

Briefing

The Modernising Defence Programme



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For expert commentary on the issues outlined in this report please email rowan.allport@hscentre.org. We would be happy to put you in touch with a relevant expert.

Top cover image: F-35B Lightning II aircraft (MoD/Crown Copyright) (OGL)

Bottom cover image: Ajax armoured vehicle (MoD/Crown Copyright) (OGL)

Summary

- In January 2018, the Government launched the Modernising Defence Programme (MDP), a spin-off of the wider National Security Capability Review.
- The chief motivation behind the MDP is financial, with the MoD facing a budget deficit of between £10 billion and £30 billion over the next decade. This has been as a consequence of challenges with efficiency savings, the depreciation of the pound after the Brexit vote, and programme costing issues.
- Additionally, since the 2015 SDSR, there have been a number of strategic situational shifts, including an increase in the threat posed by other states, the proliferation of advanced weapons systems, the Brexit vote and the coming to power of the Trump Administration.
- The MDP is reviewing current policy in the context of the UK's domestic defence and NATO responsibilities, as well as its role as an ally to countries including the US, and its ability to lead coalitions or act alone.
- The MDP itself is split into four threads: the first examining the Operating Model for Defence; the second reviewing the MoD's business model; the third examining engagement with industry; and the fourth assessing policy and capabilities.
- The policy and capabilities workstream is the most important of the MDP threads: it will study the need for changes in the context of current threats, evaluate what military capabilities are required to manage them, and assess potential obstacles to output delivery.
- The policy review will likely focus on the need to address new and intensified challenges brought about by developments including the increasing level of threats from other states including Russia, post-Brexit UK defence priorities, the proliferation of advanced weapons systems, and the destabilisation of transnational institutions.
- Questions will need to be answered as to what future capabilities the Armed Forces should possess. Areas that may be considered for investment include anti-submarine, anti-air and armoured warfare; with new funding for anti-ballistic missile, space, AI and unmanned technology also possible.
- The backdrop to the review will be the ongoing battle over whether or not to increase the defence budget: a rise in the spending floor from 2% to 2.5% of GDP has been mooted, but the Treasury would be loathed to provide the approximate £8 billion per year required.
- Key areas to watch in the review will be the decisions on the future of the Royal Navy's amphibious landing capability and frigate numbers; the size of the Army and its future armoured vehicle and attack helicopter fleet; and the plans for future fighter and surveillance aircraft purchases.

The Modernising Defence Programme

Background

The MDP came about as a result of the need to update the defence element of the [National Security Strategy & Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#) (NSS/SDSR 2015). Originally, the intention – [announced](#) in July 2017 – was for the Cabinet Office to lead a broad (encompassing defence, the security services, counter-terrorism policing etc.) National Security Capability Review (NSCR), with Theresa May’s National Security Advisor, Sir Mark Sedwill, heading the project.

The difficulties with the defence component of the NSCR began to emerge in the autumn of 2017. Leaks from the MoD had [revealed](#) that major capability reductions were on the horizon due to budget shortfalls – with full details of three packages of cuts to the Army, Royal Navy and RAF later being [published](#) in the press. In December, Sir Mark [confirmed](#) that his review was intended to be ‘fiscally neutral’ – a situation that would make cuts unavoidable given the MoD’s financial problems and the implausibility of transferring resources from the other branches of the national security apparatus to the department.

However, given his own objections to the options presented to him, together with a negative reaction from Conservative MPs and in the media, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson was granted a request to spin out the defence element of the NSCR into the MDP – a decision [announced](#) in January 2018.

The NSCR was [published](#) in March 2018: the document contained a brief section on defence, but for the most part simply reaffirmed that the core conclusions of SDR 2015 remained sound and deferred further elaboration to the MDP.

Key issues

Finance

The chief motivator for the MDP is financial, an issue with three main components:

Difficulties with efficiency savings: The MoD’s equipment programme is dependent on efficiency savings for a significant amount of funding, but the viability of these efficiencies is questionable.

Post-Brexit vote currency depreciation: The value of the pound relative to other leading currencies has fallen since June 2016, increasing the cost of defence imports.

Poor programme costings: It remains opaque as to how the MoD has calculated some of the costs relating to its equipment and support programmes.

