



(c) crown copyright

(THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT)

SECRET

C.(57) 84

COPY NO. 20

1st April, 1957

CABINET

STATEMENT ON DEFENCE, 1957

Note by the Secretary of the Cabinet

By direction of the Prime Minister, I circulate a further revised draft of the Defence White Paper.

2. The main changes are in paragraphs 1-6 and in paragraphs 41-51.
3. The textual amendments discussed at the Cabinet's meeting on 28th March have been incorporated in the revised text.

(Signed) NORMAN BROOK

Cabinet Office, S. W. 1.

30th March, 1957.

SECRET

8th PROOF



DEFENCE

Outline of Future Policy

*Presented by the Minister of Defence to Parliament
by Command of Her Majesty
March 1957*

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
NET

Cmnd.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I	
Scientific Advances	
Demands on Economic Resources	
Britain's Responsibilities	
Collective Defence	
Nuclear Deterrent	
Defence of the Deterrent	
Civil Defence	
Europe and Atlantic	
Middle East	
Far East	
Overseas Garrisons	
Central Reserve	
Sea Power	
II	
Man Power and Recruitment	
Reserve Forces	
III	
Expenditure	
Research and Development	
Commonwealth Co-operation	
Switch of Resources	
IV	
Conclusion	

Defence : Outline of Future Policy

I

The defence policy of the United Kingdom is determined, as previous Statements on Defence have emphasised, by the need to fulfil our obligations as a member of the Commonwealth and of various regional defensive alliances. It must therefore enable us both to make our fair contribution to the Allied deterrent to global war and to discharge our responsibilities in many parts of the world. But if that contribution is to be fully effective it must reflect the impact on strategic thought of the rapid progress in scientific and technological development.

2. At the time of the Korean war in 1950 we launched a rearmament programme which was intended to build up our military strength, in conjunction with our allies in NATO, to face what then appeared to be the imminent risk of world war. Thereafter, the immediate danger of major war gave place to the prospect of a prolonged period of acute international tension. It became clear that the conception of the "long haul" must be substituted for a short intensive period of rearmament. To-day the Communist threat remains: but its nature has changed and it is now evident that, on both military and economic grounds, it is necessary to make a fresh appreciation of defence policy and to adopt a new approach towards it.

Scientific Advances

3. In recent years military technology has been making dramatic strides. New and ever more formidable weapons have been succeeding one another at an increasing rate. In little more than a decade the atom bomb dropped at Hiroshima has been superseded by the far more powerful hydrogen or megaton bomb. Parallel with this, the evolution of rocket weapons of all kinds, both offensive and defensive, has been proceeding apace.

4. It has been clear for some time that these scientific advances must fundamentally alter the whole basis of military planning. But, it is only now that the future picture is becoming sufficiently clear to enable a comprehensive reshaping of policy to be undertaken with any degree of confidence.

Demands on Economic Resources

5. Britain's influence in the world depends first and foremost on the health of her internal economy and the success of her export trade. Without these, military power cannot in the long run be supported nor can Communist economic infiltration into the under-developed areas of the world be effectively countered. It is therefore in the true interests of defence that the claims of military expenditure should be weighed against the need for maintaining the country's financial and economic strength.

6. Over the last five years defence has taken 10 per cent. of Britain's gross national income. Some 7 per cent. of the working population are either in the Services or supporting them. One-eighth of the metal-using industries, upon which the export trade so largely depends, are engaged on defence production. About two-thirds of this country's expenditure on

research and development, and a large proportion of its highly qualified scientists and engineers engaged on this work, are employed on defence projects. In addition, the retention of such large forces abroad gives rise to heavy charges which place a severe strain upon the balance of payments.

Britain's Responsibilities

7. A defence plan, if it is to be effective and economical, must be based on a clear understanding of the military responsibilities to be discharged. Britain's armed forces must be capable of performing two main tasks:—

- (i) to play their part with the forces of Allied countries in deterring and resisting aggression;
- (ii) to defend British colonies and protected territories against local attack, and to undertake limited operations in overseas emergencies.

