2025

269 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0032](#)]

270 PQ [366 5](#)

271 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

272 [Q201](#)

273 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

274 Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#), Cm 1338, 24 June 2025

written evidence, the then Minister for the Armed Forces told us that such a Bill could be utilised to improve readiness for crisis and conflict across the whole of Government, rather than just Defence. He said that the key requirements and measures had not yet been fully identified by Government. The timetable for the Bill's introduction to Parliament cannot be established until this work has been completed.²⁷⁵

- 114.** It remains unclear exactly what legislation the Government intends to bring forward in support of resilience and readiness, and more specifically, the scope and purpose of this legislation would be. While the then Minister referred to the Bill as being the vehicle for cross-Government efforts, neither the National Security Strategy nor the Resilience Action Plan make any reference to the 'Defence Readiness Bill'—although the Resilience Action Plan does cite the need for legislation to allow the Government to intervene to protect the defence supply chain. It appears that the then Minister for the Armed Forces²⁷⁶ views the Defence Readiness Bill as being the vehicle for the legislation proposed in the Resilience Action Plan given his answer to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy in June 2025²⁷⁷ and the written evidence we received after his appearance in July which states the Bill:

could include measures to improve the preparedness of key industries, better protect our Critical National Infrastructure and support the mobilisation of wider Defence, including industry reserves. We think such an updated legislative framework will contribute to deterrence as a whole.²⁷⁸

However, it is not possible to determine whether the proposed legislation referred to in the SDR (the Defence Readiness Bill) and the proposed legislation referred to in the Resilience Action Plan are one and the same. Given that the Resilience Action Plan was published a month after the SDR, its failure to cite the conclusions and timetable of the SDR seems a missed opportunity to demonstrate a cross-Government approach.

275 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0032](#)]

276 Following the September reshuffle, the Minister is now Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry with the Defence Readiness Bill listed as one of his areas of responsibilities.

277 Oral evidence taken by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy on 30 June, [Q64](#) [Minister for Armed Forces]

278 Ministry of Defence [[UKCES0032](#)]

Engagement with the public

- 115.** The UK public is a vital part of any response to a crisis, emergency or conflict. Prior to the publication of the Resilience Action Plan, Dr Robert Johnson shared his scepticism about the efficacy of the Government enablers of resilience. Pointing to the Emergency Alert phone system and the Government ‘Prepare’ website,²⁷⁹ he noted that:

there is a website page dedicated to what the public should do in the event of an emergency. The problem there is that, in the event of an emergency, the first thing that you are probably going to lose is your electricity and, therefore, I suspect, your ability to read a website.²⁸⁰

- 116.** The Resilience Action Plan set out the Government’s strategic approach to resilience: continuously assessing how resilient the UK is, enabling the whole of society to take action to increase their resilience, and strengthening the core public sector resilience system. It emphasised that resilience is a whole-of-society endeavour and acknowledged that delivering resilience “will require a profound cultural and behavioural shift and needs to be informed by robust ... evidence” with Government clear on what it “is asking of different groups and how it will enable them to respond”. It expects to adopt a whole-of-society approach through: asking the public to prepare for emergencies using the Gov.uk/prepare website and emergency alert system; integrating the service offer from voluntary, community and faith services into planning; improving the resilience of critical national infrastructure; working with the private sector to ensure that they have the tools for risk and resilience planning; and adopting a whole-of-society approach to training, exercising and governance.²⁸¹
- 117.** The importance of a whole-of-society approach was emphasised in the SDR which welcomed the Prime Minister’s launch of a national conversation on defence and security which we addressed earlier in this Report. Dr Robert Johnson pointed to the UK approach to first aid as providing a model which could be followed:

we have wonderful voluntary services such as the Red Cross and St John Ambulance. Why not do the same thing for a wider resilience programme in the UK? It gives people confidence, and then you do not have the panic. You have this sense of national purpose and collective responsibility, and a degree of wanting to volunteer to do more.²⁸²

279 Cabinet Office, [Prepare](#), gov.uk (accessed 12 November 2025)

280 [Q194](#)