The 2015 NSS/SDSR committed the UK to spending at least 2% of the country’s GDP on defence, raising defence spending by 0.5% per year to 2020/21. Notionally coming off the back of this was a major pledge to buy new items of hardware – including the P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, new mechanised

infantry vehicles and upgraded Apache helicopters – with a total price tag of £24.4 billion. However, only £6.4 billion of this was new money, with the remainder having to be found through the use of £7.3 billion of contingency funding (i.e. money held back to pay for unexpected developments such as programme cost increases) from the equipment programme and a further £3.4 billion of similar money held centrally by the MoD, as well as the implementation of £7.3 billion of efficiency savings.

Since the November 2015 review, several significant financial issues have emerged. It has become apparent that delivering the required efficiencies will be extremely challenging, with a House of Commons Defence Select Committee [report](#) in December 2017 raising serious questions as to their viability. On the expenditure side, post-Brexit currency depreciation has resulted in the importing of military equipment becoming more expensive for the UK, with a January 2018 [analysis](#) from the National Audit Office (NAO) projecting that this could trigger £4.6 billion in additional costs over the next decade.¹ This has to be combined with what the May 2018 Public Accounts Committee [report](#) described as a “significant cost optimism bias” regarding the defence equipment programme – including the exclusion of a number of items from cost projections. The result is an equipment budget shortfall which the NAO estimates to be between £4.9 billion and £20.8 billion. Whilst an exact figure is impossible to determine, a total defence funding deficit of between £10 billion and £30 billion over the next decade is a frequently cited figure amongst defence commentators.

Strategic Shifts

Beyond financial issues, there have been a series of significant shifts in the strategic landscape since the publication of NSS/SDSR 2015 that justify a re-examination of the UK’s approach to defence, including:

Increasing state-based threats: Escalating aggression and assertiveness from Russia, China and North Korea’s nuclear programme, has led to state-led conflict becoming the leading defence challenge.

Rising numbers of terrorist attacks: No less than 5 terrorist attacks took place in London and Manchester during 2017.

Weapons proliferation: Whether self-constructed, illegally procured or stolen, there has been a broadening of non-state actors’ abilities to field advanced systems.

Brexit: The vote by the British public may significantly undermine the UK’s European and global influence and endanger the domestic economy.

The Trump Administration: The US government’s behaviour is currently unpredictable, and there is a risk of moves that will undermine NATO or wider international stability.

¹ The value of the pound has recovered somewhat since the April 2017 levels upon which NAO’s estimations were based, but could fall again should Brexit negotiations continue to go poorly.

The continuing aggression of Russia – most demonstrably seen in the UK through the Skripal poisoning incident – has reaffirmed the need to make defence provisions to address the threat Moscow represents both to the UK and mainland Europe. Further afield, both North Korea’s unexpectedly rapid progress with its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, together with China’s expansionism in the South China Sea, pose a risk to the global stability on which the UK depends. The Defence Secretary has [openly stated](#) that it is state-based threats, not terrorism, that the Government now considers the primary challenge.

A total of 36 people were killed in terrorist attacks in the UK last year, with Army soldiers twice deployed to support the police under Operation Temperer. All but one of these attacks was crude in nature, but the upsurge in violence was a shock, coming after over a decade of relative quiet.

The Islamic State has demonstrated that non-state actors can acquire and field complex and unconventional systems, including commercial UAVs modified for military purposes and chemical weapons. Iran has supplied ballistic missiles to Houthi rebels in Yemen that have targeted the Saudi capital. Measures are now required to counter capabilities previously only available to state actors.

The negotiations over Britain’s future outside the EU are ongoing. Assuming the UK departs as planned, NATO will become the country’s primary institutional investiture in Europe, and additional defence investment may be desirable to maximise the leverage it provides. In addition to the aforementioned currency devaluation, Brexit may have a negative impact on the wider economy that puts pressure on state expenditure – including on defence.

Finally, the unexpected November 2016 election of Donald Trump to the US presidency has undermined the established role of Washington in the world. Sympathetic to autocrats and often indifferent to allies, major questions remain over what direction the current US administration will take US foreign policy.