The aim must be to provide well-equipped forces sufficient to carry out these duties, while making no greater demands than are absolutely necessary upon manpower, money and other national resources.

8. Frequent changes in defence policy are wasteful and disturbing. Experience has shown that the rapid progress of scientific development and constant fluctuations in the international situation make it difficult to foresee future military requirements with any certainty, and that, consequently, a good deal of flexibility must be maintained. Nevertheless, an attempt must be made to establish a broad framework within which long-term planning can proceed.

Collective Defence

9. The growth in the power of weapons of mass destruction has emphasised the fact that no country can any longer protect itself in isolation. The defence of Britain is possible only as part of the collective defence of the free world. This conception of collective defence is the basis of the North Atlantic, South-East Asia and Baghdad alliances.

10. The trend is towards the creation of integrated allied forces. Therefore, provided each member nation plays its fair part in the joint effort, it is not necessarily desirable that each should seek to contribute national forces which are by themselves self-sufficient and balanced in all respects. But whatever yardstick is taken, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Britain has been bearing a disproportionately large share of the total burden of Western defence. Moreover, in assessing the value of her military effort, it must be remembered that, apart from the United States, Britain alone makes a contribution to the nuclear deterrent power upon which the peace of the world so largely rests.

Nuclear Deterrent

11. It must be frankly recognised that there is at present no means of providing adequate protection for the whole country against the consequences of an attack with nuclear weapons. Though, in the event of war, the Hunters and Javelins of the Royal Air Force would unquestionably be able to take a heavy toll of any enemy bombers, a proportion would inevitably get through. Even if it were only a dozen, they could with hydrogen bombs inflict widespread devastation.

12. This makes it more than ever clear that the overriding consideration in all military planning must be to prevent war rather than to prepare for it.

13. While comprehensive disarmament remains the foremost objective of British foreign policy, it is unhappily true that, pending international agreement, the only existing safeguard against nuclear aggression is the power to threaten retaliation in kind.

14. The free world is to-day mainly dependent for its protection upon the nuclear capacity of the United States. While Britain cannot by comparison make more than a modest contribution, there is a wide measure of agreement that she must possess an appreciable element of nuclear deterrent power of her own. British atomic bombs are already in steady production and the Royal Air Force holds a substantial number of them. British megaton weapons are now being developed and a stock of them will in due course be manufactured.

15. The means of delivering these weapons is provided at present by medium bombers of the V-class, whose performance in speed and altitude is equal to that of any bomber aircraft now in service in any other country. It is the intention that these should in due course be supplemented or replaced by medium-range ballistic rockets. A provisional agreement for the supply of these missiles has been entered into with the United States.

Defence of the Deterrent

16. Since peace so largely depends upon the deterrent fear of nuclear retaliation, it is essential that a would-be aggressor should not be allowed to think he could readily knock out the bomber bases in Britain before their aircraft could take off from them. The defence of the bomber airfields or rocket launching sites is therefore an essential part of the deterrent and is, we believe, a feasible task. A manned fighter force for this purpose will be maintained and will progressively be equipped with air-to-air guided missiles. These fighter aircraft will in due course be replaced by a ground-to-air guided missile system.

17. The possibility is not being overlooked that scientific progress may eventually make it possible to devise a means of defence even against bombardment by ballistic rockets. Research on this problem, in collaboration with the United States, is being intensified.

Civil Defence

18. While concentrating available resources as far as possible on building up an active deterrent power, it would be wrong not to take some precautions to minimise damage, should the deterrent fail to prevent war. Civil Defence must accordingly retain a place in the defence plan.

19. As in other fields, the country's economic capacity limits the effort which can be devoted to this purpose. In 1957-58 it will be necessary to concentrate on keeping the existing local organisation in being so as to provide a basis on which realistic planning can continue. The necessary training equipment will be provided. Essential research will proceed; and work on providing emergency communications and on setting up the fall-out warning and monitoring system will go on. These preparations will provide a basis for expansion, should that later be necessary.

