

Integrated Review: defence spending must invest in UK manufacturing



Intention to move away from ‘competition by default’ is a step in the right direction but more detail is needed, says defence workers’ union

GMB, the union for defence shipbuilding workers, has cautiously welcomed the Integrated Review’s statement that the Government ‘will move away from the 2012 policy of ‘competition by default’ and prioritise UK industrial capability where required for national security and operational reasons.’



However, the union warned that the existing critical projects are delayed and there is still no guarantee that critical contracts will go to UK yards and the UK supply chain.

Finally, we will implement a new defence and security industrial strategy aligned with the Government's plan for growth. It will constitute a more strategic approach to our core industrial base, from building ships in Scotland and armoured vehicles in Wales, to manufacturing aircraft in England and satellites in Northern Ireland. Through our investment in priority equipment and technologies to meet national

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security requirements, we will convert innovation into commercial opportunities more effectively and support prosperity and growth in the wider economy. We will move away from the 2012 policy of 'competition by default' and prioritise UK industrial capability where required for national security and operational reasons. We will also reform and revitalise our approach to acquisition, exports and international collaboration, including greater use of government-to-government arrangements.

GMB has long campaigned for contracts to be retained in the UK. The union is currently fighting to secure the £1.5 billion Fleet Solid Support order for the UK.

But the international competition was initially cancelled in November 2019 and it has not been relaunched. The Ministry of Defence has refused to confirm what share of that contract's value will be guaranteed for the UK under its new policy.

Ross Murdoch, GMB National Officer and Maritime Chair of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, said:

"We have long campaigned for a strategy for retaining essential defence manufacturing in the UK, and if it is sincere then today's announcement could represent a significant victory on behalf of shipbuilding workers. However, there is a lack of detail and close scrutiny will be needed.

"While it is welcome that Ministers have finally recognised that their 'competition by default' policy was fatally flawed, it should not have taken thousands of job losses while lucrative contracts flowed overseas to get to this point.

"Ministers must now prove that they are serious about backing UK industry by bringing forward the £1.5 billion Fleet Solid Support contract, and guaranteeing that it will be fulfilled through UK yards and the world class UK supply chain."



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