Themes

The MoD [states](#) that the MDP is built around three core pillars:

- the UK’s role in NATO and at home
- the UK’s role as a capable and reliable contributor to missions led by its close allies and partners, particularly the US
- the UK’s ability and willingness to act independently or lead multi-national missions

Given how broadly they can be interpreted, these pillars are – in truth – not particularly helpful in determining the direction of the review. Probably of greater utility is the specific framing of the role of the Armed Forces, with the MoD stating that they must be able to:

- operate in the full range of combat environments and across all domains (land, sea, air, space and cyber), and to respond rapidly and globally
- play a central role in an integrated, cross-government security apparatus, contributing to domestic security and resilience alongside civil authorities, and providing escalatory and de-escalatory options, crisis response, and support to global defence engagement priorities
- provide leadership as a framework nation in NATO, European formations, and coalitions, or operating independently alongside the US

Again, this is somewhat unspecific and open to interpretation, with commitments made only to broad capabilities and missions. More useful are the government statements accompanying this overview, which makes clear that in their view: “The fundamentals of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review remain sound” and that: “The central elements of the plan we set out in 2015 for [Joint Force 2025](#) remain right.” This appears to close the door on any truly major policy shifts. Again, however, much depends on how the word “fundamental” and term “central pillars” are interpreted.

The review is split into four threads:

Workstream 1 – MoD Operating Model: establishing a refreshed and clearer Operating Model for Defence, to enable better and faster decision-making and more efficient and effective delivery of defence outputs

Workstream 2 – Efficiency and business modernisation: seeking to provide confidence in the MoD’s ability to realise existing efficiency targets, and a set of options for future efficiency and business modernisation investments

Workstream 3 – Commercial and industrial approach: assessing how the MoD can improve on commercial capability and strategic supplier management

Workstream 4 – Defence policy, outputs and military capability: analysing the global security context and its implications for defence policy, the roles and tasks that are prioritised, and the opportunities or imperatives for modernising the defence workforce, military capabilities and force generation processes

It is immediately evident that the first three of the four threads are wholly or partly focused on generating further efficiencies by modifying the operations of the MoD internally and in the context of its partnership with industry and other sectors. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that further improvements can be made to how the department operates, the hand of the Treasury is also clearly reflected in the MDP’s structure.

Workstream 1

The main focus will be on updating the MoD Operating Model. The [current](#) MoD Operating Model originated in Lord Levene’s 2011 Defence Reform [report](#) and became fully operational in 2014. Amongst its most notable features were the devolution of much of the defence budget to the three services, efforts to improve accountability, and reforms to the command and leadership structure within the MoD. However, some are of the view that further changes are required to enhance efficiency, including the upskilling of key personnel and ‘recentralising’ certain elements of decision making.

Workstream 2

This examination of the MoD’s efficiency programme is in no small part the result of the aforementioned concerns over the department’s ability to meet current targets. Indeed, the MoD’s Permanent Secretary, Stephen Lovegrove, recently [told](#) an audience at RUSI that the four different efficiency programmes which the department had embarked upon meant that “dangers of double counting and confusion are apparent on a daily basis”. There will, therefore, likely be a study to examine the feasibility of current efficiency goals and an effort to restructure their delivery. In addition, the potential for future efficiencies and routes to them will be studied.

Workstream 3

The third workstream’s goal of assessing relationships with commercial suppliers will seek to improve both how the MoD handles partners in areas such as programme management, as well as ensuring that external partners work to their maximum potential. A particular area which may be addressed is reform to the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO). This body was set up in 2014 as part of an effort to refresh the regulation of single-source contracts for the provision of defence equipment and services. Whilst it is recognised as having had some success in reducing costs, only 15%-20% of single source contracts fall under its remit, despite around 50% of MoD contracting being single source. There is also likely to be an examination of potential further reforms to Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) – the MoD’s arm’s length procurement body – that has recently undergone a ‘transformation programme’ to improve performance by introducing private sector practices. Any significant decisions taken will have to be closely coordinated with wider policy sets such as the [National Shipbuilding Strategy](#), the recently revised [Defence Industrial Policy](#), and the [Combat Air Strategy](#). In the [words](#) of the Defence Secretary, the MDP will be designed to: “support the growth and competitiveness of the defence sector, helping to create and sustain jobs by transforming our partnership with industry”.

Workstream 4

The most important workstream in terms of both outcome and popular consciousness will be the examination of policy, outputs and capabilities. The first key focus will be on assessing what threats to prioritise addressing, and how to respond to them. For example:

- Against the backdrop of increasing state-based threats in Europe and Asia, will the UK continue a gentle pivot towards these threats, or will there be a radical reassessment that reduces the level of priority given to counter-terrorism?
- Given the increasing prominence of the Russian threat and a need to secure the UK's post-Brexit regional influence, how should the UK balance its defence posture between a European and global focus?
- In the context of the increasing ability of state and non-state actors to project force using capabilities including precision-guided weapons and cyber-attacks, is there a requirement for a renewed emphasis on the defence of the UK homeland?