281 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

282 [Q202](#)

This approach is borne out by the experience during the Covid-19 pandemic—the Resilience Action Plan cites the figure that within “24 hours of a governmental call for citizens to join the NHS volunteers, 500,000 people had signed up”.²⁸³

Box 2: The Finnish approach to societal resilience

When we visited Finland, we examined their approach to societal resilience. Their ‘Security Strategy for Society’ covers the role of the authorities, the business community, civil organisations and citizens. The pillars of the strategy are: psychological resilience; leadership; international and EU activities; defence capabilities; internal security; economy, infrastructure and security of supply; and the functional capacity of the population and services. Twice a year, Finnish defence forces organise local exercises with the reserves from the region and local authorities participating to test responses to crises (the example given to us was an issue with the local water supply). In addition, National Defence Courses are run 4 times a year and last just under 4 weeks. Attendees come from Government, local authorities, elected representatives, industry and NGOs. Upon graduation, attendees are presented with a badge identifying them as a part of societal resilience. The Finnish Security Committee consists of the key Ministers and officials who are responsible for the comprehensive security model (which coheres the whole of society approach to preparedness). Furthermore the Finnish maintain their bunker network allowing shelter for 4.4 million people in the event of attack.

Cross-Government working and accountability

- 118.** Dr Robert Johnson told us there appeared to be a lack of clear responsibility (and therefore accountability) in relation to responding to crises or emergencies.²⁸⁴ When we asked the then Minister for Armed Forces who was responsible, he told us it was the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster but clarified that “how we meet and improve homeland defence work is not just an MOD job ... [it] has to be all Departments stepping up and doing so in a co-ordinated fashion, and that is where the Cabinet Office leads”.²⁸⁵ On the day that the then Minister for the Armed Forces appeared before us, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was giving a statement to the House on the Resilience Action Plan. The then Minister for the Armed Forces

283 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

284 [Q194](#)

285 [Q310](#); [Q312](#)

had not been briefed on the statement and was unaware of what it would cover—when he protested that he had been preparing for his appearance for this inquiry, it was pointed out that the Cabinet Office were likely to have known the contents of the Resilience Action Plan far enough in advance to engage him. The Resilience Action Plan states that the Government will:

publish Lead Government Department Expectations, setting out the role of Cabinet Office and other UK government departments in planning, preparing, responding to and recovering for emergencies, including whole-system risks It will set clear roles, responsibilities and articulate what ‘good’ looks like. ... LGDs will be required to explain how they are managing risks and meeting their responsibilities in their Annual Report and Accounts.²⁸⁶

119. It also contains a commitment to make “an annual statement to Parliament on risk and resilience to engage parliamentarians in the overview of the current risk picture, performance on resilience and the current state of preparedness and what the UK government will do to respond”.²⁸⁷ This contrasts strongly with the decision to make the Home Defence Programme “internal-to-government”.²⁸⁸ When it was suggested that the failure to brief the then Armed Forces Minister on the Resilience Action Plan was evidence of a lack of joined up approach, the Minister told us that to make the system work, “you need both to have the central leadership and to have each part of the system taking responsibility and to be trusted to deliver its part of that resilience framework.”²⁸⁹

120. In our ‘Defence in the Grey Zone’ Report, we determined that a lack of cross-Government coordination undermined homeland resilience efforts and there should be a single minister in charge. We recommended a dedicated a Homeland Security Minister be appointed.²⁹⁰ In its response, the Government argued that:

the Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister and Security Minister remain suitable leads for these matters and that this is the most efficient for delivery and coordination of national preparedness.²⁹¹

However, this Report has raised concerns about areas where cross-government working appears to be lacking, most notably on engagement with the public (including the lack of central direction for the ‘national conversation’) and the Defence Readiness Bill, neither of which were

286 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

287 Cabinet Office, [UK Government Resilience Action Plan](#), 8 July 2025

288 [PQ 366 5](#)

289 [Q315](#)

290 Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2024–25, [Defence in the Grey Zone](#), HC 405

291 Defence Committee, Fifth Special Report of Session 2024–26, [Defence in the Grey Zone: Government Response](#), HC 1326

mentioned in the Cabinet Office-produced National Security Strategy and Resilience Action Plan. The lack of cohesion on matters of fundamental national importance in three Government documents published within 4 weeks of one another, addressing the same issue but without clear alignment, raises concerns and suggests that there is potentially a lack of central direction.

