
Britain's Military Deterrence Gaps

*An analysis of the most urgent
capability gaps in Britain's military
deterrence posture.*

Robert Clark

Foreword by General Rt Hon The Lord Dannatt GCB CBE MC DL, former
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Foreword

The Strategic Defence Review of July 2025 provided a clear analysis of the security threats facing the United Kingdom, with sixty-two recommendations to address these threats.

Disappointingly, the much-delayed Defence Investment Plan failed to fund the implementation of the recommendations and the country remains at severe risk. Neither our enemies nor our allies can quite believe that the British Government remains so complacent over our security.

This paper by 878 focuses very sharply on the most significant deficiencies in our deterrent capability. Although drone warfare has changed the face of combat, it has not removed the need for combined arms manoeuvre on the land battlefield. NATO has charged the UK-led Strategic Reserve Corps to have the capability to retake ground – the 3rd UK Division is the tip of that spear, but its equipment shortfalls are woeful. There are insufficient CHALLENGER 3 main

battle tanks on order, an AJAX programme that should be scrapped in favour of upgrading the WARRIOR infantry fighting vehicles, and a reinstatement of the SKYNET6 Ultra High Frequency (UHF) satellite system, essential for connecting sensor to shooter, itself the key to increasing lethality.

And the Royal Navy – the traditional bastion of our security and guarantor of our trade. The proposals for a Hybrid Navy are catchy to the eye but mask an underlying deficiency. The greatest challenge to our security now is at sea, as Russia challenges NATO in the High North and probes at our connectivity to the European mainland. Being an island used to be our protection, but not now with a trellis of umbilical cords between us and Europe and with North America. At the very least the Type 45 destroyers should be upgraded and be able to afford us a measure of ballistic missile protection into the 2040s. And a serious shipbuilding programme would be a huge boost to economic growth.

We have a new Government, but we face the same challenges. John Healey, now as Chancellor, knows the depths of our defence investment peril – Wes Streeting as the new Defence Secretary is quickly finding out. Prime Minister Andy Burnham may promise us the best social care system in the world, but what is the value of good care if we are not fundamentally secure? Priorities, Prime Minister – that is your job, not wishful thinking.

Richard Dannatt

General The Lord Dannatt GCB CBE MC DL

Introduction

Only three weeks after Britain's Defence Investment Plan (DIP) set the tone for defence for the next three years, a new Prime Minister (Andy Burnham), Chancellor of the Exchequer (former Defence Secretary John Healey), and Defence Secretary (former Health Secretary Wes Streeting) were ushered into Government.

While the long-awaited and repeatedly delayed DIP fleshed out some of the technical aspects of last year's Strategic Defence Review (SDR), there remain many capability gaps across the British Armed Forces which, if left unchecked, will lead to an erosion of deterrence, and of war-fighting capability should deterrence fail.

To determine some of these capability gaps in military deterrence, the starting point for analysis must be an appreciation of what the United Kingdom's military is for, set against the political aspirations made of it. First, this means the territorial defence of the United Kingdom and its overseas territories, spanning the North and South Atlantic, Caribbean, Mediterranean, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, whilst also protecting its NATO allies.

Additionally, as an island nation on the north-western fringe of Europe, the British economy depends on free and open maritime trading routes across the globe: in particular the Mediterranean to the Gulf, and the Indian Ocean route through the Suez Canal and the Bab-el Mandeb Strait. In addition, the Strait of Hormuz is still critical for British oil and natural gas imports; we also depend on the Strait of Malacca in the Indo-Pacific.

Despite the need to ensure the security of these national interests, the UK has not only much reduced its expeditionary-capable land force, but has also seriously depleted its maritime capability in the Royal Navy.

Meanwhile, the continued defence of continental Europe from adversarial hegemonic power remains central to British foreign and therefore defence policy. Traditionally this has been achieved through the UK's role balancing continental powers and leading alliances in that cause.