In May this year, Sir Mark Sedwill [told](#) the House of Commons Defence Committee that a refreshed version of the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) will be published before the end of 2018. The NSRA is an intelligence-led analysis that groups the domestic and overseas risks to Britain's interests via a matrix of likelihood and impact, and plots them into three tiers. The 2015 overview was presented as:

Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorism • International military conflict • Cyber attacks • Public health • Major natural hazards • Instability overseas
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attacks and pressure on allies • Decay and failure of key institutions • CBRN attack • Weapons proliferation • Serious and organised crime • Financial crisis • Hostile foreign action
Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military attack on the UK, its bases or overseas territories • Fuel supply disruption • Radioactive or chemical release • Resource insecurity • Public disorder • Weather or other natural hazards • Environmental events

Whilst the updated NSRA will not be published ahead of the MDP's headline conclusions, the data used to compile it will be used to inform the review. Both comments from policymakers and events since 2015

can give clues as to how this assessment is likely to be modified. The shift in perceptions regarding state-based threats indicates that the risk of attacks and pressure on allies; military attacks on the UK, its bases and overseas territory; and hostile foreign action, are likely to be given greater priority. The Skripal poisoning can be considered a CBRN attack on UK territory. The EU and NATO can clearly be seen to be institutions under threat, and the current trade tariff crisis represents a risk to the global economy.

A central task of the MSP will be to examine where it is necessary to regenerate capabilities required for state-on-state warfare that have been rationalised or eliminated. Key examples include:

Anti-submarine warfare (ASW): The UK's ASW force has been drastically cut back since the end of the Cold War. At its core sits six nuclear-powered attack submarines (down from 16 nuclear and 11 conventionally powered attack submarines in 1989) 13 frigates (down from 38 in 1989) and 30 Merlin HM2 helicopters. Nine P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft are on order, but this force will replace an original 1996 plan to field 21 Nimrod MRA4s. Against this backdrop, the threat from the Russian and other submarine forces is [increasing](#).

Ground-based air defence: The UK has eliminated most of its ground-based surface-to-air missile (SAM) capability. Only the short-range Rapier and Starstreak systems are currently operational, and just a single regiment of Land Ceptor missiles is planned to be brought into service in the coming years. After decades of fighting enemies with little or no air power at their disposal, the threat to UK and allied forces from air attack has returned.

Armoured warfare: Under current plans the UK will, in future, field [only two](#) tank-equipped armoured regiments, each with 58 Challenger 2 tanks. In contrast, Russia is reorientating its land forces to undertake large-scale operations using armour and artillery-heavy formations. New generation equipment is rapidly being introduced into service by Russia's ground forces.

CBRN defence: The 2010 SDSR significantly scaled down the UK's chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence capabilities. NS/SDSR 2015 partly reversed these decisions, but the use of chemical weapons by ISIS and the Syrian government on the battlefield, as well as their utilisation in assassinations by Russia and North Korea, have raised questions as to whether current capabilities are adequate. An additional £48 million investment in a new Chemical Weapons Defence Centre has already been [announced](#).

Forward basing in Europe: SDSR 2010 announced that the British Army would be fully withdrawn from Germany by 2020. However, with Russia once again a potential adversary, this is being [reconsidered](#), with a proposal to retain equipment in Germany being studied.

Additionally, there are areas in which it may be desirable for the UK to generate new capabilities. These include:

Anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems: With the increasing proliferation of ballistic missiles to new state and non-state actors, the introduction into service of a new generation of 9K720 Iskander precision-guided ballistic missiles by Russia, and the rapid development of North Korea's nuclear ICBM capability, investment in ABM systems for the protection of deployed forces and the UK mainland may be desirable.

Unmanned vehicles: The UK has already made substantial investments in unmanned aerial vehicles and the Royal Navy recently received its first [unmanned minesweepers](#). However, action is still required to match [Russia's progress](#) with unmanned ground vehicles, and it is unclear as to whether the RAF's next fighter will be manned or unmanned.

Space warfare: In May 2018, it was [announced](#) that a Defence Space Strategy would be published this summer. Key areas of focus will include the protection of space-based assets from hostile action, and the further development of space-based capabilities to support the front-line. The recently launched RAF-supported [Carbonite-2](#) demonstrator satellite has given the UK experience in operating an Earth imaging system, and this may be further developed in future. There is also the question of whether Britain will develop a rival network to the EU's Galileo satellite navigation system.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The creation of an MoD AI lab was [announced](#) in May 2018. The facility will study AI, machine learning and data science in the context of its application to areas such as autonomous vehicles, deterrence and command decision making. Nevertheless, further substantial investment will be required to operationalise the AI Lab's output.

