# Tensions rise over defence spending in heated PMQs exchange



In a charged session of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs), Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch engaged in a fierce exchange with Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer over the government's recent announcement to increase defence spending. The confrontation unfolded shortly after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak revealed plans to boost the UK’s defence budget by an estimated £13.4 billion, aiming to raise spending to 2.5% of GDP by the year 2027.

The decision to reallocate aid funds for this purpose comes as Sunak prepares for discussions in Washington with former President Donald Trump, particularly regarding the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. During the session, Badenoch pressed Starmer on the accuracy of the figures presented, juxtaposing Sunak's £13.4 billion figure against a statement made by Defence Secretary John Healey, who indicated the increase in real terms might be only £6 billion when adjusted for inflation.

In response to Badenoch's detailed inquiries regarding the defence spending figures, Starmer clarified, "If you take the numbers for this financial year and then the numbers for the financial year 2027-28, that's a £13.4 billion increase." He labelled this as the most significant sustained increase in defence spending since the Cold War, claiming it would enhance the UK's security as well as that of Europe. Badenoch, however, countered, suggesting that the government was "playing silly games with numbers" and sought clarity on which of the figures was accurate.

The tension escalated as Badenoch highlighted the Chagos deal, a plan that involves the UK handing over the territory to Mauritius while retaining a lease on Diego Garcia, home to a crucial UK-US military airbase. She questioned whether any of the newly announced funding would support this deal, to which Sunak affirmed the importance of the Chagos deal for both UK and US security, reaffirming that the funding was aimed at preparing for "a generational challenge."

Moreover, General Sir David Richards, a former defence chief of staff, commented on the increase in defence spending in light of Trump's influence on European allies, suggesting that the decision had been "accelerated" by recent events. He mentioned that without Trump's pressure, such a significant increase might not have materialised. His remarks were echoed by Healey, who indicated that the US had long called for European nations to bolster their defence contributions to NATO.

The parliament session also highlighted dissenting views from within the Labour Party, as backbencher Diane Abbott raised concerns regarding the redirection of funds from international development to military expenditures. She indicated that this might result in heightened risks of conflict, asserting that the contributions meant to alleviate poverty could instead diminish safety globally.

Healey defended the government's strategy, stating that "hard power is now more important than soft power," while acknowledging the urgent nature of bolstering UK military capabilities amidst shifting geopolitical landscapes.

This exchange at PMQs not only underscores the current debates revolving around defence spending but also reflects broader implications for UK's foreign policy, particularly in the context of transatlantic relations and collective European security efforts.

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

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-defence-spending-25-february-2025> - This URL supports the claim about the UK's plan to increase defence spending to 3% of GDP and the reallocation of funds from international development. It provides details on the Prime Minister's statement regarding defence spending increases.
* <https://www.aeralis.com/2025/02/26/pm-announces-defence-spending-increase/> - This URL corroborates the announcement of increased defence spending by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, highlighting the economic and security implications of this decision.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> - Although not directly linked, this URL generally supports news coverage related to UK defence spending announcements and debates in Parliament.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/> - This URL provides general information on parliamentary activities, including debates and discussions on defence spending, which aligns with the context of PMQs.
* <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/index.htm> - This URL supports the broader context of NATO's role in European security and the pressure on European nations to increase their defence contributions.