

A Brief for the debate on the
1984 DEFENCE WHITE PAPER
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NB The issue of Cruise missiles was dealt with in the brief for the recent debate on that subject. Copies of that brief (Ref. DEF(84)2) are available on request from the Research Department.

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THE 1984 DEFENCE WHITE PAPER

1. Introduction

The 1984 Defence White Paper (Cmd 9227) was published on 14th May 1984. As in recent years, it is in two volumes, the second consisting entirely of statistics. The first volume includes a number of separate self-contained passages (printed in blue), which provide deeper background and analysis of certain issues. These passages are entitled "the European Contribution to NATO", "NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Like with Like?", "Warship Design and Procurement", "Twice a Citizen" (about the Reserves) and "Soviet Defence Expenditure".

Apart from demonstrating how our defences are continuing to be strengthened after five years of Conservative rule, the White Paper outlines the Government's ambitious plans for the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence and the armed services, as well as reforms intended to improve efficiency and save money in weapons procurement. The Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Michael Heseltine, described his various initiatives as:

"the greatest single overhaul of machinery for development and co-ordination of defence policy for two decades" (Financial Times, 15th May 1984).

2. Defence Expenditure

The defence budget for 1984/85 amounts to £17,033 million. Future plans provide for 3% growth in real terms in 1985/86 with a further addition for Falklands costs. The 1985/86 defence budget will be nearly 20% higher in real terms than in 1978/79, excluding the Falklands additions. The Government does not intend to continue with the policy of increasing spending by 3% a year in real terms after 1985/86, but there should be a small increase in spending in 1986/87.

NATO comparisons. In 1983, the United Kingdom spent 5.4% of its GDP on defence, more than any other major European ally. The equivalent figures were: United States - 6.9%, France - 4.2%, West Germany - 3.4% and Italy - 2.8%.

The United Kingdom was second only to the United States so far as total expenditure was concerned with \$24,370 million, compared with \$225,345 million for the United States, \$22,360 million for West Germany, \$21,530 million for France and \$10,310 million for Italy.

The United Kingdom was also second only to the United States in the league of defence spending per capita, spending \$435 per head of population. The equivalent figures were: United States \$962, France \$396, West Germany \$364 and Italy \$181.

3. The East-West Military Balance

The White Paper shows that the Soviet Union has 2,715 strategic nuclear systems (intercontinental and submarine-launched nuclear missiles and heavy bombers), whereas NATO (excluding France) has 1997. The Soviet Union has 4,447 land-based intermediate-range nuclear systems in Europe, whereas NATO has 901. This imbalance is beginning to be redressed by the first deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles.

The Soviet Union has 1,600 European short range nuclear systems, whereas NATO has 1,200.

In conventional forces, the current balance on the central front is as follows:

	<u>NATO</u>		<u>Warsaw Pact</u>
Total soldiers	1	:	1.2
Main battle tanks	1	:	2.3
Artillery	1	:	2.7
Anti-tank weapons (including helicopters)	1	:	1.3
Fixed wing tactical aircraft	1	:	2.1

The balance of ready maritime forces in the Eastern Atlantic is as follows:

	<u>NATO</u>		<u>Warsaw Pact</u>
Surface ships	1	:	0.7
Submarines	1	:	2.3
Maritime Aircraft	1	:	1.3
Mines	1	:	31

These ratios are slightly better than last year's in respect of tanks, artillery, anti-tank weapons, submarines and maritime aircraft.

4. Strengthening the Front Line

A major aim of Government policy is to shift servicemen from support areas to the front line. In the Royal Navy, eight major warships which would have been placed in the stand-by squadron from 1986 onwards will remain with the operational fleet, thus increasing the numbers of destroyers and frigates available at short notice for NATO and national commitments by 20% over previous plans.

In the Army, 4,000 men will be deployed to the front line, while the number of front-line aircraft will increase by 15% by the end of the decade without any overall increase in RAF manpower.

5. The Royal Navy

The modernisation of the Royal Navy continues. More, in real terms, was spent on the construction of new ships and their weapons systems in 1982/83 than in any of the previous 20 years. In 1983/84 about £750 million more in constant prices was spent on the conventional Navy than in the last year of the Labour Government.

37 warships are now on order for the Royal Navy and next year the third Invincible class aircraft carrier - HMS Ark Royal - will be accepted into service. There are now 12 nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarines in service with 4 more on order and a further order expected soon. The first of the new Type 23 frigates will be ordered shortly, as will two more Type 22 frigates.

The lightweight Stingray torpedo is now operational with Sea King helicopters and Nimrods. The Harpoon surface-to-surface missile system is to be bought for the Type 23 frigates and the later Type 22's. Sea Eagle - the air-launched anti-ship missile - will enter service next year, while the Sea Wolf missile is to be improved.