Cyber: Large sums have already been invested in UK-wide cyber capability – including the MoD's Joint Force Cyber Group, [Defence Cyber School](#) and planned [Cyber Security Operations Centre](#). There is ongoing debate as to whether further defence resources should be invested in this field.

Finally, there are also obstacles to the potential delivery of existing and future capabilities that will need to be addressed. These include:

Recruitment challenges: The regular services are significantly undermanned. The [latest data](#) shows that there is a 6% overall shortfall in fully trained strength. There are also 'pinch points' in critical specialisms such as engineering and intelligence suffering even greater shortfalls. These issues have been compounded by the [problems](#) with the Capita-run recruitment system that has seen many of those attempting to join up suffer extensive delays with their applications.

Armed Forces pay: As is the case amongst much of the public sector, there is considerable pressure to lift the 1% pay rise cap that has been imposed upon the Armed Forces – the Armed Forces Pay Review Body has [reportedly](#) recommended a rise of 3%. However, RUSI have stated that such a rise would cost £200 million per year. This would in turn place further pressure on the defence budget.

House of Commons Select Committee on Defence inquiry into the MDP

Last month, the Defence Select Committee published its [report](#) 'Beyond 2%: A preliminary report on the Modernising Defence Programme'. Its key observations and recommendations include:

Strategic environment: The threats facing the UK from both state and non-state actors have changed for the worse, and the MDP's conclusions must reflect this with a force structure capable of dealing with these challenges.

Financial Pressures: The MoD equipment and personnel plans laid out in SDSR 2015 were underfunded and are consequently unaffordable under current plans.

Efficiencies: The practice of relying on unachievable efficiency programmes to fund commitments must come to an end.

Capabilities:

- **Maritime:** The UK requires a greater ASW capability, should retain its amphibious landing ships, and consider the purchase of Tomahawk land attack missiles for surface ships.
- **Land:** The Army's strength should not be cut below 82,000, and efforts need to be made to support the deployability of the 'warfighting division' – including through addressing weaknesses in anti-armour and anti-air warfare capability.
- **Air:** Clarification is needed on the MoD's intention to purchase 138 F-35B aircraft, and a plan is required to address both Britain's lack of ballistic missile defences and the need to provide ground-based air defence to key facilities in the UK.
- **Cyber:** Greater consideration needs to be given to methods to neutralise threats.
- **Space:** Investment in microsatellite development should continue.

Recruitment: The MDP should seek to address the perception of the Armed Forces as a declining institution; and the MoD needs to be prepared to remove responsibility for recruitment from Capita should they fail to improve their performance.

Spending: Defence spending is too low and should be increased to 3% of GDP – a level last seen in the mid-1990s.

Additionally, a subsequent Defence Committee [report](#) into the UK's defence relationship with the US and NATO recommended a rise in defence spending – first to 2.5% of GDP, and over time to 3% of GDP.

The Defence Budget

Given the inability of the current defence budget to sustain planned programmes without major capability cuts, a potential rise in defence spending is a central point of debate. The UK MoD budget was

originally [scheduled](#) to be £36.98 billion in 2018/19,² rising to £39.6 billion by 2021/22.³ Contributions from outside the MoD budget are expected to bring the UK's defence spending total [declared](#) to NATO in 2017 (the most recent date for which forecasts are available) to £43 billion, or 2.14% of GDP.⁴

Additionally, in order to support the MoD until the MDP was complete, a further one-off payment of £800 million [was added](#) to the 2018/19 budget in April this year – £600 million of which was brought forward from the Dreadnought nuclear deterrent replacement contingency funding, and £200 million from the supplementary estimates.

Going forward, momentum appears to be gathering around calls to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP – a move that would require around £8 billion of additional annual funding. Such calls have come from:

- Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood: [speaking](#) in the House of Commons in May this year, when he stated that more than 2.5% of GDP would need to be spent on defence to cover equipment costs and pay rises
- former Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon: speaking in a House of Commons debate in March 2018, when he [called](#) for a target of spending 2.5% of GDP on defence by the end of the current parliament
- Rear Admiral Alex Burton: until recently Commander United Kingdom Maritime Forces, when he [told](#) the BBC in February 2018 that 2.5% was required for the UK to retain its status as a "credible military power"

Needless to say, money on this scale will be difficult to obtain from the Treasury – particularly as Gavin Williamson reportedly has a poor relationship with Chancellor Philip Hammond, with [a row](#) over the Treasury's unpaid flight bills to the MoD having been picked up in the press.