121. CONCLUSION

We question the Ministry of Defence’s ability to protect the UK and the Overseas Territories from crisis or conflict. This means the UK is not fulfilling its Article 3 responsibilities—a fact recognised by Government. Despite this recognition from Government (which has pledged to be ‘NATO First’), measures to remediate seem to be moving at a glacial pace—we are deeply concerned by reports that the UK has no Article 3 national plan and that the work on the Home Defence Programme is still ongoing, a year after it was originally due to be complete.

122. CONCLUSION

We will ensure that our future examination of the thinking on capability and infrastructure requirements and the resultant force structure within the Defence Investment Plan will include scrutiny of the implications for defence of the UK and Overseas Territories. In addition, we will seek to establish how the decisions taken within the Defence Investment Plan contribute to the Home Defence Programme and the UK meeting its Article 3 commitments.

123. CONCLUSION

Cross-government working on homeland defence and resilience is nowhere near where it needs to be. The Government has said repeatedly that we are in an era of new threat, yet decision-making is slow and opaque.

124. CONCLUSION

The Cabinet Office’s leadership in this area appears to be inward focused rather than engaging with other Government departments and wider society. What is required is a clear plan and consistent messaging with well-defined leadership responsibilities—resilience and readiness are not an internal government matter; they require whole of society engagement.

125.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government produce a public timetable on the generation of the Home Defence Programme and that briefings (at whatever classification is required) are offered to the Select Committees scrutinising the Government departments with responsibilities under the plan.

126.

RECOMMENDATION

We reiterate our previous recommendation for the creation of a Minister of Homeland Security who should be responsible for delivery of the Home Defence Programme alongside the Resilience Action Plan and a public engagement strategy.

127.

RECOMMENDATION

We welcome the proposal of a Defence Readiness Bill. However, the Government has not yet determined what specific measures it wishes to include in the Bill, let alone written it. This should be agreed within Government and legislation published as soon as possible.

128.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should set out its timetable with key milestones for the defence readiness legislation in its response to this report, including its approach to pre-legislative scrutiny, and ensure that it has a strategy for engagement with Parliament and the UK public. Prior to the introduction of the legislation, we recommend that the Minister responsible for the Bill (the Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry) implement a regular programme of statements in the House with updates on the efforts to improve readiness and resilience and the progress of the legislation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction and context

1. The Government should ensure that it accelerates and further deepens defence and security cooperation with the EU and European partners, particularly France, on the threat posed by Russia and the countries that enable it, notably China. As a nuclear power, it is incumbent upon the UK to lead discussions within Europe on forming a coherent response. (Recommendation, Paragraph 7)
2. Europe is over-reliant on US defence capabilities. Despite indications from successive US Presidents that Europe needs to step up, European NATO members have failed to invest in key strategic enablers. (Conclusion, Paragraph 14)
3. The US needs to see European investment in defence capabilities for there to be any chance of an orderly transition of responsibilities. The Government should assess where the UK can lead in terms of replacing US capabilities in the event of them being withdrawn and establishing how it can best support EU capability development programmes, particularly those referenced in 'ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030', thereby increasing the crossover between NATO and EU capability development. The Government must ensure that it plays a leading role and expends every effort to hold the NATO Alliance together. (Recommendation, Paragraph 15)
4. The public need to understand not only the necessity of defence but also their role in it. We are therefore very supportive of the concept of a national conversation on defence and recommend that the Government (and MOD in particular) seek to increase public awareness of recent attacks against the UK, including sabotage, and cyber-attacks, through regular public briefings. However, the MOD should not lead the national conversation—the responsibility for this must be personally led by the Prime Minister and held across the most senior levels of Government, recognising that this is a Cabinet-wide endeavour. In its response to this Report, the Government should set out the cross-Government measures it intends to take as part of the national conversation, including expected timeframes and responsibilities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 18)

