



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

26 March 2024

Dear James,

Following your decision to stand down from your role as Minister for Armed Forces, I wanted to write and thank you for your outstanding service and contribution to our party, Parliament and country.

You have made an important contribution to Government and your support to consecutive Conservative administrations at the Ministry of Defence has been commendable. Over the years you have served your country with immense distinction, serving in Kabul, Northern Ireland, Basra and Sangin in Helmand Province. With your invaluable military experience, you have been a fantastic advocate for our armed forces, and a great Minister championing conservative values at every stage.

You have played an invaluable role in implementing the Government's Defence agenda – including major investments in new equipment and capabilities for our armed forces. I have always admired your passion and conviction to reiterate the importance of investing in defence in a more contested world. This is something I was proud to support, by leading a Government that has delivered record funding for the armed forces - with more than £50 billion being invested this year alone.

On your watch, the Government has overseen the largest sustained defence spending increase since the end of the Cold War - with a £24 billion uplift in cash terms over the Spending Review 2020 period and an additional £11 billion at last year's Spring Budget. Thanks to the investments made in defence since 2020, defence spending is expected to increase to 2.3% of GDP this year – and we have committed to increase that to 2.5%, when the economic situation allows.

No one will understand as well as you, the considerable contribution our armed forces make to this country, but also the security of others around the world. You have seen first-hand, as Minister for Armed Forces, just how widespread and effective that role is. I know you will continue to be a powerful advocate for defence, including the case to invest more to face the challenges of today and the future.

I am also sorry to hear that you will be standing down as a Member of Parliament at the next election. I appreciate that your decision will not have been an easy one to make, but I respect your reasons for doing so. I know that the constituents of Wells will be saddened to lose you as their MP, after years of loyal and selfless service. You define what it means to be a public servant and you should be proud of your record. I have no doubt that you will continue to make a positive impact on public life.

Thank you again for your service to our party and for everything you have done to deliver meaningful change in defence. I wish you all the very best.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a Happy Easter.

Yours sincerely,
Rishi

The Right Honourable James Heappey MP