



The Defence Budget Increase, Makes Me A Happy Vet:

The world is currently in chaos. Wars are being fought on all fronts. Most won't admit to it or wish it wasn't so, but it's true. This world isn't just plagued by the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza - you have maniacs ploughing cars into innocents just out trying to do some Christmas shopping.

As a Veteran of the armed forces, it's enough to get the hackles on the back of my neck rising up to the heavens. Even on a night such as Sunday the 23rd of February 2025, whilst I drive through a deluge of bad weather, tearing rubber on my way to a metal show in Birmingham, hoping to forget some of the onset paranoia from the state of our world, I find myself passing multiple crashes. Police lights flicker and dance around the inside of my vehicle as I pass, only to then be presented with a convoy of vehicles. I was grateful for the slowing of speed in this torrential and dangerous downpour, until I realised that ahead of me was a large flatbed truck, being escorted by a police vehicle at the rear and a military jeep at the front. The rear of the police car displays a scrolling signal that states 'do not pass'.

The symbols on the back of the flatbed state 'warning explosives' and there are multiple nuclear warning symbols adorning the monstrous frame, that encases what clearly is nuclear armament. I slow my vehicles speed from 70 to 30 as I trail behind the missile that's heading to be positioned with what I have no doubt will be one of our nuclear submarines. The fact that the UK has never had on land silo's for launching Nuclear missiles is what confirms my thought here... The convoy turns off at the next junction, with flashing amber lights disappearing into the distance. A WMD going out of sight, but for this veteran, never out of mind.

I feel the paranoia again now, bubbling and rising up from my depths in the form of bile up that now hits the back of my throat, as I relive the horrors, I experienced during the war on terror. These grim flashbacks, although terrible are small time compared to the very real threat of nuclear and mutually assured destruction. Currently as it stands, the collective nuclear arms of the United States, China & Russia have enough power to completely destroy human civilization. I can't help but notice that the UK doesn't even make the list... not that I would want our nation to, but it seems a dangerous list to not be a part of. It wasn't so long ago that we were one of the leaders when it came to nuclear disarmament following the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, leading to the abolition of the Soviet Union.

Peace in our time seemed so close, yet as of the last three years a lot has changed the scope of global security and with it, that of our military and defence capabilities - especially the invasion of a superpower into a sovereign European country. As it stands, according to the **Bulletin of Atomic Sciences** an independent report in 2022 confirmed that the UK currently has a stockpile of 225 Nuclear Warheads, of which only 120 are operationally viable for deployment on four Vanguard-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile Submarines (SSBN's). According to the **Centre for arms control and Non-proliferation** only 40 of these are deployed at a time.

Similar reports from 2022 looking at Russia alone - agreeably the biggest threat to the West, since their illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine - have a Stockpile of 4,477 Nuclear Missiles with 1,588 warheads deployed on ballistic missiles and at heavy bomber bases. That means that the UK has 7.5% of the Nuclear defence capability against such a Nation. Add to that our hollowed out personnel that as of January 1st, 2025, stood at a meagre 180,780 personnel. The prospect for the UK's defence capabilities on this unstable world stage are laughable at best. With our current ammunition/ missile supplies, we'd only be able to stand a week or two but no more if we were to be attacked or invaded by an enemy such as Russia. We certainly wouldn't have any such capability to wage or defend to say the least in a high-end war.

When people say that knowledge is power, well, I don't believe this to be entirely true when you're a combat veteran that has suffered with PTSD as a result of service. In fact, this kind

of knowledge feels more like a curse. It sends you roaming around the house in a sleepwalking stupor, to repeatedly lock the doors and in lieu of a rifle, place a large hammer, sledge or axe by the frame of any door to the dwelling where you and your beloved partner rest their head at night.

On the 25th of February 2025 Prime Minister Sir Kier Starmer announced that the defence budget spend would be increased to 2.5% GDP heading towards 3% by 2033. This should equate to an increase in spending by £13.4 billion going towards defence with a hefty and impressive shopping list that I am already salivating over, which includes: Attack Drones, An Iron Dome missile defence system, aircraft carriers, submarines and of course potentially an increase in nuclear arms. On top of this there will be a recruitment drive to increase the volume of personnel in the armed forces.

As much as it may seem to many like a step in the wrong direction when we are seeking peace in our time, it's given me peace of mind that our government has finally woken up and smelled the shit among the roses. Now is not a time to act weak with the threats both outside and within. We must be stepping up to equip ourselves, in a world where allies turn on allies (Trump vs Zelensky is a prime example), and the impacts of poor foreign policy decisions, threaten on bringing down world war three! All I can say is that I am glad this move has happened, and saddened that it didn't take place sooner...

I just hope this budget is spent wisely, so as to ensure the statement from Sir Kier rings true for our Great Nation:

Secure at home, Strong Abroad.

This increase, much as I felt more secure on patrol, with a pistol in my holster, a rifle strapped to my Burgen, a GPMG cradled in my arms, large amounts of ammunition and bar mines for clearance, I strongly feel our increase in missiles and boots filled by brave service men and women strongly is the *right* move.

The world is on the precipice and the time to increase our focus on defence capabilities and military might on the world stage is crucial, especially when the hands of the Doomsday clock have edged once more whilst we refused to look.

The time right now, is 89 seconds to midnight.

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