6. The Army

Improvements in the Army include the following:

The first regiment equipped with the new Challenger tank, protected by Chobham armour, enters service in Germany this year. The Milan, Swingfire and TOW anti-tank weapons are all being improved. The new Saxon armoured personnel carrier will be introduced later this year to enhance the mobility of infantry earmarked to reinforce BAOR. 6 Brigade has begun a year-long trial in the airmobile anti-tank role in Germany.

5 Airborne Brigade is being expanded to enhance its capabilities (for operations outside the NATO area) and to conduct airborne deployments. Its strength will amount to approximately 4,500. RAF Hercules aircraft are being "stretched" in order to enable them to carry more paratroops in such operations.

7. The Royal Air Force

The extensive modernisation of the RAF continues. As the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Williamson, has said:

"There is coming to fruition the largest reequipment programme that the RAF has been involved in (since the early 1950's) --- Tornado, the Airborne Early Warning Nimrod and the improved UK Air Defence Environments all mean that our operational capability is as high as I have known it and this has coincided with an improvement in the morale of the people in the Service" (Times, 9th September 1983).

There are now three squadrons of Tornado GR1 strike/attack aircraft operations in Britain and two in West Germany. Development of the advanced Harrier GR5 is continuing and will enter service in the late 1980's. The Tornado F2 - the air defence variant will join the RAF later this year. Eventually there will be seven F2 squadrons for the defence of UK air space.

The network of ground radars and command, controls and communications systems for air defence (UKADGE) is being totally modernised, with new radars about to enter service. Surface-to-air missile capabilities are being improved with additional Rapier units being acquired. As Sir Keith Williamson said:

"the air defence of the UK is going to be very much better based than it has been at any time in peacetime" (Times, *ibid*).

8. The Reserve Forces

The Reserve Forces are being significantly strengthened and expanded. The Territorial Army is a highly cost-effective instrument of national defence . It provides some 30% of the mobilised strength of the Army for about 4½% of the Army's budget. The TA has grown from 59,300 in 1979 to over 70,000 now and is due to reach 86,000

in 1990. New Territorial units will include six more infantry battalions, an air defence regiment, a Yeomanry squadron and an Army Air Corps squadron. This autumn a large number of Territorials will be participating in Exercise LIONHEART, which will be designed to test plans for reinforcing the British Army of the Rhine.

The pilot scheme to assess the feasibility of raising a Home Service Force, to provide static guard forces for lower priority key points in time of tension or war, has been a success. The HSF is to be about 5,000 strong. The Royal Naval Reserve is being equipped with new minesweepers and patrol craft. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force is also expanding: six new field squadrons have already been established.

9. Trident

The White Paper states that there has been no change in the cost of the Trident programme other than for inflation and exchange rate variations. Taking account of these factors, the latest cost estimate is £8,729 million at 1983/84 prices. Trident will absorb only about 3% of the total defence budget over the period of its procurement and 6% of the defence equipment budget.

The White Paper emphasises that the British strategic force will continue, when Trident is operational, to be of the minimum size necessary to provide a credible and effective deterrent. Thus the Government's current plans for the Trident force will not involve using the full warhead capability of the system.

On 16th May, the Government announced its plans for the development of the Clyde submarine base at Faslane and Coulport in the light of the Trident programme. More than 1,500 new jobs are expected to be available at the peak of new construction work there in 1988. An estimated extra £125 million will be injected into the local economy between 1985 and 1992.

Nationally, the Trident programme is expected to involve directly some 20,000 new jobs annually in the peak years of the programme, and some 15,000 indirectly.

10. Better Management of Defence

The Government's intention is to draw a clearer distinction between the formulation of advice on operations, policy and resource allocation on the one hand, and the management of defence resources on the other. Henceforth, a combined Defence Staff, responsible to the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Permanent Under-Secretary, will be responsible for the former.

The principal concern of the three Service Chiefs of Staff will in future be the oversight of the management of their individual services, and their total fighting efficiency and morale. They will chair Executive Committees of their Service Boards responsible for the management functions of Service personnel, training, logistics and supply. The Defence Secretary has emphasised that:

"In judging the appropriate management for the Ministry, my overriding aim has been to strengthen the fighting effectiveness of our forces. Nothing must be done, which would weaken the separate identities and tradition of the three fighting services. They play a vital part in the morale of our front-line units" (Hansard, 12th March 1984, Col.22).

Value for money for the taxpayer. The Government is determined that the British taxpayer should get maximum value for the very large sums of money devoted to defence. Inside the Ministry of Defence, an Office of Management and Budget will be created to achieve stronger control over the Department's corporate planning and financial and management systems. Whenever possible, competitive tendering for contracts is being introduced at every level in the supply of defence equipment. Civilian manpower in the Ministry of Defence has already been reduced by 47,000 to 200,000 during the period of the Conservative Government, and it is intended to bring it down further to at least 170,000 by 1988 in line with the Government's target for the Civil Service as a whole.