This is currently manifested by British political leadership and support for the government and people of Ukraine, against unprovoked and full-scale invasion by Russia (there is also the political aspiration for the UK to lead, with France, a post-conflict stabilisation force in Ukraine, which would require land operations, as well as likely air, space, and potentially even maritime contributions).

Historically, Britain's foundational military strength comes from the Royal Navy. However, ensuring freedom of navigation across those maritime choke points, on which global trade depends, and the protection of overseas territories, are just two national interests which have come under increased strain in recent months.

Most recently, the Royal Navy has been tasked with a mine-clearing and freedom of navigation mission in the Strait of Hormuz, while ensuring continued air defence of the sovereign base areas at Cyprus, one of which came under attack by Iranian proxy Hezbollah from Lebanon.

While the UK's sovereign base areas have been reinforced in recent weeks by additional ground-based air defence assets to counter the airborne threat from hostile actors, there still remain massive gaps across the UK's air defences, which recent spending plans announced would only cover a fraction of what is required.

Despite Britain's air defences requiring more investment to ensure a truly layered and sovereign capability, this work analyses the most glaring gaps in the UK's deterrence – its ability to deter war from happening, the result of years of neglect. While deterrence theory is complex, this analysis will explore the two main concepts: deterrence through denial, and deterrence through punishment.

Deterrence by denial seeks to deter hostile action by making it unlikely to succeed, denying an aggressor the ability to achieve its objective. The UK Armed Forces' deployment in Eastern Europe demonstrates the multinational

response that incursion into NATO territory would trigger, thus either denying any Russian victory, or making one less likely. Deterrence by punishment threatens severe repercussions should an attack occur, therefore significantly raising the cost of an attack. This includes the risk of military strikes.

As General the Lord Dannatt rightly states in this paper's Foreword, Britain has a new Government but faces the same challenges. Resourcing the DIP should be this Government's most immediate concern, but institutional obstacles to meeting the UK's spending commitments to its NATO allies will remain. The previous Labour Government recently committed to increasing defence spending to 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the next Parliament, while simultaneously committing to reach 3.5% of GDP by 2035.¹ The new Government should now firmly commit to a 2030 deadline to reach 3% of GDP on defence spending, for two clear reasons.

First, extra resource expenditure is likely to increase *after* 2030, given current fiscal pressures against it in the DIP (planned internal savings of nearly £11bn by 2030 via civil service workforce reductions and lowered consultancy spending). Meanwhile extra capital expenditure is set to rise to cover some incoming procurement programmes, including money set aside for autonomous systems. There will be a fiscal squeeze on new capital expenditure, but also an expected reduction in resource expenditure until 2030. A budget rise to 3% of GDP by 2030 would allow additional capital to be set against some of the deterrence gaps this paper examines that befall the British Armed Forces.

Second, setting a clear deadline for reaching 3% for 2030 will alleviate some of the political challenges downstream to reach 3.5% only five years thereafter. In today's prices, 3.5% of GDP would represent an additional £40bn by 2035.² Setting a clear mid-point deadline between now and 2035 helps move the political dial in the right direction for 2035 – a firm NATO commitment the UK can ill-afford to fall short on. In the short-term however, this is necessary to help bridge some of the gaps in the UK's ability to deter its adversaries.

To achieve that deterrence, a military force must possess two intrinsic capabilities: credible forces in place where they are needed; and the political leadership required to use those forces. The most urgent areas of the UK's military which lack credibility to deter aggression are manoeuvre in the land domain; the hybrid navy concept in the maritime domain; and space.³

1 The Defence Investment Plan Funding Explainer. (2026). Ministry of Defence. Accessed online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-defence-investment-plan/the-defence-investment-plan-funding-explainer> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

2 Paxton. (2026). The "welfare versus defence" framing oversimplifies the difficult trade-offs. Institute for Government. Accessed online at <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/article/comment/welfare-versus-defence-framing-over-simplifies-difficult-trade-offs> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

3 NB: This policy paper is derived from Written Evidence submitted to the Parliamentary Joint Committee for the National Security Strategy, 8th July 2026.