Europe and Atlantic

20. The possession of nuclear air power is not by itself a complete deterrent. The frontiers of the free world, particularly in Europe, must be firmly defended on the ground. For only in this way can it be made clear that aggression will be resisted.

21. Britain must provide her fair share of the armed forces needed for this purpose. However, she cannot any longer continue to make a disproportionately large contribution. As the figures below show, the defence expenditure of this country has been higher, in relation to national income, than that of any other member of NATO, except the United States.

DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

(The figures below are based on NATO definitions of defence expenditure)

	<i>Per Cent. of National Income</i>	<i>Spent in 1955 (£ million)</i>
United States	11.2	14,460
United Kingdom	9.3	1,569
France	7.8	1,118
Canada	7.7	648
Netherlands	6.5	159
Greece	6.4	44
Turkey	5.7	135
Germany... ..	5.3	625
Italy	4.7	324
Portugal... ..	4.7	28
Norway	4.3	48
Belgium	4.0	121
Denmark... ..	3.6	47
Luxembourg	3.6	4

22. In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government, after due consultation with the Allied Governments in the North Atlantic Council and in the Council of the Western European Union, have felt it necessary to make reductions in the British land and air forces on the Continent. The strength of the British Army of the Rhine will be reduced from about 77,000 to about 64,000 during the next twelve months; and, subject to consultation with the Allied Governments in the autumn, further reductions will be made thereafter. The organisation of this force will be streamlined in such a way as to increase the proportion of fighting units and atomic rocket artillery will be introduced which will greatly augment their fire-power.

23. The aircraft of the Second Tactical Air Force in Germany will be reduced to about half their present number by the end of March, 1958. This reduction in numbers will be counter-balanced by the fact that some of the squadrons will be provided with atomic bombs. A similar reduction will be made in the light bomber force in England, which is assigned to NATO.

24. Naval forces do not for the most part contribute directly to the deterrent and their role in total war is uncertain. It may well be that the initial nuclear bombardment and counter-bombardment by aircraft or rockets would be so crippling as to bring the war to an end within a few weeks or even days, in which case naval operations would not play any significant part. On the other hand, there is the possibility that the nuclear battle might not prove immediately decisive; and in that event it would be of great importance to keep open Atlantic communications against submarine attack. It is therefore necessary for NATO to maintain substantial naval forces and maritime air units. Britain must make her contribution, though, for the reasons given above, it will have to be on a somewhat reduced scale.

Middle East

25. Outside the area covered by the North Atlantic Alliance, Britain has military responsibilities in other parts of the world, in particular in the Middle East and South-East Asia.

26. Apart from its own importance, the Middle East guards the right flank of NATO and is the gateway to the African continent. In the Arabian Peninsula, Britain must at all times be ready to defend Aden Colony and Protectorates and the territories on the Persian Gulf for whose defence she is responsible. For this task, land, air and sea forces have to be maintained in that area and in East Africa.

27. In addition, Britain has undertaken in the Baghdad Pact to co-operate with the other signatory States for security and defence. It is the especial purpose of the Pact Powers to prevent Communist encroachment and infiltration. In the event of emergency, British forces in the Middle East area would be made available to support the Alliance. These would include bomber squadrons based in Cyprus capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

28. As a result of the termination of the Treaty with Jordan, Britain has been relieved of the responsibility for defending that country in the event of attack; and British forces are being withdrawn. The British troops in Libya will also be progressively reduced.

Far East

29. In South-East Asia, apart from defending her colonies and protectorates, Britain has agreed to assist in the external defence of Malaya after she attains independence. Britain also has an international commitment, as a member of the SEATO and ANZAM defence systems, to help preserve stability and resist the extension of Communist power in that area.

30. It is proposed to maintain in this theatre a mixed British Gurkha force and certain air force elements, together with a substantial garrison in Hong Kong and a small naval force based on Singapore.

