House of Commons

Defence Committee

Sunset for the Royal Marines? The Royal Marines and UK amphibious capability

Third Report of Session 2017–19

HC 622

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The Defence Committee

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Summary

Following the Government's announcement of the National Security Capability Review (NSCR), unofficial reports have emerged suggesting that major reconfigurations to the United Kingdom's amphibious units are being considered, with specific threats to the strength of the Royal Marines and to the Royal Navy's *Albion* class amphibious ships. The review process has been almost entirely closed and Parliament has not been involved in the discussion of what would represent a drastic reduction in defence capability. The Defence Secretary's success in gaining control of the Defence strand of the NSCR through the initiation of the Modernising Defence Programme provides an opportunity to open up this dire prospect for proper examination.

The British experience in amphibious operations is extensive and has been hard-won. It is sustained today by a core of specialists who sit within the units that are reportedly under threat. These capabilities have proved themselves effective in the past, have demonstrated their utility to recent operations, and will be of continuing relevance to operations in the future.

The Royal Marines, at the heart of this capability, have had to meet a number of challenges in recent years that are having an appreciable effect on their fighting power, their training cycles, their basing and their morale. The reported reductions would further compound these challenges. Given the disproportionate contribution the Royal Marines make to Defence and the sheer range and versatility of their military skills, both they and the country's security would be significantly undermined.

With the impending disposal of HMS *Ocean*, the additional loss of the *Albion* class vessels would mean the end of the Royal Navy's specialist amphibious fleet. Ships—such as a *Queen Elizabeth* class carrier —which have been cited as alternative platforms, are in reality no substitute for the purpose-built amphibious warships in this role, and a high level of operational risk would have to be assumed if such plans were to proceed. The reported reductions in personnel would also have a profound effect on the communities in which these units are based and from which they are drawn.

Wider global trends and the overall direction of UK foreign policy all point to the absolute necessity of retaining a meaningful amphibious capability that can project power far from its home base. At a time when the UK is seemingly considering divesting itself of these units and platforms, virtually every other international defence power is investing in them. The world is changing and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines need to change with it. However, if the price of such change is the sacrifice of this country's amphibious capability, we can only conclude this to be a short-sighted, militarily illiterate manoeuvre totally at odds with strategic reality.

1 Introduction

1. In July 2017 the Government announced that it would be initiating a National Security Capability Review (NSCR), and that Defence would be one part of this review. In the months following this announcement, reports have emerged suggesting that a number of fundamental changes to UK amphibious forces are being considered—notably reductions in the Royal Marines and the possible disposal of the Royal Navy's *Albion* class landing platform dock (LPD) vessels. Accordingly, the Committee resolved to inquire into these core elements of amphibious capability that were reportedly under threat and assess their importance to UK Defence.

2. The Committee issued a call for evidence on 27 November 2017, which included the inquiry's terms of reference. We had one oral evidence session, on 5 December 2017, and received over 100 written submissions, many from retired Royal Marines and Royal Navy personnel with first-hand experience of amphibious warfare over recent decades. They provided detailed evidence of the challenges posed by these complex operations. The Committee also created a web forum to allow members of the public to make more informal submissions. Almost 1,000 submissions were made via this forum.[1] We also note the UK Government and Parliament e-Petition entitled 'Stop the cuts to the Royal Marines and the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ships', currently standing at over 25,000 signatories.[2] We would like to extend our thanks to the Petitions Committee for raising awareness of our inquiry amongst the e-Petition's signatories. This level of interest clearly demonstrated the extent of serious public concern. We thank all of those individuals who contributed in any way to the inquiry.

1 A selection of contributions from the web forum is included in Annex 2.

2 UK Government and Parliament e-Petition 202588

2 The National Security Capability Review

3. The National Security Capability Review (NSCR) was announced on 20 July 2017, with the Government saying it would include "examination of the policy and plans which support implementation of the national security strategy, and help to ensure that the UK's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible, to address current national security challenges".[3] Defence would be one of twelve strands taken forward by a number of cross-departmental teams, under the co-ordination of the National Security Adviser, Sir Mark Sedwill, who is based in the Cabinet Office. This announcement had been preceded by indications that a 'refresh' of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR),[4] was being considered outside the usual five-year SDSR cycle established in 2010.[5]

4. In oral evidence to us on 25 October 2017, the then Secretary of State, Sir Michael Fallon MP, stated that the rationale for the NSCR was that the threats identified in 2015 had "intensified" and that the review would concentrate on strengthening cyber, space, CBRN, hybrid and information warfare, and ballistic missile defence. It would also seek to address the difficulties that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is facing in meeting the "challenge of inflation, cost growth in some of our more complex programmes and ambitious efficiency targets … so it is right that we continue to modernise the way we work, look to remove duplication and prioritise our capabilities to deliver smarter and stronger defence."[6] On 18 December, giving evidence to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (JCNSS), Sir Mark said that the review had been commissioned by the National Security Council as a "fiscally neutral" exercise and that "the purpose in doing it is to see if the money that is already allocated is allocated in the right way".[7]

5. Following the announcement of the NSCR in July, reports began to emerge that significant reductions in the UK's amphibious capability were being considered as part of the review. In September, *The Times* reported that a reduction of 1,000 Royal Marines (15% of their current strength) was under consideration.[8] This was soon followed by reports that the Royal Navy's two *Albion* class landing platform dock (LPD) ships were also at risk.[9] It was later reported that the Royal Navy's Commander UK Maritime Forces, Rear Admiral Alex Burton, had resigned over the threat to the LPDs.[10]

6. The reaction to the reported reductions has been almost wholly negative. Parliamentarians have used every opportunity to criticise these plans and call for their reversal. At a Westminster Hall debate on UK amphibious capability on 21 November, secured by Ruth Smeeth MP, there was cross-party support for maintaining the capability

