

Campaign Against Arms Trade
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Submission from the Campaign Against Arms Trade to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy on the National Security Capability Review: A Changing Security Environment

1. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) in the UK is working to end the arms trade. The trade has a devastating impact on human rights and security, and damages economic development. CAAT believes that large-scale military procurement and arms exports only reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems.
2. The ostensible aim of the National Security Capability Review (NSCR) is "to ensure that the UK's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible, to address current national security challenges." Undertaken by Sir Mark Sedwill, the National Security Adviser in the Cabinet Office, its findings are due to be published in the late spring. The Cabinet Office lead on the NSCR was welcome, indicating that perhaps, at last, there was an understanding within Government that "security" was not the same as "Defence" and that security is a cross-departmental matter.
3. Although the NSCR has yet to be published, on 25th January 2018 Gavin Williamson, the Defence Secretary, bowed to astute lobbying and announced a Modernising Defence Programme (MDP) within the Ministry of Defence (MoD). He described MDP as following on from high level findings of the NSCR, which, he says, identified that more needed to be done with the MoD budget. He did not rule out the latter increasing.
4. The Defence Secretary himself, albeit in rather hysterical way, seemed to acknowledge that security could not be pigeon-holed in Defence. He told the *Daily Telegraph* on 26th January 2018 that Russia could cause "thousands and thousands and thousands" of deaths in the UK through a cyberattack on the energy supply. Should such a cyberthreat exist, it would not, of course, be the MoD which could counter it.

National security needs to be defined and the real threats tackled

5. As the Cabinet Office is leading on the NSCR, a far broader definition of security is hopefully being used. It needs to look at all kinds of threats to security, not only those which are military, and examine the deeper roots underlying these threats, as well as to consider what contributes to, and exacerbates, them. Climate change, unequal trade policies, authoritarian rule and global militarism are just some examples of the causes of insecurity which need examination.
6. Tackling these problems, the underlying causes of insecurity, will mean a shift in focus right across Government. Human rights, climate change and sustainable development need to be consistently at the centre of policy; human needs must take priority over commercial concerns.

Erosion of the international rules-based order

7. A major component to the UK's security policy should be a commitment not to make a situation worse. Overseas military interventions, as seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, have caused devastation and instability with dire consequences for people living in those areas and, to a lesser extent, the world more generally.
8. It is also vital that the UK be seen to consistently encourage democratic participation and uphold the rule of law.

9. Unfortunately, rather than doing this, successive UK governments have undermined their call for universal human rights by their commitment to promoting arms sales. To use just the most egregious example, Saudi Arabia is the largest customer for UK arms, giving it huge power to mute any UK criticism of its policies. The UK government was an enthusiastic promoter of international arms trade regulation through the Arms Trade Treaty. However, this has not prevented the UK government from continuing to licence the export to Saudi Arabia of military aircraft and bombs even though there is a clear risk that they will be used in serious human rights violations in Yemen.
10. The targeted killing by a UK armed drone of Reyaad Khan in August 2015, compounded by the calls from [Rory Stewart](#), then a Foreign Office Minister, in October 2017, and by the [Defence Secretary](#), in December 2017, for UK citizens who have fought with Islamic State to be hunted down and killed is deeply disturbing. The message sent is that UK Ministers do not believe in the due process of the law.
11. The UK government actions mentioned in the above paragraphs have led to great cynicism about UK foreign policy, in the process doing much to undermine the international rules-based order. The UK government should switch from helping despotic governments remain in power to supporting people struggling for democracy and human rights. The effect of such an approach for improved UK and global security would be immense.

Allocation of resources

12. To date, the *status quo* has prevailed in the allocation of resources to address threats to security. The setting up of the MDP means this looks set to continue. This will suit the armed forces and arms companies which successfully argued for military spending of 2% of Gross Domestic Product. The companies have also convinced the European Union to fund military research for the first time. ([Vredesactie, October 2017](#))
13. Demands are now being made in Parliament and the media for yet more military spending, even though there is no explanation as to how such spending enhances security. Indeed, current military spending has reduced security, both by facilitating an aggressive military policy and by diverting resources away from addressing, for example, climate change, marginalisation and civil emergencies. Inside the military budget, equipment costs have been prioritised over personnel showing the influence of arms company lobbying.
14. To tackle the underlying causes of insecurity, vested interests need to consciously be set to one side. As well as ending taxpayer support for arms exports, UK military spending should be reduced. Resources should, for example, be shifted from developing new nuclear-armed submarines, or building and operating new aircraft carriers, towards work to minimise flood risks or greater support for renewable energy development.
15. Many of those employed in the arms industry are skilled engineers, and there is a generally acknowledged shortage of these. Sectors that could benefit from these skills include renewable energy and low-carbon technologies. The public funds which support the arms trade should be redirected to investment in these.

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