



IR23: The Government's renewed approach to Defence

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The UK Government has now published its long awaited '2023 Integrated Review Refresh (IR23)', which updates the UK's approach to defence. The update comes amidst an increasingly volatile and complex world, and one that has tested the 2021 assumptions to breaking point.

IR23 confirms additional funding of £5 billion, which will be provided to the MOD over the next two years. Not close to the funds that were being asked for, and almost all of which will be consumed by the Royal Navy. The now frequently reported and growing concerns from defence experts and political commentators over the UK's dwindling ammunition stocks also feature in the scramble for funding, together with support for the AUKUS submarine programme.



Source: Alamy images

The plans also set out an ambition to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP, the same commitment made back in June 2022 under the Johnson administration. Despite a promise to review defence spending after 2025, there is currently no cemented timeframe for this commitment, prompting many to question its validity.

The plans reemphasise the respective geopolitical threats of Russia and China; placing an obvious focus on the risk posed to European security by Russia, as well as introducing several measures to combat the “epoch-defining” challenge presented by the Chinese Communist Party.

Other measures outlined in the plans include:

- The creation of a new National Protective Security Authority within MI5, established from 13th March to provide a wide range of UK businesses and other organisations with immediate access to expert security advice;
- Establishing an Economic Deterrence Initiative to strengthen the power of the UK's sanctions enforcement, closing off routes for human rights abusers and oligarchs to evade sanctions;
- Doubling funding for a government-wide China Capabilities programme, including investing in Mandarin language training and diplomatic China expertise. The Government will also roll out a College for National Security curriculum, to bolster national security capabilities across government;
- Setting up a new Integrated Security Fund worth £1 billion to deliver on the core objectives of the Integrated Review at home and around the world, including in economic and cyber security, counter terrorism and human rights. This replaces the existing Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF);
- Publishing a refresh of the UK's Critical Minerals Strategy to ensure the UK has reliable access to the vital components for everyday and future technology;
- Providing an additional £20m in funding for the BBC World Service, ensuring it can continue to provide 42 vital language services – including in countries targeted by hostile states for disinformation;