3 'Strategic Defence and Security Review Implementation', Cabinet Office news release, 20 July 2017
4 HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, Cm 9161, November 2015
5 See for example the speech of the National Security Adviser, Mark Sedwill, at the RUSI Land Warfare Conference, 29 June 2017
6 Oral evidence, *Work of the Department 2017*, 2 October 2017, HC 439, Q1
7 Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, Oral Evidence, *Work of the National Security Adviser*, 18 December 2017, HC 625, Q4
8 'Defence review puts 1,000 Marines in firing line to fund navy shortfall', The Times, 20 September 2017
9 'Royal Navy could lose "fight on beaches" ships in planned cuts', BBC News, 5 October 2017
10 'Admiral quits navy as budget cuts loom over Marines', The Times, 7 October 2017

from every backbench Member who spoke.[11] In a lengthy debate on defence in the Chamber on 11 January 2018, initiated by former Shadow Defence Secretary Vernon Coaker MP, amphibious capability was cited repeatedly as an example of a capability that should be retained and enhanced.[12] The issue has also predominated in departmental questions,[13] and the level of concern in the House of Lords has matched that in the Commons.[14]

7. Before our 5 December oral evidence session on amphibious capability, we had taken other relevant evidence from retired senior officers in a preliminary session on the NSCR. The former First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, was forthright on the subject:

> Nobody in the world of complex warfare, especially for an island nation that delivers force from the sea, thinks that a reduction in the sophisticated end of amphibiosity is a good idea … [any capability review] really needs to consider very carefully why you would want to reduce amphibiosity at the expense of something else when the proper answer is that you should increase and solidify the quality of amphibiosity using investment in new equipment and new capability, and you should preserve the outstanding capability of the Royal Marine in the inventory of fighting forces across defence.[15]

General Sir Richard Barrons, a former Commander, Joint Forces Command, was equally direct, saying that it was "madness" both to consider removing the capability to put a force ashore over a beach, and to think that the right approach to the Royal Navy's manpower shortages is to "cull some of the finest infantry in the world … It is just folly".[16]

8. A measure of the international reaction to the reported proposals was given by Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, who retired as the commander of US Army Europe in late 2017. When asked in an interview about the UK's amphibious capability he said "I'd hate to lose that particular capability or take an option off the table that makes the problem a little bit simpler for any potential adversary". He further warned that such reductions would make it more difficult to ensure a more equitable level of burden-sharing across NATO. On the quality of British personnel, General Hodges noted that some of the best British officers he had met came from the Royal Marines and said "I'd hate to see the institution that produces men like that degraded".[17]

9. We welcome the view expressed by the Ministry of Defence in its written evidence that it considers the UK's amphibious capability to be a "vital component of our nation's power projection capabilities", and the Department's discussion of the place of that capability within UK Defence.[18] These sentiments have been echoed by Ministers and officials

11 HC Deb, 21 November 2017, c 297WH
12 HC Deb, 11 January 2018, c 503
13 HC Deb, 23 October 2017, c 2; HC Deb, 27 November 2017, c 2; HC Deb, 15 January 2018, c 589
14 HL Deb, 23 November 2017, c 293; HL Deb, 28 November 2017, c 644; HL Deb, 29 November 2017, c 674; HL Deb, 5 December 2017, c 958
15 Oral evidence, *National Security Capability Review*, 14 November 2017, HC 556, Q8
16 Oral evidence, *National Security Capability Review,* 14 November 2017, HC 556, Q9
17 'General Ben Hodges warns Britain over armed forces cuts', BBC News, 8 November 2017
18 Ministry of Defence (RMA0098)

elsewhere.[19] However, the MoD used its written evidence to dismiss reports of reductions in amphibious capability as "speculation". This is typical of the Department's refusal to engage on specifics relating to force structure and configuration across the NSCR process.

10. We also note a disturbing trend relating to Ministerial accountability for decisions resulting in changes to the force structure and manpower of the Services. Since the Levene reforms, we have observed Ministers avoiding explanation or accounting for changes in force structure or manpower on the basis that they are matters for the relevant Service Chief. An example occurred when changes to the role of 42 Commando Royal Marines, and consequent reductions in manpower, were announced in 2017, with Ministers stating within Parliament[20] and elsewhere[21] that these were matters for the First Sea Lord. The Service Chiefs, as a Committee, are further removed from the process of strategic decision-making today than they have been since their inception, with the Chief of the Defence Staff as the sole uniformed military representative on the National Security Council and none of the Service Chiefs sitting on the Defence Board.[22]

11. On 25 January 2018, the Defence Secretary announced that the Defence strand was being removed from the NSCR and a new Modernising Defence Programme (MDP) was being initiated. The Secretary of State also confirmed in questions following the statement that this new review process would not be fiscally neutral. The resultant MDP is now due to report in the summer of 2018.[23]

12. **The NSCR is still ongoing and we will examine the process and its substantive outcomes when it has concluded. Even with the Defence element of the NSCR being separated from the rest of the review, as has recently been announced, the conclusions and recommendations in this report have continuing relevance to the process that this sorry episode has demonstrated. The entanglement of Defence with other issues under the control of senior National Security Council/Cabinet Office officials has led to an unacceptable lack of Ministerial accountability. We warmly welcome the new Defence Secretary's success in regaining control of the Defence Review process, but we remain concerned at the post-Levene disintegration of the Chiefs of Staff Committee as the primary source of direct military advice to the Government.**

13. **Our predecessors, along with other Committees such as the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, have been critical of the process surrounding previous SDSRs: in contrast to earlier exercises, such as the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, there has been very little consultation and engagement outside Government during the review process. Unfortunately, we see no evidence of this state of affairs changing in the NSCR. Bodies that would expect to be consulted in the course of these reviews have not been 'brought in' to the process, and have struggled to receive substantive answers to many questions that have arisen. This is a particularly serious omission where Parliament is concerned. Decisions of this magnitude should be debated in Parliament and information provided to select committees to allow for proper scrutiny. Parliament should also have real influence on the review process. Presenting**

19 HC Deb, 21 November 2017, c 320WH; Oral evidence, *Work of the Department 2017*, 2 October 2017, HC 439, Q49 [Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Military Capability)]

20 HL Deb, 4 April 2017, c 942 [Earl Howe]

21 'Michael Fallon does not rule out Marine cuts as MoD "faces budget hole"', *The Guardian*, 31 March 2017

22 The predecessor Defence Committee looked at these structural issues in detail in *Decision Making in Defence Policy*, Eleventh Report of Session 2014–15, HC 682. See also Professor Gwythian Prins (RMA0102).