31. In addition, there is a Commonwealth Strategic Reserve. This includes a brigade, to which Britain contributes two battalions. Australia and New Zealand jointly provide the remainder of the brigade and some naval and air forces.

32. After consultation with the United States and with the other Commonwealth countries concerned, the Government have decided to withdraw the remaining United Kingdom troops, approximately a battalion, from Korea. A liaison mission will be retained at the Headquarters of the United Nations Command.

Overseas Garrisons

33. Garrisons for British colonies and protectorates make substantial demands upon military manpower. Some of these garrisons are at present larger than is necessary for internal security and yet are too small to provide effective protection against serious aggression.

34. Having regard to the fact that Colonial forces are increasingly assuming responsibility for internal security and that it is now possible to send reinforcements rapidly from Britain, the Government propose to reduce garrisons generally to the numbers immediately necessary for the defence against local attack where such a threat exists.

Central Reserve

35. With the reduction in the size of garrisons and other British forces overseas, it is more than ever essential to be able to despatch reinforcements at short notice. With this object, a Central Army Reserve has been created in the British Isles.

36. To be effective, the Central Reserve must possess the means of rapid mobility. For this purpose, a substantial fleet of transport aircraft has been built up in R.A.F. Transport Command. This is at present mainly composed of Comet II's, Beverley freighters and Hastings aircraft, to which a number of Britannias will later be added. These transport resources of the R.A.F. would be supplemented, when necessary, by suitable civil aircraft and naval vessels.

37. Besides the land forces of the Central Reserve additional military power for overseas emergencies can be rapidly provided from the resources of the Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Commands of the Royal Air Force.

Sea Power

38. On account of their mobility, the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines provide another effective means of bringing power, in particular air power, rapidly to bear in peace-time emergencies or limited hostilities. In modern conditions the role of the aircraft carrier, which is in effect a mobile air station, becomes increasingly significant.

39. With this consideration in mind, it is proposed to base the main elements of the Royal Navy upon a small number of carrier groups, each composed of one aircraft carrier and a number of supporting ships. Apart from carriers, the number of large ships will be restricted to the minimum. The cruisers in the active fleet will be reduced and, in due course, replaced by new ships of the Tiger Class, now under construction. Similarly, in the various categories of smaller vessels, the policy will be to rely on a reduced number of more modern ships, some of which will be equipped with guided missiles. A considerable number of ships now in reserve, including battleships, will be disposed of or scrapped.

40. It is the Government's intention to maintain British naval strength East of Suez at about its present level. One carrier group will normally be stationed in the Indian Ocean and a small force at Singapore.

II

Man Power and Recruitment

41. Part I of this paper has outlined the changes which must be made in our defence policy to adapt it to the rapid development of military science and technology and to enable the country not only to discharge its defence commitments but also to pursue sound and progressive economic policies. This Part seeks to make a corresponding assessment of the future manpower needs of the Services.

42. In this country we have a long and honourable tradition of voluntary military service. Regular professional forces have secured our defence in peace and have formed the core of our expanded forces in war. Since the end of the last war voluntary recruitment has been supplemented by the continuance

of National Service. But it has been the declared aim of successive Governments to bring this to an end and to return to our traditional methods as soon as this can be done consistently with our defence obligations throughout the world. The present Government have frequently reaffirmed this aim and they believe it to accord with the general desire of the nation.

43. The revised defence plan, with its greatly reduced demands on manpower and its emphasis on highly trained mobile forces, now makes it reasonable to contemplate putting the Armed Forces on to an all-regular footing. National Service inevitably involves an uneconomic use of manpower, especially in the training organisation. There are at present no less than 150,000 men training or being trained in the establishments of the three Services. This high figure is due, in large measure, to the continuous turn-over inseparable from National Service, the abolition of which would make possible substantial economies in manpower. A corresponding economy could be made in administrative overheads. The Service Departments and Ministry of Supply are already engaged in a further effort to reduce these, in particular to cut down the numbers of headquarters and the size of staffs, to eliminate duplication on common tasks such as signal communications, and to reduce the number of men serving in depots and base installations by concentrating work in fewer places. Every endeavour will also be made to extend the practice of employing civilians or civilian contractors on tasks where it is not essential, for military reasons, to employ Service personnel, such as storekeeping, accounting, maintenance and equipment, policing and catering.

