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## **Submission from the Campaign Against Arms Trade to the Defence Committee for its inquiry into Defence's contribution to the UK's pandemic response**

1. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) in the UK is working to end the international arms trade. This 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. This inquiry focuses on the military's preparedness and resilience, the nature and effectiveness of the Armed Forces' support of civilian authorities, and the pressure that directing focus towards the pandemic placed on military personnel. This short submission, however, takes a somewhat wider look at the military and the pandemic.
3. The ability to assist in tackling a pandemic is not a justification for having a large, heavily armed military. The nearly 4,000 military personnel in Ministry of Defence's Defence's COVID Support Force (Parliamentary Written Answer number 46539, 20th May 2020 <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-13/46539>) have provided assistance to the NHS and other civilian bodies This was undoubtedly invaluable assistance, but since the total military personnel on 1st January 2020 was over 192,000, not a huge percentage.
4. In fact, part of the reason for the lack of preparedness for a pandemic by the NHS and others is that security had become heavily identified with the military. The UK government's security reviews in 2010 and 2015 identified pandemics as a top level threat to security, higher than a large scale conventional military attack on the UK by another state. Covid19 has shown that pandemic was indeed a very real threat, causing not only the tragic deaths, but also disruption to everyone's live in an unimaginable way.
5. However, while the security reviews accurately placed pandemic above military attack as a threat to the UK, vast amounts of public money continue to be spent on big ticket projects such as nuclear weapons, F-35s and aircraft carriers. This equipment cannot address the challenge of a pandemic.
6. The UK's intervention in wars overseas, either directly as was the case, for example, in Iraq or Libya, or indirectly through the supply of military equipment with Yemen through the arming of Saudi Arabia has left large parts of the world in turmoil. A pandemic adds to the suffering already experienced in these places, but as it does not respect national boundaries, globally everyone is rendered less safe.
7. Along with other existential threats such as climate change, environmental degradation and nuclear weapons, pandemics demand a global response and a complete rethink around security.
8. Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills are in short supply yet many with them work in the arms industry. Government research and development funding has benefited this sector while other industries have been less favoured. Excluding the money spent via higher education, UK government research and development (R&D) expenditure on arms in 2018 was £1.2billion. (Office for National Statistics)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/researchanddevelopmentexpenditure/bulletins/ukgrossdomesticexpenditureonresearchanddevelopment/2018#toc>) This is about 48% of all direct UK government R&D expenditure.

9. Energy supply is a sector that needs STEM skills. According to the International Energy Agency, (<https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-technology-rdd-budgets-2020>) in 2018 total UK public energy R&D (excluding fossil fuels and nuclear energy) was \$670 million in PPP terms, or £467 million. Of this, \$100 million (£70 million) was for renewable energy. (The PPP - purchasing power parity - conversion rate for sterling in 2018 was \$1 = £0.697.)
10. It would be a disastrous response to the pandemic, if, as has been suggested, the UK government was to address the economic fallout from Covid 19 by pressing ahead with the Tempest combat aircraft or other major military projects.
11. Instead, resources should be moved to sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, as well as the design and development of medical equipment, and the building up of public health capacity and infrastructure so that the real security threats are addressed. The jobs would follow the resources. Most importantly, however, the pandemic should put to rest any notion that security threats are all military and a military response is needed to address them.

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