

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SDSR 2015: Reaction from the Royal Aeronautical Society

Commenting on the publication today (Monday) of the Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), Iain McNicoll, Chair of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) Air Power Group, said:

"The Prime Minister's unveiling of a more strategic, threat-based approach to determining military capability, which can more easily and successfully counter shifting situations and more diverse threats, is welcome.

"Ministers have clearly learned a valuable lesson from the resource-driven approach to the 2010 SDSR. The approach set out by the Government five years ago rapidly became obsolete with the emergence of unforeseen threats from so-called Islamic State and a resurgent Russia. The UK faces a very different threat landscape today, with growing instability.

"We must avoid becoming prisoners of the present. Only the development of a more flexible, agile and technologically-advanced military, that can be readily and rapidly deployed in times of crisis, will ensure the UK maintains vital national security and influence on international issues whatever the geo-political situation.

"The Government's pledge to close the critical capability gaps left over from the 2010 Review, especially giving our severely depleted fast-jet capability a much-needed boost and delivering a multi-mission aircraft kitted with the full suite of maritime reconnaissance equipment, comes as a great relief. Equipment is only one half of the story; and we await to see if more details on personnel emerge in Wednesday's Spending Review to determine whether the Government will provide sufficient specialist manpower to ensure we avoid ending up with a hollow-force.

"Even with much needed investment Ministers are right to continue to bear down on equipment development and acquisition costs over the next five years in order to provide value for money to the taxpayer. The progress made during the last Parliament has at least made the current equipment plan affordable and therefore deliverable. The Government must continue along the path of efficiency savings to avoid having to backtrack on these new equipment proposals."

Additional comments on specific announcements:

On the extension of the Typhoon lifecycle and additional F-35 Joint Strike Fighters:

The RAeS submission highlighted the importance of providing sufficient fighter aircraft with the most advanced radar and missiles to be fully effective and so as not to undermine the whole investment:

“The days of dedicated air-to-air and air-to-ground combat aircraft are rightly over so the Government’s commitment to fit Typhoons with highly capable radar and acquire planned F-35 Joint Strike Fighters with the full suite of ground attack capability is crucial to providing the flexible force of the future.”

“With the number of fast-jet aircraft squadrons at an all time low, we are pleased that Ministers see the value in creating additional squadrons for our combat air capability, so that it will be better balanced with the rest of the UK’s forces. However, the long-term increase in squadrons is small, with only nine in 2025 – up from eight today.”

On Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA)/Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA):

The Royal Aeronautical Society’s SDSR submission concluded that the gap in maritime patrol and ground surveillance aircraft was unsustainable and must be filled as soon as possible.

“Local and wide area maritime surveillance against both surface and sub-surface threats is essential for the UK’s freedom to operate the future aircraft carriers and our nuclear deterrent, to protect our coastal waters more effectively, and to ensure the UK has an independent long-range search and rescue capability. The Government is absolutely right to prioritise the delivery of these new aircraft and to plan to embody future ground surveillance capabilities.”

On air intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR):

“Air ISR is essential for providing air, ground and maritime forces with vital situational awareness, and can provide benefits to domestic security and law enforcement. We welcome the commitment to extend the life of ISR aircraft, and to upgrade Sentry E-3D. The proposal to double the number of intelligence gathering unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is also to be applauded.

“The inclusion of the Zephyr ultra-long endurance UAV, currently under development, will not only boost ISR capability but also provide the UK with world-leading technology – highly attractive for exports. However, we would have liked to have seen more detail on how ISR should be optimised across all the platforms with a view to convergence in the longer term to reduce the overall cost.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The [Royal Aeronautical Society](http://www.aerosociety.com) (RAeS) is the world's only professional body dedicated to the entire aerospace community. The Society promotes the highest professional standards in all aerospace disciplines; provides specialist information; acts as a central forum for the exchange of ideas; and plays a leading role in influencing opinion on aerospace matters. Visit www.aerosociety.com for more information.
2. In July 2015, the RAeS published its submission to SDSR 2015 – [*Aerospace in the SDSR 2015: Building flexible capability for a fast-changing world*](#) – which assesses the current international landscape and sets out the capabilities required to deal more effectively and efficiently with new global threats.
3. Iain McNicoll is available for further comment and interview.

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