23 HC Deb, 25 January 2018, c 423. The point regarding fiscal neutrality is at column 426.

the outcome of a review of this nature to Parliament without any prior Parliamentary input or scrutiny is totally unacceptable. This is not entirely the fault of the Ministry of Defence, as the NSCR is being co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office. Nonetheless, a lack of engagement will only encourage the emergence of rumours and leaks that distract from the overall review. The Department may dismiss such reports as 'speculation', but they are inevitable in a secretive—indeed a closed—process without proper external engagement, given the scale of the force structure reconfigurations that are reportedly being considered. The Department may wish to reflect upon this in future defence and security review exercises. *We recommend that the Modernising Defence Programme be used as an opportunity finally to involve those organisations, individuals and institutions—including Parliament—which have previously made valuable contributions to strategic defence reviews.*

14. **The Secretary of State and other Defence Ministers are accountable to Parliament for *all* the policies, decisions and actions of their department. This is a long-standing constitutional principle which is articulated in the Ministerial Code. It is not acceptable for Ministers to avoid answering questions on force structure and manpower changes on the basis that these were decisions taken by the Service Chiefs, as if Ministers are devoid of responsibility to account for these decisions. If this is the way that the Levene Reforms have been interpreted by the Department, then this is an interpretation made in error. It is not possible for any Department of State to arrange itself internally so as to insulate Ministers from Parliamentary accountability or allow them to hide behind officials. The Service Chiefs are more distant from strategic decision-making than they have been at any point in modern history. The decisions they are required to make on force structure are often invidious choices, entirely restricted by the political and financial parameters, set by Ministers, on how resources are allocated. The Department should be aware that we will not accept an abdication of accountability by Ministers, and will expect Ministers, led by the new Secretary of State, fully to account for and explain the policy rationale behind force structure changes that emerge from this or any future Defence review process.**

3 Amphibious warfare

The British experience in amphibious operations

15. British expertise in amphibious warfare is extensive and has been shaped by long experience.[24] This arose as a matter of geographical and geopolitical reality—an island nation and leading naval power whose foreign policy was tied for many centuries to defending its colonial possessions and maintaining the European balance of power by deploying land forces to the continent.

16. The history of British amphibious warfare demonstrates its dangers and complexities. For every success, there have been serious reverses illustrating the unique risks associated with amphibious operations. The injuries that Horatio Nelson suffered to his right eye and right arm occurred not in battle at sea, but in the course of amphibious operations in the French Revolutionary Wars, the latter injury occurring during the attempted assault on Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1797, a costly failure.[25] The Gallipoli Campaign during the First World War provides a study in failure, demonstrating the rapidity with which a combination of poor planning, inexperienced commanders, a lack of specialist amphibious equipment, poor intelligence, and a lack of proper command and control can result in disaster.[26]

17. By contrast, the most notable successes, especially the more recent examples, have been characterised by comprehensive planning and direction of amphibious operations by specialists within the Armed Forces. They have been able to rely on personnel who have been rigorously trained in amphibious warfare, operating from purpose-built amphibious assault ships with dedicated command, control and communications facilities. The large-scale amphibious operations of the Second World War give an indication of the level of resource that was applied to developing specialist doctrine, training and equipment. This understanding has evolved, allowing this experience, expertise and meticulous attention to detail to be applied on operations up to the present day.

18. Although this historical record demonstrates the leadership that the UK has shown in developing specialist amphibious techniques, our witnesses emphasised how the nature of amphibious operations has evolved and changed since the era of the Normandy landings. In oral evidence, Major General Julian Thompson referred to the "Saving Private Ryan" scenario—the perception that amphibious operations involve undertaking large-scale assaults with division-sized formations against heavily defended beaches in daylight. This was abandoned in the mid-1950s[27] and is not part of the UK's modern concept of amphibious operations. **The more recent doctrine and tasking of amphibious units places great emphasis on unopposed landings, ideally at night, to maximise stealth, surprise and the amount of time available to get reinforcements and equipment ashore before the enemy is in a position to counterattack. Any assessment of current UK**

24 Q4 – Q5; Paul Lloyd (RMA0025); Peter Calliafas (RMA0034); Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085)

25 Knight, R, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson*, Allen Lane, London 2005, pp 172, 249–250

26 See Creswell, J, *Generals and Admirals – The Story of Amphibious Command*, Longmans, London 1952, pp 118–146; Thompson, J, *The Royal Marines: From Sea Soldiers to a Special Force*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London 2000, p 91–106

27 Spellar, I, *The Role of Amphibious Warfare in British Defence Policy 1945–56*, Palgrave, London 2001, pp 94–100

amphibious capability based on a 'D-Day'-style conception of amphibious landings, in the teeth of all-out enemy resistance, completely misses the point[28] For example, in the evidence session of 25 October, the then Defence Secretary said:

> We have to spend money on dealing with the threats from cyber as well as finding resources to storm beaches.[29]

This suggests an incomplete understanding of the role of amphibious forces today, despite a welcome emphasis on the need to invest both in conventional and innovative capabilities.