44. In reorganising the Services on a more compact, efficient, and highly trained basis we shall, of course, take fully into account our commitments to our allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and our other regional alliances. The process will need to be kept constantly under review in the light of changing strategic circumstances, and will inevitably take a considerable time. At present the total strength of the Forces is about 700,000.* By the end of 1957-58 the Forces will still comprise 620,000 men. Subsequent reductions will depend largely on our success in attracting a sufficient number of regular recruits. On present indications it is possible to envisage that by 1962 the Services should be stabilised at a total strength rather more than half the existing figure.

45. The Government have made a comprehensive review both of the demands upon the economy and of our vital military commitments. They have concluded that, in the light of the need to maintain a balanced distribution of the national resources of manpower, regular forces on this scale constitute the objective which they should seek ultimately to attain. In their view, if the three Services are reshaped and redistributed on the lines indicated above and commitments are re-assessed in the manner outlined in this paper, this country can discharge its own overseas responsibilities and make its fair contribution to the joint defence of the free world. The Government have accordingly decided to plan on this basis.

46. On this basis the Government hope to avoid any further call-up under the National Service Acts after the end of 1960. Nevertheless, if voluntary recruiting fails to produce the numbers required, the country will have to face the need for some limited form of compulsory service to bridge the gap. While regular recruitment is building up and the strength of the Forces is being run down, it will be necessary to reduce progressively the

* This figure relates to adult male uniformed United Kingdom personnel of all ranks and excludes Gurkhas, Colonial forces, women and boys.

size of the National Service intake. The number of men becoming available for National Service will to a growing extent exceed requirements. The Government will announce as soon as possible the way in which they intend to effect the call-up of the numbers needed. Every effort will be made to ensure that this is done in as fair and reasonable a manner as possible. The Government believe that, provided it is seen to be an inseparable part of the process of winding up National Service, the country will accept any unavoidable anomalies with understanding.

47. But this process will not be easy; nor is the problem the same in all three Services. The Royal Navy is already, in the main, a regular force on long-service engagements and it should readily attract enough recruits to meet its needs. In the Royal Air Force, 127,000 other ranks, or about two-thirds of the present strength, are regulars. But some 31,000 of these are serving on three-year engagements; and many of them would not have enlisted but for their liability for National Service. Nevertheless, the recent improvement in its recruiting makes it reasonable to hope that the R.A.F. will be able to enlist enough regulars to meet the smaller numbers required under the revised plan.

48. It is in the Army that the greatest difficulty arises. Only about 164,000 are regulars; and of these, less than 80,000 are serving on engagements of over three years. A marked improvement in regular recruiting will therefore be needed to make it independent of National Service.

49. Moreover, it is not enough simply to reach the total strengths required. A proper balance must be maintained in the composition of the forces. The replacement of the men who are now called up after deferment as apprentices will constitute a special problem. With the continuous development of modern equipment, skilled tradesmen are increasingly important. Unless, therefore, an adequate proportion of these can be recruited, the Services will be in danger of becoming unbalanced and losing in efficiency. There is also the problem of obtaining sufficient recruits to man the branches which perform the less popular duties.

50. In order to encourage recruiting, the Government will seek to make life in the Services more attractive. As already announced, the scales of rations are being increased. It is also proposed to press ahead with the modernisation of barrack accommodation, the construction of more married quarters, and the provision of better recreational facilities. Methods of improving the serviceman's prospect of good employment on his return to civilian life are being examined. In these and other ways plans are being prepared for the different ranks and branches of each Service, with the object of offering good long-term careers.

51. In order to waste no time in building up the Regular element, the recruiting campaign will be intensified, and more money will be provided in the coming year for this purpose.

