# Keir Starmer’s defence review criticised as vague promises risk UK security



Keir Starmer's recent unveiling of a Strategic Defence Review has drawn significant attention, yet this initiative is little more than a patchwork of promises amid a backdrop of failing military policy. Spearheaded by former NATO chief George Robertson, this review is touted as a step towards a "new era for defence," but it is hard to ignore the severe doubts surrounding government spending priorities that threaten the UK’s military readiness.

Defence Secretary John Healey's assurances of a commitment to ramping up defence spending to 3% of GDP by 2034 should raise alarm bells rather than inspire confidence. His latest announcement shifted from guarantees to vague aspirations, underlining the government's inability to fulfil its obligations at a time when strong leadership is imperative. With the armed forces' future at stake, Healey’s lack of decisiveness is unacceptable; he should be prioritising funding for a military that is struggling to meet modern challenges.

While a few proposals within the review have elicited interest—such as the initiative to construct six new munitions factories in a bid to address the alarming depletion of the UK’s defence stocks—the reality is that this response is long overdue. The ongoing supply of arms to Ukraine has left the UK's military exposed, and though the initiative promises to create jobs, mere job creation cannot compensate for the glaring gaps in our national security.

The expansion of the Royal Navy’s capabilities under the Aukus programme, which includes plans for up to 12 new attack submarines, is marred by uncertainty. While this may create short-term jobs, clarity on command structures remains vague, and the pressing needs for enhanced personnel training and recruitment are being overlooked, jeopardising operational readiness.

Moreover, the review's focus on potential risks to the UK, particularly from ballistic missile threats, raises questions about its practicality. The proposed new defensive systems are commendable in theory, but full-scale solutions akin to Israel's Iron Dome appear financially unrealistic. Essential infrastructure must be protected, but without robust, actionable plans, these measures amount to little more than rhetoric.

The mention of introducing 7,000 new British-built missiles, including advanced drone technologies, draws skepticism. The UK’s defensive posture must be recalibrated, emphasising the integration of various technologies that can effectively respond to modern threats. The lightweight drones showcased in Ukraine represent a crucial opportunity, yet they risk being sidelined amidst bureaucratic delays.

Amid the fanfare of the review, discussions are reportedly underway for the acquisition of F35A jets capable of carrying nuclear payloads. This move may further bind the UK to US technology, creating questions about autonomy and operational capacity due to reliance on Pentagon-controlled munitions. The logistics of deploying such aircraft on UK carriers, which already grapple with training deficiencies, remain unresolved.

Domestically, there is an urgent need to bolster the UK’s land forces. The current fleet of armoured personnel carriers lacks the modern capabilities required for today’s battlefield, exposing troops to unacceptable risks. A decline in available air support intensifies vulnerabilities, underscoring the critical necessity for expanding troop numbers and enhancing combat readiness.

As Healey prepares to unveil long-term ambitions for Army growth, one thing is clear: without decisive action on recruitment and a straightforward commitment to equipping our forces, the UK’s operational readiness will remain in jeopardy. The nation’s defence strategy must undergo significant structural changes to effectively meet contemporary security demands. The review represents a crucial turning point, and failing to act decisively could have dire consequences for the UK's national security amidst an increasingly volatile global landscape.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14770191/Ministers-funding-MoD-former-British-Army-colonel-Philip-Ingram.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-sets-out-biggest-sustained-increase-in-defence-spending-since-the-cold-war-protecting-british-people-in-new-era-for-national-security> - On 25 February 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a significant increase in UK defence spending, committing to raise it to 2.5% of GDP by April 2027, with an ambition to reach 3% in the next parliament. This move aims to bolster national security and economic growth amid global instability, including Russian aggression in Ukraine. The strategy includes investing in advanced defence technologies and supporting the UK's defence industry, which sustains over 430,000 jobs across the country. The increased spending will be funded by reducing Overseas Development Assistance from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI and reinvesting it into defence.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-root-and-branch-review-of-uk-armed-forces> - On 16 July 2024, the UK government launched a comprehensive review of the armed forces, termed a 'root and branch' review, to ensure Britain is secure at home and strong abroad. Commissioned by Prime Minister Keir Starmer and overseen by Defence Secretary John Healey, the review is headed by Lord Robertson and aims to report in the first half of 2025. It seeks to determine the roles, capabilities, and reforms required by UK Defence to meet 21st-century challenges, threats, and opportunities, ensuring affordability within the trajectory to 2.5% of GDP on defence.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-says-step-up-in-defence-spending-can-safeguard-the-future-of-nato> - Prime Minister Keir Starmer has committed to increasing UK defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by April 2027, with an ambition to reach 3% in the next parliament. This commitment aims to safeguard the future of NATO and ensure the UK is ready to defend itself against multiple threats at home and abroad. The review will determine the future defence posture of the UK, the capabilities needed, and will set out a roadmap to achieving 2.5% of GDP on defence, with a 'NATO-first' policy at the heart of Britain’s defence plans.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/25/starmer-slashes-aid-to-fund-major-increase-in-defence-spending> - On 25 February 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced the UK's largest increase in defence spending since the Cold War, committing to raise the budget to 2.5% of GDP by 2027. To fund this, the government plans to reduce the foreign aid budget by 40%, a move that has raised concerns about potential consequences for countries reliant on UK support. The announcement comes ahead of a meeting with US President Donald Trump and has sparked debate over the balance between national security and international aid commitments.
6. <https://www.euronews.com/2025/02/25/keir-starmer-pledges-to-raise-uk-defence-spending-to-25-of-gdp-by-2027> - On 25 February 2025, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer committed to increasing the country's defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, with an ambition to reach 3% in the next parliament. This decision aims to bolster national security amid a 'new era of insecurity' in Europe, particularly in response to Russian actions. The move is part of a broader strategy to enhance the UK's military capabilities and global standing, with the increased spending to be funded by reducing the foreign aid budget from 0.5% to 0.3% of national income.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/keir-starmer-labour-government-armed-forces-review-defence-spending-b1170957.html> - On 16 July 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer launched a 'root and branch' strategic defence review to overhaul the UK's Armed Forces, focusing on recruitment, funding, equipment, and inter-departmental coordination. The review, overseen by Defence Secretary John Healey and led by former NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson, aims to address the 'hollowed out' state of the forces due to years of neglect. It seeks to ensure the UK is prepared for a more dangerous and volatile world, with conclusions expected in the first half of 2025.