Amphibious capability in modern warfare

19. The 2015 SDSR identified the provision of "world-class amphibious forces" as one of the Royal Navy's main tasks alongside delivering the nuclear deterrent and projecting maritime power. It further stated that Joint Force 2025 would include:

> Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade who are trained and equipped to provide specialist amphibious and Arctic warfare capabilities. We will enhance a Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carrier to support this amphibious capability.[30]

The most recent Joint Doctrine Publication on Maritime Power, issued in October 2017, also set out the range of capability and flexibility offered by the UK's amphibious forces, including a landing force of Royal Marines and specialist shipping consisting of the *Albion* class LPDs.[31]

20. The evidence we have received has amply illustrated the enduring value of amphibious operations to UK Defence and to modern warfare. General Thompson told us that amphibious capability was "a strategic asset", recalling the application of the capability in the past, and how easily the specialism is lost if not properly sustained.[32] The written evidence provided valuable insights into the role of amphibious capability in modern operations. One submission summed up the range of strategic options that the capability offers:

> Amphibious operations project power, support or relief, inland from sea, river or lake without the need for a port, airfield or overflight rights. They can be militarily offensive or defensive. They are an effective method of deploying balanced forces to prevent a hostile landing, to remove an aggressive force or provide support to vulnerable neighbours. The very threat of an amphibious landing can be sufficient to deter hostile action, without the necessity of actually doing anything unless required or asked. An amphibious force can be deployed from its base to be in readiness elsewhere without commitment, it can land at a time of its choosing and retire without taking or losing ground. An amphibious response is a graduated response,

28 Q7–8; George Elton (RMA0020); Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); William Taylor (RMA0074); Professor Gwythian Prins (RMA0102)

29 Oral evidence, *Work of the Department 2017,* 2 October 2017, HC 439, Q67

30 HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, Cm 9161, November 2015, para 4.47

31 Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 0–10: UK Maritime Power (5th Edition),* October 2017, paras 4.15 – 4.18. See also DefenceSynergia (RMA0065)

32 Q2-Q5

> and a response that can be delivered with complete surprise, at a location and with a combination of amphibious equipment of the force's choosing. Unlike other forms of warfare, or disaster relief, amphibious operations can take place at large distances from the home base.[33]

Witnesses also highlighted the tactical application of amphibious capability, projecting maritime power by manoeuvring, deploying and sustaining balanced forces from the sea, including heavy- and medium-weight equipment, which can then continue a campaign against an enemy on land.[34]

21. A number of recent operations by UK Armed Forces have been either effected or supported by amphibious power. The campaign in the South Atlantic in 1982 required a landing force, led by 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, to be put ashore to re-take the Falkland Islands.[35] In 2000, an Amphibious Ready Group was at the centre of Operation PALLISER, incorporating a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) and a subsequent military intervention to stabilise a rapidly deteriorating security situation in Sierra Leone. Written evidence from personnel involved in the operation demonstrates the decisive role played by the Royal Marines. It also demonstrates the value of operating from the safety of an offshore base, and of the riverine and raiding capabilities of amphibious units using air-cushioned vehicles and offshore raiding craft.[36] The United Nations Association in written evidence made the suggestion of how riverine capability could be utilised to support the UN's humanitarian and peacekeeping work and this would "a way for the Royal Marines to maintain a state of combat readiness and to receive active duty experience".[37] During the Iraq War in 2003 at the outset of Operation TELIC, an amphibious assault was launched against the Al-Faw Peninsula from the Gulf. Although principally an airborne amphibious operation, evidence from commanders involved points to the risks that had to be taken because of a lack of means to put heavy weapons and light armour directly onshore. It was fortunate that access to the peninsula by heavy equipment was available through an alternative overland route, which may not always be available.[38] This lack of sealift was the result of the campaign taking place during an LPD capability gap, created by the predecessor *Fearless* class being retired before the *Albion* class had entered service.

22. The written evidence we received emphasised the deterrent, as well as the offensive power of the capability, citing the operations in Kuwait (1961),[39] Tanganyika and Aden[40] as examples of the mere presence of amphibious forces nearby preventing a more serious threat emerging. The Gulf War in 1991 is another more recent example of the utility of an amphibious force as a 'force in being' that can tie down enemy forces which otherwise might be employed elsewhere.[41]

33 Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051)
34 Q5 [Dr Roberts]; Q6 [Lt Gen Fry]
35 Q9; Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085)
36 Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Adrian Raisbeck (RMA0062). See also Dorman, A, 'The British Experience of Low-Intensity Conflict in Sierra Leone', Defence & Security Analysis, June 2007, Volume 23:2, pp 185–200. The value of riverine and raiding operations is also mentioned by Dr Roberts at Q37 and Q46.
37 United Nations Association (RMA0104)
38 Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066)
39 Commander (Rtd) N D MacCartan-Ward (RMA0055)
40 Q5 [Gen Thompson]; Brigadier (Rtd) Tom Lang (RMA0069)
41 Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066)

23. Further written evidence examined whether sea-based amphibious operations are becoming obsolete and involve too high a level of risk given the technological developments taking place in the modern battlespace. The weight of the evidence, combined with the incidence of recent operational examples mentioned above, suggests that this is not the case. At a time when the UK's strategic competitors are increasingly relying on technologies which extend 'access denial', the capability to deploy personnel and equipment from the sea where access to ports and other points of entry is denied should be sustained.[42] We also strongly endorse the argument put by Lieutenant General Sir Robert Fry, a former Commandant General Royal Marines, that if we dispense with the capability we will not be part of its intellectual or technological development in the future:

> unless we remain in the game, we cannot expect to get to the next generation of capability. If we lose it now, we will be out of it forever.[43]

This was echoed by Nick Childs, Senior Fellow for Maritime Security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies:

> dressing it up as a reimagining of capability when actually you are talking about reducing capability is not a way to get to a place in the future where you are using the critical assets, including landing capabilities, in a different way.[44]

24. **The institutional expertise the United Kingdom possesses in amphibious warfare has been hard won, and continues to be maintained today in UK Armed Forces by a group of specialists, mainly found in the Royal Marines and in the Royal Navy's amphibious fleet. Dispensing with a unique cadre of military expertise from across the three Services, or reducing it to the level where it cannot be deployed on a strategically meaningful scale, would be an irreparable act of folly. The UK is one of the few nations that have a sovereign capability in this specialism. Reductions of the type and scale that are reportedly being contemplated would wipe this out, and there would be no going back. It would be yet another step away from full-spectrum capability.**

42 See for example Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030). The challenges and opportunities presented by increasing urbanisation of the littoral are discussed in chapter 6.