Reserve Forces

52. Reserve forces will continue to have an important part to play.

53. Apart from the flying units of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve which it has regretfully been found necessary to disband, the Naval and Air Forces Reserves will be retained in their present roles, though the numbers required will have to be reduced to accord with the new plan.

54. Reservists will continue to be needed to make good deficiencies in the Regular Army in overseas emergencies. However, the great majority of the Reserve Army, in particular the Territorial Army and A.E.R., will continue to be trained and equipped primarily for Home Defence.

55. Under present plans Britain is due to provide two Territorial Army divisions as reinforcements for NATO. Since these certainly would not be ready for action on the Continent in less than three months, which in nuclear war would be of little value, the Government consider that it would be more appropriate to assign them to Home Defence duties like the rest of the Territorial Army. This question is being discussed with SACEUR.

III

Expenditure

56. The Defence Estimates for the year 1956/57 amounted to about £1,600 million, before deducting receipts from the United States and Germany. Had the programme as planned a year ago been allowed to continue unchanged, the figure for 1957/58 would have risen to about £1,700 million.

57. However, as a result of strenuous efforts to effect economy, it has been found possible to keep the defence estimates for the coming year down to a total of £1,489 million. From this must be deducted receipts from Germany and the United States, which are expected to amount to about £50 million and £19 million respectively. Thus the net estimate of total defence expenditure for the year 1957/58 will amount to about £1,420 million. This large saving has been secured by various measures, including in particular a substantial reduction in the overall strength of the forces, the cutting down of production orders and purchases of stores and some curtailment of the research and development programme.

58. It is not yet possible to forecast the level of expenditure in later years. It should not however be expected that it will show a decline in any way comparable with that in the manpower strengths of the forces. This is primarily due to the ever-increasing complication of modern weapons and equipment, the higher cost per man of regular forces and the fact that proportionately more civilians will be employed. Nevertheless, it can safely be assumed that the new plan, when it is fully implemented, will further appreciably reduce the burden on the economy. Above all, it will release skilled men, including many badly needed scientists and technicians, for employment in civilian industry. Both exports and capital investment will gain.

Research and Development

Commonwealth Co-operation

60. With the advance of military technology, Commonwealth co-operation on research and development is assuming increasing importance. An outstanding example is the development of guided missiles at Woomera, which is being undertaken jointly by the United Kingdom and Australia.

61. The Government will seek to maintain and foster close co-operation in defence matters generally with members of the Commonwealth. This will continue to be effected by normal intergovernmental consultations, frequent meetings of Chiefs of Staff, the exchange and secondment of officers, and the supply of training facilities.

Switch of Resources

62. This new plan involves the biggest change in defence policy ever made in normal times. In carrying it through a certain amount of disturbance is unavoidable.

63. The large reduction in the size of the forces will inevitably create some surplus of officers and N.C.Os. It will take a little time to assess the numbers precisely. The proportion will differ for each Service and for the various ranks and branches. Those whose careers have to be prematurely terminated will be given fair compensation and will be helped in every way possible to find suitable employment in civil life.

64. Similarly, the volume of defence work of many kinds will be curtailed, and some establishments will have to be closed. The manpower and industrial resources released must be absorbed into productive use as quickly as possible. The Government Departments concerned will do all they can to secure that this switch is effected smoothly.

IV

Conclusion

65. The Government have adopted this new defence plan in the confidence that it will not only give relief to the country's sorely strained economy, but will produce compact all-regular forces of the highest quality.

66. The three Services will be equipped and organised on the most up-to-date lines. The Fleet will be composed of modern vessels. The Army will be equipped with atomic artillery and given a high degree of strategic mobility. The Air Force will be supplied with British megaton bombs; a missile system of air defence will be developed; and ballistic rockets will be introduced to supplement the V-bombers.

67. In short, it is the intention that, when reorganised in accordance with the new plan, Britain's armed forces shall be better equipped, better trained and better designed for the tasks that lie ahead.