5. We are producing this Report prior to the publication of the Defence Investment Plan and as a result without the full picture of the future force posture. We timed this inquiry on the understanding that by now there would be an indication of broad prioritisation, if not specific investment decisions—because these hard choices were not in the published SDR and have not been announced since, we cannot examine them yet: we expect to do so as soon as possible. In order for the UK to play the appropriate leading role in European security, it must address its readiness for contemporary war and start adopting new technology at scale and pace. Time is short, given the urgency of the threat and the work required to respond appropriately. (Conclusion, Paragraph 21)
6. We recommend that the Government review the Defence Industrial Plan and the forthcoming Defence Investment Plan, in light of our recommendations and conclusions in this chapter. (Recommendation, Paragraph 22)

Defending Europe in the near term

7. It is clear that the nuclear threat has increased in the recent past. The UK already declares its nuclear deterrent to the defence of NATO, the single most significant contribution it can make. Whilst we have not received sufficient evidence to recommend investing in a second sovereign delivery method for nuclear deterrence, we wish to understand why the Government dismissed this option—we recommend it set out its reasoning in detail in response to this Report. (Recommendation, Paragraph 27)
8. The Government has stated its intention to implement a NATO First approach. For this to be meaningful, it must implement SDR recommendations aimed at ensuring that the UK is a better Ally. Witnesses have highlighted a lack of mass, delays in developing promised capabilities in line with NDPP timelines, and a failure by the UK to meet its Article 3 commitments. (Conclusion, Paragraph 33)
9. We were concerned to hear that the UK's lack of mass is denuding its leadership in NATO. In addition, the lack of resourcing dedicated to the UK meeting its Article 3 commitments is a further failure of leadership. We recommend that the Government addresses these criticisms in detail in its response to this report, setting out the actions it is taking to resolve these issues with a timeline for implementation. (Recommendation, Paragraph 34)
10. The Government should set out its plan for implementing the SDR. We recommend that the Government publishes an annual update on its implementation of the SDR commitments. In addition, we will continue to

seek regular classified updates on its progress against those commitments related to NATO and how it is improving the offer to personnel deployed to NATO. (Recommendation, Paragraph 35)

11. The lack of clarity about the Government's approach to Integrated Air and Missile Defence, given the absence of European IAMD capability, is an area of critical importance that requires urgent action. (Recommendation, Paragraph 42)
12. The Government should provide the Committee with a briefing on the Strategic Effect Cycle. (Recommendation, Paragraph 46)
13. It is not always clear how the UK's many minilateral and bilateral defence relationships feed into the Government's broader strategy or if the Department and Ministers have an assessment of their relative prioritisation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 47)
14. If certain relationships are vital to achieving Government goals then the Government should ensure that there is sufficient political attention and resourcing for these relationships. Given the calls on resources, we recommend the Government ensure it assesses the impact and outcomes of current structures and agreements before starting new rounds of negotiations. (Recommendation, Paragraph 48)
15. The UK's role as a framework nation in JEF means that it has to ensure it is leading both politically and militarily including by ensuring that it has the capabilities required for exercises and operations in the High North and Polar regions. The UK must ensure that the JEF is able to respond at pace and protect its member nations (and in particular their critical national infrastructure installations) given the increasing threat posed in the High North and the Baltic Sea. We intend to examine the Defence Investment Plan for the inclusion of capabilities which would facilitate military tasks in northern Europe. (Conclusion, Paragraph 52)
16. The UK's security and defence partnership with the EU is a welcome recognition of the importance of both parties to the defence of Europe. At present, the partnership is somewhat aspirational, awaiting the outcome of negotiations on a Framework Participation Agreement; access to SAFE; and movement on the UK's Administrative Arrangement to join the PESCO Military Mobility project. (Conclusion, Paragraph 61)
17. It is vital that British defence industry is not sidelined or excluded from working with their European counterparts—that will be the key measure (in relation to defence) of success when assessing the Government's relationship with the EU. The Government will need to

ensure that its ongoing defence relationship with the EU produces benefits which are demonstrable and adequately explained to the UK public. (Recommendation, Paragraph 62)