43 Q31

44 Q31

4 The Royal Marines

Development of amphibious commando infantry role

25. The tradition of the Royal Marines goes back to the establishment of naval infantry in the English Army in 1664. Becoming 'Royal' Marines in 1802, they were generally dispersed in small detachments throughout the fleet and, amongst a range of other tasks, were found at the forefront of boarding actions and landing parties. The formation of Royal Marines Commando units with special training and responsibility for amphibious raiding began in the Second World War. With the disbandment of the majority of Army Commando units after the war, 3 Commando Brigade, containing the remaining Royal Marines Commandos and their supporting units, became the UK's principal commando formation.[45]

26. The skills that accompanied the commando role led to the Royal Marines becoming the parent arm of the UK's amphibious specialism in the 1950s. The British Army's amphibious role and training steadily diminished and the Royal Marines became the institutional hub of experience and expertise in amphibious infantry operations.[46] The importance of the role was demonstrated in a number of post-war engagements in Korea, Aden, Borneo, Suez and the Falklands. Alongside their growing list of specialist functions, the Royal Marines have continued to fulfil infantry and counter-insurgency roles in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan.[47] 3 Commando Brigade remains the UK's dedicated amphibious commando formation and is also a crucial part of the UK's rapid reaction capability. The deployable high readiness force within the Brigade is the Lead Commando Group (LCG), a battlegroup of some 1,800 personnel built around a full-strength Commando (a battalion-sized unit of around 700 Royal Marines) with supporting naval, land and air assets. Until very recently the Royal Marines were able to deploy at brigade strength, but the ability to do this was ended by the SDSR 2010, with one of the two *Albion* class LPDs being put into extended readiness, and one of the four *Bay* class landing ship dock (auxiliary) vessels being sold to the Royal Australian Navy.[48] That vessel, the *Largs Bay*, had spent slightly less time with the Fleet—just over four years—than she had taken to build and enter service.

Strength

27. As noted in paragraph 5, two months after the announcement of the NSCR reports began to emerge that options under consideration included a cut of 1,000 Royal Marines from current strength.[49] More recent reports suggested that one option would involve

45 Christopher Ferguson (RMA0003); Commander (Rtd) N D MacCartan-Ward (RMA0055); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Thompson, *The Royal Marines*; Ladd, J D, *By Sea By Land: The Authorised History of the Royal Marines Commandos*, HarperCollins, London 1999

46 Spellar, I, *The Role of Amphibious Warfare in British Defence Policy 1945–56*, Palgrave, London 2001, pp 94–100

47 Q4; Commander (Rtd) N D MacCartan-Ward (RMA0055); Adrian Raisbeck (RMA0062); Brigadier (Rtd) Tom Lang (RMA0069); Charles Pilton (RMA0075); Ronald Lockley (RMA0080); Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083); Ernest Blaber (RMA0084); Simon Orr (RMA0090)

48 Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Human Security Centre (RMA0099); Professor Gwythian Prins (RMA0102)

49 'Defence review puts 1,000 Marines in firing line to fund navy shortfall', The Times, 20 September 2017

a cut of up to 2,000 personnel (30% of current strength) and a potential merger of 3 Commando Brigade and 16 Air Assault Brigade (which contains the battalions of the Parachute Regiment and its supporting units).[50]

28. The overall strength of the Royal Marines has been steadily reducing over the last few years. Standing at 7,390 in August 2011, the last report before statistics on Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel strengths ceased being published on a monthly basis in October 2017 shows the Royal Marines at a strength of only 6,580.

29. In April 2017 it was announced that 42 Commando would be re-roled to undertake maritime operations duties, resulting in a reduction of 200 personnel.[52] As well as representing a further cut in strength that puts more strain on the remaining personnel, it now requires Lead Commando Group to be generated from the two remaining full strength Commando units (40 and 45 Commando).[53] As one former Royal Marine explained in written evidence:

Royal Marines Strength[51]	
January 2010	7,020
January 2011	7,330
January 2012	7,360
January 2013	6,870
January 2014	7,060
January 2015	7,110
January 2016	6,980
January 2017	6,830
July 2017	6,700
October 2017	6,580

> lessening the numbers of personnel will only strain the rest. The workload seldom lessens with numbers; it tends to stay the same or seemingly rises. The effect this would have with guys on the ground would be foreboding and create unhappiness within, allowing this would create mistakes in the long run[54]

30. As well as the full strength amphibious assault Commandos, 3 Commando Brigade is supported by a number of other units which are essential to a sustained deployment. The Commando Logistics Regiment is the UK's only amphibious logistics formation, providing equipment, medical and other logistical support to the Brigade.[55] One piece of written evidence observed: "I know of no other equivalent unit in the Armed Forces that is so versatile as the CLR."[56] 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group fulfils the Brigade's reconnaissance, intelligence and communications requirements. Dr Peter

50 Merger threat to Royal Marines and paratroopers', *The Times*, 12 January 2018
51 Ministry of Defence, Royal Navy and Royal Marines Monthly Personnel Statistics, updated 16 October 2017. RN/RM Personnel statistics will be published on a quarterly basis in the future.
52 'Royal Marines to be restructured in line with growing Royal Navy', Ministry of Defence, 11 April 2017
53 Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056)
54 Lee Coates (RMA0001)
55 Christopher Ferguson (RMA0003)
56 Peter Backlog (RMA0031)