Land Manoeuvre

Despite the growing importance of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), the conflict in Ukraine is still dominated by the capacity for general manoeuvre, like all land campaigns. The capacity for successful manoeuvre around a battle-field determines success or failure.

Ukrainian UAV warfare is increasingly successful inside Russia, but within Ukraine UAVs are used in the context of the need for the capacity to manoeuvre, or to restrict it, especially when a force is unable to integrate digitalised combined arms. The Russian military has been unable to achieve this; however the Ukraine Armed Forces are still in the relatively early stages of this development, despite 11 years of *de facto* NATO force development and doctrinal training. Traditionally, integrating forces to achieve battlefield supremacy has been a strength of the British Army.

Combined arms manoeuvre (CAM) means the successful integration of forces – traditionally infantry with armour, artillery with air support, and more recently, air defence with electronic warfare. Successful CAM now demands the additional integration of uncrewed ground/aerial vehicles (UGVs/UAVs), cyber-operations, and flexible mission command, to bypass modern defences, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target-acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) sensors, and digitalised targeting systems, in order still to achieve manoeuvre and battlefield supremacy.

This ‘Manoeuvrist Approach’ is central to the British Army. Rather than trading blows in a war of attrition, as in the battlefields of Ukraine, the British Army’s philosophy has relied on agility and speed to strike an enemy’s vulnerabilities. The main manoeuvre formation of the British Army is the 3rd (United Kingdom) Division, its principal war-fighting division. Of the 3rd Division’s component parts, 3rd Deep Recce Strike Brigade, 12th Armoured Brigade, and 20th Armoured Brigade form the bulk of the war-fighting personnel. However there are serious concerns about the deliverability of vital platforms for these units, with long project overruns and technical faults causing lengthy delays.

The most pressing is the incoming Ajax armoured fighting vehicle. 245 ISTAR-role Ajax vehicles, and 93 support-role Ares platforms, will form the backbone of the fully-digitalised Deep Recce Strike and Armoured Brigade Combat Teams (BCT), in addition to the 623 incoming Boxer mechanized infantry vehicles. These fully digitalised armoured platforms will form the Division’s manoeuvre backbone, complemented by 148 upgraded Challenger 3 Main Battle Tanks (MBT), to provide additional manoeuvre with increased firepower – vital in land warfare.

Following engineering delays, the Initial Operating Capability (IOC) for the incoming Challenger 3 MBTs is scheduled for 2027. The fleet of 148 upgraded

tanks is expected to enter service by the end of 2030.⁴ Under its Brigades, 3rd Division includes three tank regiments: the Queen's Royal Hussars, the Royal Tank Regiment, and the King's Royal Hussars. British tank regiments comprise 56 MBTs each, 168 in total for the three regiments. Adding the 22 MBTs maintained at the Armour Centre and other training grounds⁵ brings this to 190 for a full fleet (not including reserve platforms). Therefore at current force levels the 3rd Division will be under-strength by 42 MBTs.

The long-running Ajax debacle has been well documented,⁶ plagued by repeated trial suspensions since 2021, causing injuries and even discharges. Most recently, trials were paused in late 2025, when 35 soldiers fell violently ill (shaking and vomiting) due to extreme noise and vibration during training.⁷ This came at an awkward moment for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and then-Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, Luke Pollard MP, who had to reverse Ajax Initial Operating Capability in early 2026.⁸ There has been no update on the Ajax IOC since then.⁹

This summer's DIP provided guaranteed funding for Ajax, ensuring continued political support and industrial safeguards, but the programme is already nine years delayed, having been designated to enter service by 2017.¹⁰ With the pace of technological advancement, if Ajax ever enters service it may be outdated and require extensive uplifts to maintain a competitive edge.

