

Vital £1.6 billion ship order looks set to go overseas



Sending the Fleet Solid Support ships order to Spain is an insult to shipyards across the UK

GMB, the shipbuilding union, has demanded cast iron guarantees for UK yards now a vital £1.6 billion order for ships to supply the Royal Navy looks set to go overseas.

Sources close to the tendering process for the three new military support ships say the Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace MP, is set to award the contract to a consortium led by Spanish government-owned company Navantia which has a history of receiving state subsidies, rather than Team UK.



Mr Wallace gives evidence in front of the Defence Select Committee today [2 November]

GMB, which has long campaigned for the Fleet Solid Support ships to be built in the UK, has written to the Secretary of State warning of the impact of the move, particularly on shipyards in Scotland, the North West, the North East and the South West.

GMB estimates that at least £285 million would also be returned to the taxpayer through income tax, national insurance contributions and lower welfare payments if the ships were built in the UK.

Shipbuilding and ship repair employment in Great Britain has fallen by 80,000 jobs since the early 1980s – threatening the UK’s sovereign defence manufacturing capability at a time of international uncertainty.

“ Campaigners fear the Tories are set to snub British workers and award a £1.6billion defence deal to a Spanish-led bid <https://t.co/vFh6n9IzW6>

– Mirror Politics (@MirrorPolitics) November 2, 2022

Matt Roberts, GMB National Officer, said:

“At a time of international uncertainty and with the UK economy in crisis, it seems utterly perverse for the Conservatives to send a massive naval contract overseas.

“Sending parts of the FSS order to Spain rather than delivering all the work in the UK is an insult to shipyards across the UK.

“The Defence Secretary must reassure GMB members and the public there will be adequate oversight to ensure foreign bidders cannot and do not renege on their obligations.

“The UK should prioritise the maintenance and strengthening of our sovereign defence manufacturing capabilities.

“Once again the Conservatives are showing they cannot be trusted with our nation’s security.”

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