Roberts, Director of Military Sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, described how the unit was at the cutting edge of UK Armed Forces' work on cyber and information warfare.[57]

31. 43 Commando Fleet Protection Group performs a range of maritime security functions, including the vital task of providing security to the country's nuclear deterrent at Faslane. Army Commando units within 3 Commando Brigade include 24 Commando Royal Engineers and 29 Commando Royal Artillery, which respectively provide the Brigade's combat engineering and artillery support. The MoD stated in its written evidence that 24 Commando has recently been "re-structured in order to create a more balanced and enduring operating model" and that 29 Commando has "changed in size … proportionately to 3 Commando Brigade".[58] This is a rather indirect way of saying that these units have suffered cuts. 24 Commando RE was indeed due to be disbanded entirely under the original Army 2020 proposals, but was reprieved,[59] no doubt because of the serious effect this would have had on the ability of the Brigade to deploy. All of these supporting units are unique formations manned by personnel who are required to go through the same rigorous commando training as the Royal Marines. Amphibious assault capability and sustained deployments are impossible without them. The Brigade is also supported by several hundred personnel of the Royal Marines Reserve, based in detachments around the country, who make a vital contribution to the Brigade's work.

32. **We are concerned by the reduction in the strength of the Royal Marines inflicted since 2010, and the further reductions that will follow from the restructuring of 42 Commando. 3 Commando Brigade is required to generate high readiness forces, often entailing units being at short notice to move for extended periods. With the operational tempo remaining high, sustaining Lead Commando Group at high readiness on a reduced strength will put further strain on personnel and equipment. We believe that reductions on the scale contemplated would bring 3 Commando Brigade below the critical mass needed for it to maintain readiness and conduct its standing tasks, let alone be deployed at a tactically significant strength on operations. This is without the further dramatic cuts in personnel that are reportedly being considered. *The Department should tell us how the readiness of 3 Commando Brigade and Lead Commando Group is to be sustained following the restructuring announced in April 2017.***

33. **3 Brigade's position as a formation that is dependent on elements from all three Services to be deployable makes it particularly vulnerable at a time when all Services are facing considerable manpower pressures. It is the unique nature of the Brigade that gives it its strength, and reductions in supporting elements from other Services and branches would also compromise its capacity as a deployable fighting force.**

Training, exercises and defence co-operation

34. During a debate on the Royal Marines in the House of Lords on 28 November 2017, the Minister of State for Defence confirmed that:

57 Q46. See also Professor Gwythian Prins (RMA0102)
58 Ministry of Defence (RMA0098)
59 HC Deb, 10 April 2014, c 25WS

> as a short-term measure, a number of collective training exercises will not take place this financial year—I emphasise the phrase "short-term measure". It is anticipated that specialist Royal Marine collective training overseas will resume in the next financial year.[60]

A written parliamentary question following up this statement revealed that a total of seven exercises planned for the 2017–18 financial year had been cancelled.[61] These include environmental training exercises which sustain skills in jungle and desert warfare, and large-scale exercises with allies such as Exercise BLACK HORSE in the United States which would have seen the Royal Marines training with their American and Dutch counterparts.

35. The written answer also addressed the cold weather training exercises that the Royal Marines conduct in Northern Norway, which have taken place regularly since the 1960s. Although training will be taking place in Norway in 2018,[62] the continuation of these exercises has been in doubt for some time.[63] These deployments serve to maintain the skills needed to fulfil the UK's standing commitments to reinforce Norway, a NATO ally, in the event of an armed attack. The resurgence of Russia as a strategic competitor brings a new significance to this commitment. The deployments also serve as environmental training to sustain the mountain and cold weather warfare capability of the Royal Marines Mountain Leader cadre. This group of highly trained experts is the owner of the cold weather warfare specialism across all of the Armed Forces. At a time when the UK personnel are on rotational deployment in areas such as Estonia and Poland over the winter months, this specialism is vital to UK Defence. The Committee's Sub-Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into Defence in the Arctic and has taken evidence on some of the specific challenges that face the Royal Marines when deploying to Norway.[64]

36. The Royal Marines are at the centre of defence co-operation with international partners. A very close relationship exists between the Royal Marines and the United States Marine Corps (USMC).[65] The USMC began participating in the Norwegian deployments in 2015 in order to regenerate their own cold weather warfare capability which had been allowed to lapse since the end of the Cold War.[66] The Royal Marines are an important part of the series of agreements between the Royal Navy and the US Navy and USMC over the past few years.[67] Since 1973 the Royal Marines have had arrangements in place with their Dutch counterparts in the Korps Mariniers to form the UK/NL Amphibious Force. As well as being significant bi-laterally, these relationships are central to sustaining NATO commitments.[68] General Thompson told us that "apart from the Americans, we are the only truly amphibious capability nation in NATO".[69] Dr Roberts added that

60 HL Deb, 28 November 2017, c 663
61 PQ 1186 4
62 See also Ministry of Defence (RMA0098)
63 Ronald Lockley (RMA0080); David Harris (RMA0088); Susan Robinson (RMA0097); '"No money" to send Marines on cold-weather training', *The Times,* 14 July 2017
64 Defence Sub-Committee, Oral evidence, *Defence in the Arctic,* 15 March 2017, HC 879. The evidence from Lt Col (Rtd) Matt Skuse, a retired Royal Marine Mountain Leader and former Defence Attaché to Norway and Iceland at Q104 – Q115, is particularly helpful. See also Peter Calliafas (RMA0034); Jason Hunt (RMA0042); William Taylor (RMA0074); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094); Robert Watt (RMA0101)
65 Q2-Q3; Q34; Peter Pennington (RMA0072)
66 Defence Sub-Committee, Oral evidence, *Defence in the Arctic,* 15 March 2017, HC 879, Q111-Q112
67 Ministry of Defence, Speech by Admiral Sir Philip Jones, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, 17 May 2016
68 Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066); William Taylor (RMA0074)
69 Q2-Q3