As Mr Heseltine said in a statement on 14th May:

"Taken together, these measures to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness across the defence programme are an essential part of the Government's commitment to enhance our national defences. As such they will contribute to NATO's policy of deterrence and help to ensure that the Alliance continues to be as effective a guarantor of peace and freedom in the decades ahead as it has been since 1949".

11. Labour Defence Policy

Nuclear Defence. The policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament and massive defence cuts was a major factor in the Labour Party's heavy defeat in last year's General Election. Yet the October 1983 Labour Party Conference passed by a large majority resolutions which reiterated in every respect the policies rejected by the electorate. The present Labour leader is just as convinced a unilateralist as was Mr Foot, as can be seen from the following statements by Mr Kinnock:

- a.) "There are no circumstances in which I would order or permit the firing of a nuclear weapon. Nothing could justify a first strike. Retaliation would be the supremely useless act of all history" (New Socialist, September/October 1983).
- b.) "I intend that the government I plan to lead will achieve in five years the denuclearisation of Britain" (International Herald Tribune, 5th October 1983).
- c.) Question : "Is it ... your intention to give up Polaris?"
Answer : "By all means. For two reasons".
Question : "Within the lifetime of a Parliament?"
Answer : "Yes, for the two reasons ... and they are defence reasons. That it is not plausible to depend upon Polaris as an effective way of defending this country ... (and) Polaris specifically is an obsolescent weapon" (ITV Weekend World, 22nd January 1984).
- d.) "The policy of the Labour Party is that we do not have anybody else's nuclear bases in our waters or on our soil. I support that policy. We can and will only get effective defence related to Britain's real needs if we have the resources to provide ourselves with non-nuclear weapons and if we do not make our country a nuclear target" (Daily Telegraph, 21st February 1984).

Conventional Defence. The 1983 Labour Party Conference also reaffirmed the party's commitments to "bring Britain's military expenditure as a percentage of the

GNP into line with that of the average of our major European allies", which would involve a massive cut in the defence budget. But strangely, Mr Kinnock has recently indicated that he might actually be prepared to see defence spending increased as a consequence of Britain abandoning nuclear weapons. Whether the Labour Party would ever accept such a policy must be very doubtful. Mr Kinnock's thinking on the matter was exposed in an interview in "A Week in Politics" on Channel 4 on 25th May 1984. The following are extracts:

Question: "Do you accept ... that if you don't have nuclear weapons ... then you've got to spend an enormous amount of extra money on conventional weapons in order to have the same degree of effective defence and deterrence?"

Answer : "I think that there are probably obligations in that direction especially insofar as changing the equipment of the Royal Air Force is concerned and insofar as ensuring we have an effective surface and submarine fleet is concerned ...

... Very few people ... can give an adequate assessment of what the cost consequences are of removing ourselves from nuclear dependence and adopting conventional methods including high technology. If the consequence of that in order to get effective defence is additional expenditure, we owe it to ourselves and our country and to the Alliance to ensure that we are not failing in that respect and that will be the case".

12. SDP/Liberal Alliance Defence Policy

Ever since the SDP/Liberal Alliance was formed, there have been cracks and splits in its defence policy, which have had to be papered over.

Polaris. While both parties are opposed to Trident, the Social Democrats want to keep Polaris in service for as long as possible, whereas the Liberals, who have traditionally opposed any independent nuclear deterrent, want to phase it out. The Alliance General Election manifesto fudged the issue by merely saying that: "Polaris should be included in the merged START and INF talks".

Cruise missiles. The Social Democrats have conditionally supported the deployment of cruise missiles, while calling for a "dual key". The Liberal Party on the other hand has opposed their deployment since 1981 (although Mr Steel himself has been closer to the SDP position).

In the Commons debate on cruise missiles on 31st October 1983 both Liberal and Social Democratic MPs voted against the Government, but supported an amendment, which, while calling for the continuation of negotiations, by implication suggested that cruise missiles should be based in the United Kingdom under certain conditions. However, there is little doubt that the majority of Liberal MPs and activists remain opposed to the deployment of cruise missiles under any circumstances. The Alliance European Election manifesto calls for the suspension "of further deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles to give the Soviet Union an opportunity to come back to the conference table".

Other issues. Their European manifesto also calls for the reduction of Europe's dependence on nuclear weapons by "moving towards 'no first use' of nuclear weapons (and) the creation by NATO of a 150 km Battlefield Nuclear Weapon Free zone in Central Europe, which could provide the basis for negotiations with the Russians on a wider verifiable nuclear free zone".