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**Submission from Campaign Against Arms Trade to the Defence Committee on Shifting the goalposts? Defence expenditure and the 2% pledge**

1. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) in the UK is working to end the international arms trade. CAAT believes that large scale military procurement and arms exports only reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems.
2. CAAT is making this short submission as it believes the underlying assumption on which your Inquiry is based is wrong. High military expenditure does not increase UK or international security; on the contrary, it threatens it.
3. Defence, in the sense of provision of security to its citizens, may be the "first duty of government". However, before considering the expenditure needed to provide such security, a prior examination is needed as to the threats to that security and into what creates and exacerbates those threats. It is for this reason that CAAT, among others, has argued that the National Security Strategy needs to be developed first. After this, should come the investigation into what is needed to meet these threats and tackle their causes. Only after that would the Government be in a position to allocate resources in the most effective way to tackle them.
4. NATO is a military alliance. Its continuance helps maintain a military mindset of the kind that has contributed to many of the problems the world faces, including mass migration by those fleeing conflict. The September 2014 NATO Declaration that member states would spend 2% of GDP on the military, with a minimum of 20% of that being on major equipment, including its research and development, boosts the military and helps arms companies. It does nothing to bring greater security to the UK or elsewhere.
5. The Defence Budget includes Trident renewal and the new aircraft carriers. These may help in "meeting the aspirations of the government in line with their perception of 'Britain's place in the world'". However, this view of the UK's global position is one that seems rooted in 19th Century imperialism and militarism. It is an attitude which has led to the recent disastrous interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, that have increased the threats to UK security.
6. Conversely, many of today's major threats - to name just two, climate change and antibiotic resistance - are not military in nature and the response to them will not be paid for from the Defence Budget.
7. The 2% NATO figure, as well the UK government's adoption of it in July 2015, is illogical and arbitrary. Whether or not military pensions, or the Intelligence Services, are inside or outside that calculation is of little importance when the whole concept is so flawed.
8. CAAT suggests that your Committee encourage the UK government to instigate a wide-ranging public discussion on the UK's security.

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