18. The UK Government has endorsed greater EU-NATO working but should now identify specific measures through which it could best support the improvement of the relationship between the EU and NATO. This could include making it a discussion point in engagements with NATO and EU leaders and developing new ways of working (such as the sharing of classified information) with the European Commission that could potentially be adopted by NATO if successful. (Recommendation, Paragraph 66)

Reforming the UK defence industrial base

19. The defence industrial base has been subject to numerous reviews, plans and strategies, all of which have identified recommendations. However, many of those have only been partially implemented. Whilst the Government appears to be committed to solving some of the most intractable issues, it is too early at this point to judge the progress of these measures let alone their effectiveness. (Conclusion, Paragraph 84)
20. There is widespread recognition of the need to address the issues facing defence industry. We welcome the expansion of the defence industrial base and the engagement of HM Treasury and the Department for Business and Trade in finding solutions. However, Ministers will need to closely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the proposed policies, assisted by our scrutiny. This is an area of vital importance—delivery must be judged by outcomes, not simply changes to processes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 85)
21. The National Armaments Director is a key post for implementation of policy changes in both the SDR and the Defence Industrial Strategy. As such, we believe that the Department ought to prioritise his giving evidence to Parliament. We recommend that the Government ensure that he appears before us as soon as possible. (Recommendation, Paragraph 86)
22. The long-standing issues with security vetting must be addressed. In response to this Report we expect the Government to set out how it intends to reduce waiting times. In addition, we recommend that the Government explore having a single clearance process used across all Government departments and agencies. Furthermore, we suggest that the Government considers adapting its regional testing and evaluation ranges into hubs so that cleared individuals without access to suitable certified premises can use these hubs to take part in classified procurement, as well as for testing and evaluation. (Recommendation, Paragraph 88)

- 23.** The evidence is that readiness is suffering because of in-year pressures on budgets at a crucial time of preparation to meet potential conflict. It is vital that the additional funds allocated to defence by the Government do not get swallowed by defence inflation. Both we and the Government recognise the importance of public support (and sacrifice) for the difficult choices which must be made to finance the defence posture required by the current threat. Any money wasted due to an inability to increase capacity will have a significant impact on public opinion. (Conclusion, Paragraph 92)
- 24.** The Government should measure, benchmark and publish the capacity of the defence industrial base, reporting actual numbers and percentage increases to Parliament on an annual basis as part of its resilience reporting. (Recommendation, Paragraph 93)
- 25.** Access to finance for defence industry is a significant issue as evidenced by the numerous publications and policy proposals from this year alone. We are frustrated that, given widespread recognition of the issue, no proposed solutions are likely to emerge before March 2026, with implementation likely to take much longer. The wider issues which face defence financing appear to be both myriad and complex. But Government ought to be able to identify which of these problems are specific to defence industry as opposed to resulting from wider systemic failings. (Conclusion, Paragraph 99)
- 26.** We recommend that the Government uses the Defence Finance and Investment Strategy to set out the data it holds and the conclusions it has drawn alongside its approach to resolving the issues with each type of funding difficulty. In the strategy the Government will need to set out how much state intervention it is willing to commit to and for how long. It should accompany the strategy with a timetabled implementation plan, detailing which Department is responsible for each action. As a minimum, the Government ought urgently to create a method of payments services provision in areas where no market participants are willing to provide their services. However, we recommend the Government rapidly conclude and publish its assessment of the viability of creating a defence-specific fund within the British Business Bank and also explore the potential to create other mechanisms. Furthermore, the Government should commit to making the Defence Investors' Advisory Group available to give evidence to Parliament—whether that be to us, to the Treasury Committee, the Business and Trade Committee or a joint session—once the strategy is published. (Recommendation, Paragraph 100)
- 27.** We welcome cross-Government work on industrial resilience which we view as area of increasing importance. The measures proposed have the potential to strengthen the defence (and wider UK) industrial base if

implemented. However, we are disappointed that the Defence Industrial Strategy failed to recognise and address the threat of disruption from protest and sabotage. (Conclusion, Paragraph 104)