"much of NATO's amphibious capability is based on the British capability."[70] The UK will be assuming leadership of NATO's Initial Follow-On Forces Group in 2019. The Royal Marines may also be asked to contribute to the Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) and the maritime component of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF).[71]

37. **The Royal Marines and attached commando units famously have one of the most rigorous and demanding military training regimes in the world, enabling them to be ready to survive, manoeuvre and fight in a variety of roles and in extreme environmental conditions. Amphibious operations place a premium on specialist training in all parts of the chain of command to plan and execute these complex military tasks. Exercises are vital for putting this training into practice, for maintaining readiness, and for maintaining a credible, high visibility deterrent. Cuts to training and exercises because of lack of resources are another sign of the neglect of this capability. *We require the Department to set out in detail, for each training serial or exercise due to involve elements of 3 Commando Brigade that has been run at reduced capacity or cancelled in FY 2017–18: a) the individual units that did or were due to participate in that serial or exercise; b) the extent of reduction in capacity; c) the cost of running the serial or exercise at full capacity; d) the reason for reduction in capacity or cancellation, and e) whether the serial or exercise will be reinstated at full capacity in FY 2018–19 and, if not, why not?***

38. **It is a matter of particular embarrassment that resource constraints have affected training and exercising with our allies. These opportunities for joint training are invaluable for defence co-operation and for sustaining interoperability. These relationships, which have been forged by the Royal Marines with their American and Dutch counterparts, are models of defence co-operation. Running down the ability of 3 Commando Brigade to participate in a meaningful way in these exercises has the potential to do serious damage to this country's defence relationships with our closest allies. It also puts at risk our standing commitments to NATO, at a time when the organisation that is the cornerstone of our defence policy needs our full support.**

Contribution to Special Forces

39. The contribution that the Royal Marines make to UK Special Forces (UKSF) has been a common theme in the evidence we have received.[72] In the past the Special Boat Service recruited exclusively from the Corps, and the link with the SBS remains strong. The Special Reconnaissance Squadron and Special Forces Support group also receive substantial support from Royal Marines personnel. The evidence indicates that somewhere

70 Q33

71 The Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) is a pool of high readiness, adaptable forces with expeditionary capacity. It is led with the UK in partnership with eight other nations. It is due to become operational in 2018. The Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) is a UK-France deployable force with land, maritime and air components, due to be fully operational by 2020.

72 Q35-Q36; Q41; Christopher Ferguson (RMA0003); Steven Kendrick (RMA0012); Peter Booker (RMA0027); Peter Backlog (RMA0031); Peter Calliafas (RMA0034); Gary McKenzie (RMA0036); Captain Colin Hamilton (RMA0041); Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Andrew McNeillie (RMA0046); Brian Williams (RMA0047); Commander (Rtd) N D MacCartan-Ward (RMA0055); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065); Tim Forer (RMA0068); Brigadier (Rtd) Tom Lang (RMA0069); Geoffrey Roach (RMA0071); Charles Pilton (RMA0075); Andrew Jackson (RMA0089); Simon Orr (RMA0090); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094); Susan Robinson (RMA0097); Human Security Centre (RMA0099)

between 40 and 50% of UKSF personnel have a Royal Marines background—yet another indication of the disproportionality high contribution that the Royal Marines make to Defence given their size in relation to the rest of the Armed Forces.

40. Special Forces are of great utility in amphibious operations. The Falklands Campaign demonstrated the value of covertly inserting small SF teams ahead of the main landing force to gather intelligence, guide the landing force to the landing zone, disable nearby enemy installations, provide fire control for air strikes and naval gunfire, and, if necessary, to engage enemy units that might be in a position to interfere with the landing.[73]

41. **The contribution made to UK Special Forces by the Royal Marines is disproportionate to the size of the Corps and is indicative of the quality of the people who pass through its ranks. The growth in the use and tasking of Special Forces in recent years makes a continuing 'pipeline' of trained and resilient personnel vital. Reducing the strength of the Royal Marines will substantially reduce the recruitment pool available, and reduce Special Forces' amphibious warfare expertise.**

Basing

42. Several bases of units within 3 Commando Brigade are due to be partially or wholly disposed of in the Government's latest Defence Estates programme announced in November 2016, including the disposal of RM Stonehouse, the current Brigade HQ.[74] The Estates strategy indicates that, following these disposals, HQs will be consolidated in the Plymouth/Torpoint area, and that there will be an Amphibious Centre of Specialisation based in the Devonport area. This consolidation will nonetheless lead to the closure of Royal Marines bases elsewhere in the South West of England, including Taunton in Somerset and Chivenor in North Devon, which will have an adverse impact on the small communities where these units are based.[75]

43. **We welcome the decision to consolidate HQs of a number of units in 3 Commando Brigade to a new location in the Plymouth/Torpoint area. This is in keeping with the Department's overall objectives to make better use of the Defence Estate and reduce its cost, and will have the benefits of consolidating units within the Brigade. *But the Department should communicate clearly and often with the personnel affected and their families as the reforms to the Defence Estate proceed, and we would urge that the work in relation to Plymouth/Torpoint site is completed and its outcome communicated as soon as is possible.***

Morale and satisfaction with Service life

44. The Armed Forces Continuous Attitudes Survey (AFCAS) 2017 revealed dramatic drops in morale and satisfaction with Service life amongst the Royal Marines. Compared to the rest of the Navy, the Army and the RAF, the Royal Marines saw the largest decreases in morale and satisfaction from the 2016 figures. For example, 35% of Royal Marines surveyed said they were dissatisfied with Service life in general, an increase of 9% from 2016. The proportion of Royal Marines Officers who rated Service morale as 'high' fell

73 Freedman, L, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, Volume II (Revised and Updated Edition), Routledge 2007, chapters 31 and 32, particularly pp 454, 467–470