More recent developments have cast doubt on the possibility of new funding. The June 2018 announcement that the NHS will now receive an extra £23 billion per year by 2023 has removed much of the financial flexibility the Government possessed, with the Chancellor [reportedly](#) telling colleagues that there is no money left for other departments. This was followed by a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary that reportedly ended with Theresa May questioning the need for the UK to maintain a 'Tier One', full spectrum military. She later [refused](#) to confirm that it was her plan to sustain such a level of capability going forward. In late June, it was [reported](#) that Gavin Williamson was threatening to lead a rebellion against the Prime Minister should he not secure an additional £2 billion per year for defence – the minimum necessary to avoid capability cuts. However, it is unlikely that any new money would be announced until the Autumn Budget at the earliest.

² In cash terms - £35.878 in 2016/17 prices: all non-NATO budget data and forecasts via: Chalmers, M. 'Decision Time: The National Security Capability Review 2017–2018 and Defence'. RUSI Whitehall Report, 6 February 2018.

³ In cash terms - £37.256 Billion in 2016/17 prices.

⁴ Additional spending includes funding from the Joint Security Fund, pensions payments, etc.

While the UK already spends over 2% of its GDP on defence as per the NATO target aggressively pushed by President Trump and the recent NATO summit, [reports](#) have emerged that the US is pushing the UK to spend more. In July 2018, a [letter](#) from US Secretary of Defence James Mattis to Gavin Williamson expressing concern at the erosion of UK military power was leaked to the press.

For its part, Labour has committed to preserving the UK's 'Tier One' Armed Forces. Speaking to RUSI, Shadow Defence Secretary Nia Griffith [said](#) that Labour would welcome any spending rise, but had concerns over where the money was to come from. She also highlighted the need for spending discipline within the MoD.

What to watch

During the autumn of 2017, plans for a series of cuts were leaked to the press in a way that was designed to draw outrage from backbench MPs and the public. They included proposals to:

- withdraw the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ships HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, and substantially cut the number of Royal Marines: this [plan](#) prompted an [inquiry](#) by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee
- withdraw of up to 7 of the 13 Type 23 frigates: these vessels are at the core of the Royal Navy's ASW capability
- make substantial reductions in the authorised strength of the Army, with cuts from 82,000 to 70,000 or less being proposed: this suggestion [reportedly](#) prompted Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood to threaten to resign should the cuts be taken forward
- delays in equipment purchases, including of the F-35B fighter, Apache attack helicopters, and a variety of armoured vehicles

When the MDP reports its conclusions, it is the final verdict on these proposed capability reductions that will attract most attention. Unless more money is forthcoming, at least some of the above cuts will be unavoidable.

One of the few insights into the review's conclusions [leaked](#) so far is a possible £2-3 billion purchase of a new fleet of E-7 Wedgetail airborne early warning and control aircraft to replace the RAF's aging E-3D Sentry force. There are reports of a row brewing due to a potential decision to procure the aircraft without an open competition.

Our Subject Experts

The Human Security Centre provides subject experts for commentary and broadcast media appearances. For further information, please contact one of the staff listed below directly.

Dr Rowan Allport – Senior Fellow and Head of the Security and Defence team

Dr Rowan Allport is a Senior Fellow who leads the Human Security Centre's Security and Defence team. Specialising in strategic analysis and international security, his primary areas of interest lie in the defence issues in and around the NATO region, interstate conflict and US foreign policy discourse. Rowan holds a PhD in Political Science and an MA in Conflict, Governance and Development from the University of York. He has written extensively on UK defence matters for US and UK publications including *The Hill*, *The Diplomat*, *DefenseOne*, *UK Defence Journal* and *Politics.co.uk*. He was also the lead author of HSC's 2015 *The Two Per Cent Solution: An Alternative Strategic Defence and Security Review* report.

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Simon Schofield is a Senior Fellow and Acting Director at the Human Security Centre. His main research interests lie in the fields of national security, intelligence and counterterrorism, having carried out research into drone attacks and targeted killing as counterterrorism policies, as well as a study on nuclear terrorism. He also has a broad range of experience in human rights issues. Simon holds a First Class Honours Degree in British Politics and Legislative Studies from the University of Hull. He has served as a geopolitical consultant for numerous news outlets including the BBC, RTE and the International Business Times.

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