

The following is a copy of the speech given at the Bristol Conference by  
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## THE ARMED FORCES – NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

### STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Looking beyond the horizon of domestic UK politics for a moment, to say these are challenging times is something of a British understatement.

The world is dangerous...and getting more so. In the short time since the 2010 National Security Strategy was written we have seen the Arab Spring, Mali, North Korea, Ukraine, Syria and Iraq / ISIL. These remind us that potential threats to our national interests are diffuse and ever-present.

In addition, climate change, resource competition, population growth and violent ideologies will manifest themselves in a variety of ways, encompassing natural disasters, terrorist and cyber attacks, and threats to vulnerable populations and international trade.

Britain is a member of the G8 (or G7+1), dependant upon a functioning inter-connected global economy. It is also as an advocate of numerous collective defence arrangements, including permanent representation on the UN Security Council. The armed forces are an integral cog to the defence and diplomacy wheel and I would like to spend a few moments talking about what we do.

### ROYAL NAVY

The Royal Navy provides security by maintaining a visible (or sometimes not so visible) presence in home waters and in regions overseas - 24/7 - 365 - a good example of this is our custodianship of the nation's ultimate insurance policy - the strategic nuclear deterrent, now in its 46th uninterrupted year,

On an average day, around the world, the Royal Navy has around 8000 sailors and marines and as many as 40 ships, submarines and aircraft either deployed or preparing to deploy in order to protect the nation's interests.

Royal Navy's reach allows it to build relationships with regional partners, and respond rapidly to conflict, aggression and unforeseen natural disasters – as recently demonstrated by the deployment of the RN to the Philippines to assist with the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.

The UK currently imports around 800,000 barrels a day of oil and very significant quantities of natural gas. The RN helps keep vital sea lanes open for this and other trade to flow, safeguarding our prosperity.

The Service is also engaged in a multitude of counter terror, piracy and narcotics initiatives that help prevent the increasing onset of criminality upon our and other nations shores.

By being globally deployed, the Royal Navy also prevents conflict. Its reassuring presence can often be enough to deter threats, help keep the peace and stabilise potential hotspots...And being globally deployed also allows the Navy to respond swiftly to unforeseen events, as and when they emerge. Examples being the Falklands War, the Gulf Conflicts, the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and of course Syria.

## THE BRITISH ARMY

The British Army is battle hardened, agile and extremely competent, and it has a unique place, like its sister services in the national fabric.

Over twelve years of combat operations against highly adaptive enemies have tempered its people, equipment, conceptual thinking, tactics, and the way they integrate with a range of partners. This blend of expertise helps secure Britain in an uncertain world.

Army also has broader utility. In 2012 the Foreign Secretary indicated that as a nation we must remain internationally active stating: 'the country that is purely reactive in foreign affairs is in decline.'

Through its international defence engagement the Army makes a significant contribution to averting crises or conflicts, and positively influencing global dynamics. This reinforces the importance Britain attaches to the Millennium Development Goals and also lends further moral weight to our significant financial contributions to the UN.

The Army also supports other government departments in safeguarding security at home. Civil emergencies, including natural disasters, pandemics, major accidents and terrorism, have the potential to threaten the welfare of British citizens and the environment. The Army's utility as the UK's domestic 'safety net' is based on its adaptability, size and geographical footprint. This was ably demonstrated during the 2012 London Olympics when the Army provided 13,500 ready trained security personnel at short notice.

So where is the British Army operating today? As you are aware they are in Germany, although currently undertaking a massive rebasing programme. In Africa they are advising and improving security reform in Kenya and doing similar tasks Sierra Leone alongside more Ebola related ones (with their RN counterparts). They are in Brunei - Jungle Warfare Training School and also in Alberta - Canada, training in an area that is 7 x Salisbury Plain. They are strategically deployed in Gibraltar, the Falklands and of course Afghanistan - all be it in a much smaller numbers and in a training role. And, as the PM announced yesterday, they will be deploying to Ukraine to provide military advice to their government.

## ROYAL AIR FORCE

Moving on to the Royal Air Force - this is a service that needs no introduction to many Bristolians. In fact they recently named their Hercules replacement,

the A400M, the City of Bristol, in honour of the fact its wings were manufactured here.

Aside from providing key military strategic lift the RAF also patrols the skies protecting the UK and its interests 24/7. This capability provides the nation with choice in times of crisis; as recently demonstrated by recent air operations assisting the Iraqi government against ISIL and in the skies over the Baltic.

They too have worked tirelessly in Afghanistan, for example, Camp Bastion Airfield had over 137,000 air movements making it the fifth busiest in the UK.

They are also permanently deployed in the Falklands providing SAR cover and air defence with their helicopters and Typhoon aircraft.

Closer to home you will have noted the stunning pictures of Russian bombers that were taken by the RAF quick reaction aircraft - reminding them that we are protective of our sovereign airspace.

This is just a very brief snapshot of what the three services are up to, but lets not forget the 168,000 uniformed and 68,000 civilian personnel that make this happen - without their dedication, ingenuity, true grit and, sometimes, ultimate sacrifice, the UK probably wouldn't experience a lot of the things it takes for granted today.

## THE FUTURE

But time marches on, and your armed forces should adapt and change in response to the needs asked of them. As we all know the recent past has been dominated by the economic downturn, and its effects will last for years to come. Due to some tough choices we've filled the black hole in the defence budget and balanced the books. We have also devolved budgets to the Front Line Commands...ensuring that the men and women at the coalface take responsibility for spending decisions.

Defence Transformation and 2020 are words that many have heard of; when you hear it you may think of a 19% reduction in armed forces personnel and 50% increase in reservists; but this reform also undertakes to honour the armed forces covenant and make our forces leaner and more agile to face the threats of today. This is manifesting itself in a number of ways across the individual services -

The Royal Navy will shortly see the introduction of its two new carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, these will allow the RN to project maritime power at a time and place of the Government's choosing in a significant manner. You may have read last week the announcement of the placing of long lead items for the Type 26 frigates due to replace the current workhorses of the fleet the Type 23s. In addition our upgraded helicopter the Wildcat allows us to extend our reach well beyond the horizon.

The British Army is also transforming, it is rebasing from Germany back to the UK, this will bring significant personnel benefits and allow for greater army personnel stability. It will, as part of this reshaping, transform in to three components - a reaction force trained and equipped for the full spectrum of intervention tasks, The second is an adaptable force - to be used for a wide range of tasks including Defence Engagement and providing HQ units for long operations. The third component is Force Troops, providing specialist capabilities from a centralised pool

The RAF is re-structuring and re-equipping to be relevant for the 21st Century. In 2020 they will provide: air defence of the UK and South Atlantic Overseas Territories; a credible and capable combat air presence to contribute to conventional deterrence, coercion and containment; an expeditionary combat air contribution for enduring land operations; strategic and tactical airlift; and other air power capabilities, including surveillance assets, helicopters and RAF Regiment ground units.

Critical to the success of 2020 for all services, is of course the provision of trained manpower - regular and reservists, - our plans are on track to deliver the Force we need to counter the wide range of threats we face, and retain the capability to bring to bear on the battlefield if required. As an employer, our contribution to wider society is profound, providing the greatest variety of opportunities and personal development to anyone who wishes to serve, regardless of background or beliefs.

As our supporters we thank you for your help, we couldn't do it without you - your involvement is critical to our success, and helps the UK shape its forces to counter future threats, protect its citizens and their livelihoods.