Elsewhere, the British Army received 100 Boxer platforms for unit trials by June 2026. Boxer, a medium-weight wheeled mechanised infantry vehicle (MIV) is replacing the 40-year-old designed and tracked Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV), designed to form the core manoeuvre component of the Army's armoured Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs). Boxer's IOC had been Q4 2025, missed due to supply chain problems.

Another concern is Boxer's predecessor, the Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle

4 Challenger 3. (2026). The British Army. Accessed online at <https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/equipment/combat-vehicles/challenger-3/> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

5 Challenger 2. (2003). Hansard. Accessed online at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2003-07-17/debates/a01eb101-f2a3-4e2d-892c-095f77ae27e0/Challenger2Tanks> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

6 Clark, R. (2021). The British Army's Ajax: Fit for Purpose? The Henry Jackson Society. Accessed online at <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/publications/ajax-fit-for-purpose/> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

7 Storey, E., and Griffiths, E. (2026). Army to resume Ajax armoured vehicle trials after they made soldiers sick. BBC. Accessed online at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

8 Ajax: Initial Operating Capacity. (2026). Hansard. Accessed online at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2026-02-02/debates/CF3762C1-5DD9-4BFF-8962-A5D9DF5A1870/AjaxInitialOperatingCapacity> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

9 Defence minister refuses to give timescale on troubled Ajax armoured vehicles. (2026). BBC. Accessed online at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3w1xj5q22do> Last accessed 27 July.

10 Ajax: The British Army's troubled armoured vehicle programme. (2023). House of Commons Library. Accessed online at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9764/> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

(IFV). Warrior is supposed to end service by 2027,¹¹ with many units already decommissioning their Warriors, ready for Boxer. But with no revised IOC for Boxer, and with only 100 out of 623 platforms delivered, this will leave a significant capability gap, as Warrior is phased out with no operational replacement for the Army's four armoured infantry battalions (not to mention the additional 72 howitzer platforms for the Royal Artillery, planned from 2028, which will themselves be subjected to knock-on delays should the initial tranche of armoured infantry Boxers likely face expected delivery overruns).

In sum, 3rd Division is the primary force for achieving manoeuvre in the land domain – still the decisive element in a peer-adversarial industrial war. At the time of writing:

- The British Army still has no deadline for its incoming armoured fighting vehicles and tracked reconnaissance platforms (Ajax), already nine years delayed and with concern that they may not achieve an IOC at all;
- The mechanised infantry vehicle programme (Boxer) has only delivered 100 out of 623 platforms to units, with no deadline for the remainder, as its predecessor (Warrior) is already being phased out with its continuation ruled out by the government;
- An MBT replacement programme (CR3) from 2027 which will leave the British Army's tank fleet depleted by nearly one third of current requirements.

These concerns undermine the British Army Chief of the General Staff's aspiration to double, then triple, lethality. This raises significant concerns regarding the Army's ability to conduct CAM with an aspirational fully digitalised force, severely limiting the UK's ability to achieve (conventional) deterrence by punishment.

UK Space Command

Underpinning developments in modern, fully integrated and digitalised warfare is the crucial role of space-based assets, particularly as digitalisation increases, delivering precise navigation, instant communications, global surveillance, and early missile-warning systems. Without space-based assets, coordinating fast-paced, multi-domain operations and CAM becomes difficult.