Defending the homeland

28. We question the Ministry of Defence's ability to protect the UK and the Overseas Territories from crisis or conflict. This means the UK is not fulfilling its Article 3 responsibilities—a fact recognised by Government. Despite this recognition from Government (which has pledged to be 'NATO First'), measures to remediate seem to be moving at a glacial pace—we are deeply concerned by reports that the UK has no Article 3 national plan and that the work on the Home Defence Programme is still ongoing, a year after it was originally due to be complete. (Conclusion, Paragraph 121)
29. We will ensure that our future examination of the thinking on capability and infrastructure requirements and the resultant force structure within the Defence Investment Plan will include scrutiny of the implications for defence of the UK and Overseas Territories. In addition, we will seek to establish how the decisions taken within the Defence Investment Plan contribute to the Home Defence Programme and the UK meeting its Article 3 commitments. (Conclusion, Paragraph 122)
30. Cross-government working on homeland defence and resilience is nowhere near where it needs to be. The Government has said repeatedly that we are in an era of new threat, yet decision-making is slow and opaque. (Conclusion, Paragraph 123)
31. The Cabinet Office's leadership in this area appears to be inward focused rather than engaging with other Government departments and wider society. What is required is a clear plan and consistent messaging with well-defined leadership responsibilities—resilience and readiness are not an internal government matter; they require whole of society engagement. (Conclusion, Paragraph 124)
32. We recommend that the Government produce a public timetable on the generation of the Home Defence Programme and that briefings (at whatever classification is required) are offered to the Select Committees scrutinising the Government departments with responsibilities under the plan. (Recommendation, Paragraph 125)
33. We reiterate our previous recommendation for the creation of a Minister of Homeland Security who should be responsible for delivery of the Home Defence Programme alongside the Resilience Action Plan and a public engagement strategy. (Recommendation, Paragraph 126)

- 34.** We welcome the proposal of a Defence Readiness Bill. However, the Government has not yet determined what specific measures it wishes to include in the Bill, let alone written it. This should be agreed within Government and legislation published as soon as possible.
(Recommendation, Paragraph 127)
- 35.** The Government should set out its timetable with key milestones for the defence readiness legislation in its response to this report, including its approach to pre-legislative scrutiny, and ensure that it has a strategy for engagement with Parliament and the UK public. Prior to the introduction of the legislation, we recommend that the Minister responsible for the Bill (the Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry) implement a regular programme of statements in the House with updates on the efforts to improve readiness and resilience and the progress of the legislation.
(Recommendation, Paragraph 128)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 12 November 2025

Members present

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, in the Chair

Calvin Bailey

Alex Baker

Lincoln Jopp

Emma Lewell

Jesse Norman

Ian Roome

Michelle Scrogham

Fred Thomas

Derek Twigg

UK Contribution to European Security

Draft Report (*UK Contribution to European Security*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 128 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 18 November 2025 at 10.00am.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 28 January 2025

Armida Van Rij, Senior Research Fellow & Head of Europe Programme, Chatham House; **Ed Arnold**, Senior Research Fellow for European Security, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) [Q1–31](#)

Tuesday 4 March 2025

Kevin Craven, Chief Executive, ADS; **Andrew Kinniburgh**, Director-General, Make UK Defence; **Julian David OBE**, CEO, techUK [Q32–75](#)

Tuesday 1 April 2025

Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman KCMG CBE PC FBA, Emeritus Professor of War Studies, Kings College London; **Dr Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer**, Acting President, German Marshall Fund of the US [Q76–114](#)

