# Taskforce Kindred: The UK's response to modern military challenges



Lodged within the Main Building of the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall is Taskforce Kindred, a dedicated team playing a pivotal role in addressing the national security challenges faced by the UK in an increasingly volatile global landscape. This small but crucial group consists of approximately two dozen personnel and has been instrumental in managing and expediting military support to Ukraine amidst its ongoing conflict, having allocated over £2 billion for weaponry over the past three years.

Taskforce Kindred’s effective deployment of military resources, including advanced attack drones and sophisticated anti-aircraft systems, has showcased a significant departure from the UK's traditionally cumbersome procurement processes. Air Marshal Edward Stringer, former head of the UK Defence Academy and now affiliated with the Policy Exchange think tank, noted that “there are some bright individuals moving at the speed the Ukrainians need. It’s not perfect, but it’s much better than the glacial progress usually seen when we buy stuff for ourselves.”

One notable development produced by the Kindred team is the Gravehawk system, which repurposes outdated Soviet-made air-to-air missiles that Ukraine has in abundance. This adaptation allows these missiles to be launched from the ground, enhancing their effectiveness against incoming Russian threats. In addition, the taskforce is working on developing drones that leverage artificial intelligence, potentially allowing them to operate autonomously, thus reducing the impact of Russian electronic warfare tactics.

General Sir Patrick Sanders, who served as chief of the general staff from 2022 to 2024, commented on the current military context, expressing concern over a societal disconnect regarding the understanding of warfare. “We could do something similar if we were engaged in an existential fight, and you can have the best and the brightest in society,” he said, reflecting on the need for a greater societal awareness of these issues.

The efforts of Taskforce Kindred are situated within a broader context of a British defence budget projected to reach £57 billion this year. With the security guarantees traditionally provided by America appearing increasingly uncertain, the focus on defence spending has intensified within Whitehall. As noted by Peter Quentin, a former adviser to the defence secretary, “[Taskforce] Kindred is part of a revolution taking place because of Ukraine,” highlighting the urgency for contemporary military solutions, which often render traditional programmes obsolete by the time they are ready for service.

While demand for defence funding has increased markedly, the Treasury has expressed hesitance in approving rapid spending increases, warning that such moves could lead to costly failures similar to past procurement issues faced by the Ministry of Defence. This has resulted in ongoing negotiations regarding the timeline in achieving a target of 2.5% of GDP for defence expenditure. Officials have reported “active, ongoing discussions” between military leaders and senior government officials, suggesting that a resolution may be on the horizon.

The need for strategic investments is critical as the UK’s military apparatus faces substantial inventory challenges. A senior Western official remarked on the significant donations made to Ukraine, pointing out that the British Army’s stock has been notably depleted. For instance, the UK has donated all 60 of its 155mm self-propelled guns to Ukraine and only retains a limited number of replacements, thereby constraining its operational capacity.

To address these challenges, the UK government has intensified its commitment to replenishing military stocks, planning to allocate approximately £1 billion annually for the next decade to increase munition production. Yet, with inherent budgetary limitations and strategic commitments, discussions continue regarding the optimal allocation of funds across short-term needs and long-term projects, such as the Global Combat Air Programme.

Matthew Savill, director of military sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, emphasised the urgency of optimising current capabilities, asserting that "can we actually deploy and use what we’ve got at the moment?" as a crucial step in deterrence. The path forward also involves balancing the deployment of both traditional weaponry and advanced technology, as underscored by General Sanders, who noted the enduring necessity of protective capabilities alongside evolving military technologies.

The UK defence establishment remains in a complex phase of transformation, with significant funding currently allocated to established projects, including the UK's nuclear deterrent, which represents a substantial portion of the defence procurement budget. Defence Secretary John Healey has outlined intentions to reform the Ministry of Defence's procurement methods, proposing to streamline oversight and enhance accountability in delivery on budgetary targets.

As rapid technological advancements continue in the context of the Ukraine conflict, shifting dynamics on the battlefield—characterised by diverse drone warfare applications—pose continual demands for agility and innovation. Despite a solid precursor in Taskforce Kindred's initiatives, the crux of the matter lies in determining how much resources and commitment the government will ultimately allocate to meet these pressing military challenges.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/a-look-at-exactly-what-britain-has-given-to-ukraine/> - This article supports the claim that Taskforce Kindred has played a crucial role in managing and expediting military support to Ukraine, including the allocation of significant military equipment from UK stockpiles.
2. <https://mod.gov.ua/en/news/lieutenant-general-ivan-havryliuk-expanding-military-technical-cooperation-between-ukraine-and-the-united-kingdom-will-enhance-defence-industry-output-in-both-countries> - This news piece highlights the role of Taskforce Kindred in assessing which weapons can be allocated to Ukraine and discusses expanding military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and the UK.
3. <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/038401-2024/PDF> - This tender notice from the Ministry of Defence mentions Task Force Kindred's involvement in securing a supply of energetic materials, supporting Ukraine's military needs.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-defence-budget-to-reach-57-billion> - This government news release supports the claim about the UK's defence budget reaching £57 billion, highlighting increased spending on defence.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-63451151> - This BBC news article discusses the UK's efforts to replenish military stocks and allocate funds for munition production, reflecting the challenges faced by the UK's military apparatus.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/jan/25/uk-defence-secretary-john-healey-reform-procurement> - This Guardian article reports on Defence Secretary John Healey's plans to reform the Ministry of Defence's procurement methods, aligning with the article's mention of procurement reforms.
7. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/defence/article/britain-now-arms-ukraine-swiftly-why-is-our-own-military-so-slow-xmk7gk5rj> - Please view link - unable to able to access data