

The Government continues to signal its intention to widen engagement in international conflicts while, at the same time, implementing a crippling round of further military spending cuts, under the auspices of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).

The Army is tasked with reducing personnel numbers to 82,000 by 2018, down from 102,500 in 2010. Battle tank strength has been cut by 40 per cent and there has been a 35 per cent cut in self-propelled artillery. The Conservatives' ambition to recruit 30,000 personnel to the Territorial Army is failing.

Together, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy have suffered more than 10,000 job losses. The Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft programme has been cancelled. The aircraft carrier fleet has been decommissioned, despite having no operational replacements available until 2020. These cuts have demoralised our Armed Forces and left the nation unprepared to face emerging threats.

REBUILDING OUR ARMED FORCES

Our current level of military spending and staffing is not fulfilling the terms of our NATO membership - which requires that we spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence - and the government has failed to lay out details of spending plans beyond 2015/16.

On the basis that the current base level of defence spending is maintained after 2015/16 at 1.9 per cent, UKIP will increase the defence budget to meet our obligations to NATO and spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence in 2015/16. We will exceed it substantially for the remaining years of the parliament.

We will phase in increased defence spending over the next five years up to an additional £4 billion by 2020. This will return funding to the pre-SDSR level, and allow for £1 billion yearly expenditure on capital projects deemed to be of the highest strategic priority by the MoD.

We will rebuild our Armed Forces and restore them to their rightful place among the most professional, flexible and effective fighting forces in the world, able to meet the security demands of the modern era and react appropriately to any threat that the UK faces both now and in the future.

RETAIN OUR NUCLEAR DETERRENT

Faced with rogue states such as North Korea and Iran, which have developed advanced nuclear capabilities, UKIP does not believe now is the time to be talking about or proposing nuclear disarmament and we support Trident renewal.

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

The two new Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers are superb operational platforms. UKIP supports their deployment, while having reservations about the Royal Navy's ability to man, operate and protect them: it could take nearly every ship in the current fleet to form an effective carrier group.

We also have reservations about the development of the American F-35B Lightning II aircraft that are due to fly from the carriers by 2020, given the massive technical problems involved. This platform may never be mission-capable. We will investigate further whether it would be better to commission an 'off-the-shelf' aircraft option and adapt the two Queen Elizabeth class carriers for non-vertical take-off and landings.

INCREASING INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITY

Currently, British intelligence is fragmented between a number of agencies, including MI5, MI6, GCHQ and BBC Monitoring. All have different funding streams and report to different government departments. This generates a significant overlap in work and resources and risks exposing gaps in the system.

UKIP will create a new over-arching role of Director of National Intelligence (subject to confirmation hearing by the relevant Commons Select Committee), who will be charged with reviewing UK intelligence and security, in order to ensure threats are identified, monitored and dealt with by the swiftest, most appropriate and legal means available. He or she will be responsible for bringing all intelligence services together; developing cyber security measures; cutting down on waste and encouraging information and resource sharing.

TAX ON ACTIVE SERVICE

UKIP will revise the Armed Forces terms of service to ensure personnel on operational duty overseas do not pay income tax.

EU ARMY

UKIP wholly opposes the creation of a EU Army. We will not tolerate British troops operating under European command, on British soil or elsewhere.