Until recently, this emerging domain for war was a source of strength for the UK, guided by the Defence Space Strategy¹² and the Strategic Defence Review

11 Langford, C. (2025). UK rules out keeping Warrior armoured vehicles in service. UK Defence Journal. Accessed online at <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/uk-rules-out-keeping-warrior-armoured-vehicles-in-service/> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

12 Defence Space Strategy: Operationalising the Space Domain. (2022). Ministry of Defence. Accessed online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-space-strategy-operationalising-the-space-domain> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

(SDR). UK space policy focuses on transitioning from space merely being a ‘supporting function’ to achieving ‘space control’, and, crucially, deterrence.¹³

However, to many people’s surprise, the recent DIP announced the cancellation of the Narrowband Ultra High Frequency (UHF) Satellite System of the incoming SKYNET 6. The SKYNET 6A and 6EC satellite communications programmes were intended to offer a rapid decision-making advantage, designed for modern, multi-domain warfare with 3.5 times the communication capacity of Skynet 5, with upgraded anti-jamming defences. There is the possibility of pursuing a different procurement route alongside allies for a replacement narrowband UHF satellite capability, but details remain scarce and undeveloped, and risk a sovereign capability for the next generation of warfare in which offensive space operations will have an intrinsic role.¹⁴

There is now concern that the four Skynet 5 satellites, launched between 2007 and 2012, have already either exceeded or are reaching the end of their original 15-year design life. To bridge this gap, Skynet 6A has been slated to enter service in 2027, following extensive testing and costs already incurred. Without UHF, Britain may struggle to compete against peer competitors who are investing in advanced and modern space-based military assets, including narrowband UHF satellites. Cancelling the UHF upgrade will inhibit the MoD’s aspiration to double, then triple, lethality, thus reducing the capacity for deterrence.

Finally, the SDR articulated an aspiration that UK space-based capabilities should be ‘supplemented by action with Allies in NATO’, to ensure that the Alliance has effective space policy, doctrine, and plans.¹⁵ There is also a concern that the UK will inadvertently relegate itself from being a NATO leader in space, especially should it seek further European integration, at the cost of sovereign space capability.

The Hybrid Navy

In December 2025 the First Sea Lord articulated the Royal Navy’s Atlantic Bastion strategy, with the introduction of the Hybrid Navy concept.

Atlantic Bastion is designed to protect the UK from Russian undersea threats in the North Atlantic, through a transformation of the Royal Navy and its submarine-hunting capabilities: in essence, deterrence by denial from Russia seeking to use the High North, and in particular the strategic Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap, to threaten the UK and its immediate (NATO) allies. Atlantic Bastion is a response to growing Russian submarine and related activity, such as by the Russian spy ship Yantar around British waters in 2025,

¹³ The Defence Investment Plan. (2026). Ministry of Defence. p.49.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Strategic Defence Review 2025 – Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad. (2025). Ministry of Defence.

including activities targeting undersea cables and pipelines.¹⁶

The recent harassment of the Prince of Wales aircraft carrier in the Norwegian Sea by a Russian maritime patrol aircraft demonstrated these threats. This resulted in two UK F-35Bs on-board the carrier being scrambled to interdict the Russian plane.¹⁷ While such activity is nothing new, the Russian plane launched tens of sonobuoys around the carrier, potentially to map the acoustic signature of the carrier and any accompanying submarines. Atlantic Bastion seeks to deter these escalating Russian threats around British waters by creating an advanced hybrid naval force to defend the UK and our NATO allies against increased sub-threshold threats, and the more traditional concern of overt Russian military action.¹⁸ According to the Royal Navy, it will enable the UK to 'find, track and, if required, act against adversaries'.¹⁹

This hybrid vision was described in the recent DIP, with some resources made available for advances in autonomous systems to integrate into crewed forces, intended to help build a hybrid model. At least £1.3bn has been allocated over the next four years for the Hybrid Navy concept.²⁰ In practice however, this will mean cutting proven (and crucial) crewed platforms for untested and uncrewed ones.

The Type 45 Destroyer's replacement, the Type 83, has been cancelled, in favour of six Common Combat Vessels (CCV), acting as command vessels for four new classes of as-yet-undesignated autonomous platforms (Type 9X). These all need to be designed, built, tested, delivered, and doctrinally proven by 2035, when the Type 45 is due to leave service. These are tight timeframes, especially for a procurement system known to move at glacial speed. Therefore existing shipyards at Rosyth which handle much of the current frigate builds should be utilised for the incoming CCVs.