Tuesday 29 April 2025

Dr Rowan Allport, Deputy Director, The Human Security Centre; **Mr William Freer**, Research Fellow in National Security, Council on Geostrategy [Q115–144](#)

Professor Peter Roberts, Associate Fellow, Centre for Public Understanding of Defence and Security, University of Exeter [Q145–173](#)

Tuesday 13 May 2025

Dr Rob Johnson, Director of the Strategy, Statecraft, & Technology Research Centre, Pembroke College, University of Oxford, Former Director, Secretary of State's Office of Net Assessment and Challenge (SONAC) [Q174–204](#)

Dr. Alastair McGibbon, Head of Semiconductors, Space Forge Ltd; **Mr Ken Turley**, Former CEO, RUK Advanced System Ltd [Q205–234](#)

Tuesday 1 July 2025

Fenella McGerty, Senior Fellow for Defence Economics, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS); **Nicholas Nelson**, General Partner, Archangel VC Fund; **Rob Murray**, CEO, Defence, Security and Resilience Bank (DSRB) Development Group [Q235–278](#)

Tuesday 8 July 2025

Luke Pollard MP, Minister for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence; **Paul Wyatt**, Director General, Policy, Ministry of Defence; **Jim Carter**, Director General, Commercial and Industry, Ministry of Defence; **Air Vice-Marshal Mark Flewin**, Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff, Military Strategy, Ministry of Defence [Q279–360](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

UKCES numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	ADS Group	UKCES0027
2	AERALIS Ltd	UKCES0019
3	ATRI UAB	UKCES0001
4	Airbus	UKCES0015
5	BAE Systems	UKCES0022
6	British Chamber of Commerce EU & Belgium	UKCES0011
7	Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey	UKCES0017
8	Defence, Security and Resilience Bank (DSRB) Development Group	UKCES0031
9	Dorman, Professor Andrew (Professor of International Security, Kings College London)	UKCES0020
10	Freer, Mr William (Research Fellow, National Security, Council on Geostrategy)	UKCES0025
11	Futter, Professor Andrew (Professor of International Politics, University of Leicester)	UKCES0003
12	GE Aerospace	UKCES0024
13	Gibdock Ltd	UKCES0008
14	Human Security Centre	UKCES0002
15	Legatum Institute	UKCES0021
16	Lockheed Martin UK	UKCES0013
17	London Politica	UKCES0005
18	MBDA Systems	UKCES0016
19	Ministry of Defence	UKCES0032
20	Ministry of Defence	UKCES0028
21	Northrop Grumman UK	UKCES0010

22	Patrick, Dr Carl Stephen (Director, Centre for Underwater Acoustic Analysis)	<u>UKCES0012</u>
23	Powell, Dr Matthew (Teaching Fellow in Air Power and Strategic Studies, University of Portsmouth)	<u>UKCES0004</u>
24	RUK Advanced Systems	<u>UKCES0029</u>
25	Space Forge	<u>UKCES0007</u>
26	Spirit AeroSystems (Belfast)	<u>UKCES0014</u>
27	The Strategy, Statecraft, and Technology: Changing Character of War Centre (SST:CCT)	<u>UKCES0030</u>
28	Tossini, Mr Joao Vitor	<u>UKCES0018</u>
29	UK NATO Industrial Advisory Group Delegation	<u>UKCES0023</u>
30	Williams, MR Nicholas (Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network)	<u>UKCES0006</u>

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
5th	Defence in the Grey Zone	HC 405
4th	The Armed Forces Covenant	HC 572
3rd	The Global Combat Air Programme	HC 598
2nd	Developing AI capacity and expertise in UK defence	HC 590
1st	Service Accommodation	HC 406
5th Special	Defence in the Grey Zone: Government Response	HC 1326
4th Special	Government response to The Armed Forces Covenant report	HC 1034
3rd Special	Government response to Developing AI capacity and expertise in UK Defence	HC 812
2nd Special	The Global Combat Air Programme: Government Response	HC 799
1st Special	Service Accommodation: Government Response	HC 751