The Type 26 Frigates also provide an opportunity for British manufacturing, with export potential to maritime allies. Replicating successful recent defence agreements based around British-built vessels and increased allied interoperability for their use should be considered.

The recent Lunna House agreement with Norway provides a credible template not simply for boosting UK growth and defence exports, but also to contribute towards British and European deterrence in areas of the UK's national interest,

16 New Royal Navy undersea warfare technology unveiled to counter threat from Russia. (2025). Royal Navy. Accessed online at <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news/2025/december/08/20241208-atlantic-bastion> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

17 Gregory, J. (2026). UK fighter jets intercept Russian plane over Norwegian Sea. BBC. Accessed online at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0jyy5w4q2no> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

18 New Royal Navy undersea warfare technology unveiled to counter threat from Russia. (2025). Royal Navy. Accessed online at <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news/2025/december/08/20241208-atlantic-bastion> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

19 Ibid.

20 Defence Investment Plan: Key decisions. (2026). House of Commons Library. Accessed online at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10935/> last accessed 27 July 2026.

establishing a joint anti-submarine naval fleet to protect critical undersea infrastructure and deter against Russian submarine patrols around British waters.²¹ A similar pathway should be explored for allies interested in the Type 26, such as Denmark.

Aside from the tight timeframes and unproven concepts, it is not clear how reliance on a fleet with more uncrewed than crewed vessels will affect deterrence. Having a force of 30 or so Large Uncrewed Surface Vessels (LUSVs) accompanying a small, reduced escort fleet could provide deterrence by denial, through a system of distributed sensors and effectors (a dispersed sensor network could extend radar coverage over a wider area, to better track adversarial activity).²²

However, the inability to provide air defence from the axed Type 83s will itself erode deterrence by denial due to a lack of naval ballistic-missile capability: this will become more important, not less, over the coming decades. The Navy is currently set to have no destroyers after 2038.

This should not be an “either-or”: it is important to grasp the deterrent effect of a “fleet in being”.²³ A hybrid fleet which is overwhelmingly uncrewed and dispersed will likely not survive unscathed from malign Russian activity, already on the increase in the sub-threshold space. Russian forces will almost certainly probe these uncrewed vessels, and at a minimum seek to jam and disable the radio frequencies critical to the vessels’ communications back to CCVs. Russian military doctrine would think little to denying, blinding, screening, and in the worst case destroying uncrewed vessels. NATO countries have yet to deploy these systems at sufficient scale to test Russian responses, but there have been sufficient incidents of Russian belligerence at sea to suggest that these systems may be more susceptible to Russian interference and to hostile activity generally.

In short, we must also replenish our conventional fleet.

21 UK and Norway to operate together to counter Russian undersea threat through major new defence agreement. (2025). Ministry of Defence. Accessed online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-norway-to-operate-together-to-counter-russian-under-sea-threat-through-major-new-defence-agreement> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

22 Navy Lookout. (2026). All in on the hybrid navy – The Royal Navy’s surface fleet gamble. 29 June 2026. Accessed online at <https://www.navylookout.com/all-in-on-the-hybrid-navy-the-royal-navys-surface-fleet-gamble/> Last accessed 30 July 2026.

23 Ibid.

Recommendations

To address these failings and once more achieve a level of deterrence within land, air, space, and maritime domains, the new British Government should allocate the resources required for the MoD at the next spending review to consider the following recommendations:

1. Halt the decommissioning of Warrior IFVs and fund the previously part-funded, then rejected, Warrior Capability Programme (WCP). The £1bn programme would upgrade 380 platforms and extend the fleet's service life past 2040, with the addition of a modified turret and 40mm cannon. This would now cost £1.25bn (including inflation), but crucially would enable the Boxer programme to continue at its current speed without leaving armoured infantry battalions without armour or mobility, given that the IOC of 2027 is set to be delayed.
2. To set a deadline in which the Government must be prepared to pay General Dynamics Land Systems the remainder of its firm price contract for Ajax, which, after the recent DIP committed a further £500mn, would leave an additional £1bn left to pay on the original £5.5bn contract.²⁴ The Government would have to then consider which alternative it would need to purchase 'off-the-shelf'. This might be BAE's CV90 for an additional £4-5bn,²⁵ or risk losing combat effectiveness and leaving 3rd Division with no Deep Strike Brigade.
3. Upscale planned Challenger 3 numbers from 148 to 198, allowing 3rd Division to maintain its current three tank regiments at full capacity, plus the 22 MBTs at various training estates, with eight spare. This would cost approximately £650mn, but crucially would give the Army a fully digitalised, fifth-generation MBT capability. Without it, the Army's MBT capability will shortly be reduced by over one third, denying 3rd Division its crucial heavy armour mobility, undermining both CAM and British deterrence by punishment against a peer adversary.
4. Reverse the axing of the SKYNET 6 narrowband UHF satellite. The British Government should also now consider moving past concepts such as 'achieving space control', which implies a policy unconnected to ground operations, to a shift towards offensive in-orbit combat capabilities.²⁶

²⁴ The Ajax programme. (2022). The National Audit Office. Accessed online at <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-ajax-programme/> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

²⁵ BAE CV90 unit cost ranges between US\$9-12mn, larger contracts such as with Czechia 2023-26 for 246 units for US\$2.2bn across similar number level of specifications to replace the Ajax fleet.

²⁶ Elefteriu, G. (2026). Embracing orbital warfare. Council on Geostrategy. Accessed online at <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/all-research/embracing-orbital-warfare/> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

5. The Hybrid Navy can still be used to help safeguard existing British jobs and manufacturing whilst transitioning to smaller uncrewed vessels. The existing Type 31 frigate design should be the template for the incoming CCVs: a proven platform would minimise production risk, utilise existing supply chains, and maintain shipbuilding at Rosyth once the current Type 31 programme finishes in the early 2030s, just as the CCVs are expected to begin production.
6. The abandonment of the Type 83 leaves the future fleet without a direct successor to the world's premier air-defence destroyer, at precisely the moment long-range missiles are proliferating.²⁷ Extending the Type 45 programme past 2035 (the Type 45 fleet updates only finish in 2032,²⁸ a wasteful upgrade for only three years' planned use) with a 10-year Capability Sustainment Programme, would ensure crucial sovereign air defence until at least the 2040s.
7. Build on the Lunna House agreement with Norway with a similar defence agreement with Denmark, already interested in the Type 26. This would be a good opportunity for the UK to develop a central strategic enabler for the more effective European deterrence of Russia, potentially including regular and interchangeable anti-submarine operations, to further deter Russian submarine operations around British waters. This would also strengthen British shipbuilding, protect British jobs, and encourage private investment across the UK's shipyards.
8. Finally, HM Government should now as a matter of political urgency and as a national security necessity commit to raise defence spending to 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030, to bridge some of the deterrence gaps identified herein, but also to allow for the 2035 spending commitment to be politically feasible, and not merely aspirational. Our nation's security demands it.

27 China carries out ballistic missile test hours after warning Australia and New Zealand. (2026). Sky News. Accessed online at <https://news.sky.com/story/china-carries-out-ballistic-missile-test-hours-after-warning-australia-and-new-zealand-13560852> Last accessed 27 July 2026.

28 Thomas, R. (2026). Sea Viper upgrade passes halfway spend under Type 45 BMD plan. Naval Technology. Accessed online at <https://www.naval-technology.com/news/sea-viper-upgrade-passes-halfway-spend-under-type-45-bmd-plan/> Last accessed 31 July 2026.