74 Ministry of Defence, *A Better Defence Estate*, November 2016, p 15

75 Christopher Ferguson (RMA0003); Captain Ian P Somervaille (RMA0054); Andrew Jackson (RMA0089)

from 62% to 41% and the numbers of Royal Marines overall who considered unit morale to be low rose to 47%, an increase of 15% from 2016. A number of specific markers including sense of achievement, level of challenge and variety also fell and there were reductions in the numbers of Royal Marines who felt a particularly strong attachment to their unit. General Fry told us:

> So when [the Royal Marines] have gone through a period like that, when they think that they have led Defence, they then find that the heart is about to be ripped out of the capability which defines them and one in six or seven of them is going to be made redundant, it is hardly surprising that their morale plummets.[76]

These sentiments are echoed throughout the written evidence, with an emphasis on the negative effect low morale has on recruitment and retention.[77]

45. **Given the number of challenges the Corps is facing, it is unsurprising that the combination of these factors is beginning to have a serious effect on morale and Service satisfaction. The Royal Marines have historically exhibited a higher than average level of morale, Service and unit satisfaction than across the other parts of the Armed Forces. AFCAS 2017 shows that the Royal Marines have seen large decreases in these categories. While falling morale and satisfaction across all Services deserve urgent attention from the Department, these notably dramatic reductions, within units that are known for their distinctive ethos and level of 'espirit de corps' are a matter of particular concern. The reports that have emerged about the NSCR will have done nothing to improve morale amongst the Royal Marines and attached units, and may well do further damage. *The Department has indicated in its written evidence that work has been initiated to gather data on outflow and morale to inform future action plans. We wish to receive detailed information on the work that is being done, the nature of the data being gathered, the level of resource and staffing being dedicated to this exercise, and other steps that are being taken to arrest these alarming reductions in morale.***

76 Q35

77 Lee Coates (RMA0001); Gareth Staples-Jones (RMA0002); Christopher Ferguson (RMA0003); Dr Mike Denning (RMA0005); Grant Eustice (RMA0007); Reverend David Osborne (RMA0010); Stephen Kendrick (RMA0012); Barry Collacott (RMA0013); Ross Wilson (RMA0014); Stephen Chan (RMA0019); Dr Martin Ridge (RMA0023); Dominic Collins (RMA0026); Peter Backlog (RMA0031); Mark Gibbs (RMA0032); Robert Jones (RMA0033); Peter Calliafas (RMA0034); Tim Reid (RMA0037); Yvonne Walsham (RMA0039); Captain Colin Hamilton (RMA0041); Jason Hunt (RMA0042); Mark Bullard (RMA0043); Richard Deacon (RMA0044); Andrew McNeillie (RMA0046); Alan Wombell (RMA0049); Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); Captain Ian P Somervaille (RMA0054); Lord Parmoor (RMA0057); Commander (Rtd) Richard Blott (RMA0058); Stephen Beckett (RMA0060); David Turner (RMA0063); Sue Crouch (RMA0064); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065); Brigadier (Rtd) Tom Lang (RMA0069); Luke Pollard MP (RMA0073); William Taylor (RMA0074); Charles Pilton (RMA0075); Ernest Blaber (RMA0084); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp CB RN and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken DSO RN (RMA0085); Andrew Jackson (RMA0089); Simon Orr (RMA0090); Chris Smith (RMA0092); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094); Susan Robinson (RMA0097); Martin Bowles (RMA0100); Robert Watt (RMA0101)

5 Amphibious ships

Development of Royal Navy amphibious vessels

Box 1: Amphibious assault ship hull classifications

LPD (Landing Platform Dock) – Usually designed with a floodable well deck and a platform for aviation with hanger facilities. Examples include the current *Albion* class and the retired *Fearless* class.

LSD (Landing Ship Dock) – Usually possessing a well deck similar to an LPD, but often lacking substantial facilities for aviation such as hangers. The UK's *Bay* class vessels are designated **Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary)** or **LSD(A)** as they are part of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

LPH (Landing Platform Helicopter) – A helicopter carrier, often visually similar to a 'flat top' aircraft carrier but optimised to operate rotary wing aircraft. HMS *Ocean* is the Royal Navy's only current LPH, due to leave service in March 2018. Royal Navy ships in this role have been referred to as 'Commando Carriers' as they had sufficient space for a large embarked force of Royal Marines for airborne theatre entry.

LHD/A (Landing Helicopter Dock/Assault) – LHDs and LHAs combine the capabilities of the above in being flat tops capable of operating sizeable helicopter contingents with well decks to operate landing craft. Examples of LHDs include the French *Mistral* class and American *Wasp* class. LHAs, such as the US Navy's *America* class are often optimised towards operating both rotary and fixed-wing aircraft.

LST (Landing Ship Tank) – A wide variety of design, usually of a smaller size than the above, with the primary role of delivering tanks and vehicles.

46. The designs of modern purpose-built amphibious warships originated in the Second World War from British staff requirements which saw a need for vessels that could swiftly transport and deploy smaller landing craft over a long distance. The US Navy was the first to construct ships to this requirement, and they saw service with both the US and the UK during the war.[78] By the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956, a large proportion of the Royal Navy's amphibious fleet had left the Service. Two light aircraft carriers were temporarily converted into LPHs for the Suez Campaign, enabling the first ever airborne amphibious assault operation using rotary aircraft.[79] This was sufficiently successful for two other carriers[80] to be permanently converted to an LPH / Commando Carrier role.

47. The first post-war purpose-built Royal Navy amphibious ships were the *Fearless* class LPDs, HMS *Fearless* and HMS *Intrepid*, which entered service in the 1960s. As many

78 Chesneau, R (ed.), Conways All The World's Fighting Ships 1922–46, Mayflower Books, New York 1960, pp. 72–77, 158–163

79 HMS *Theseus* (R64) and HMS *Ocean* (R68), the latter not to be confused with HMS *Ocean* (L12), a purpose-built LPH shortly due to leave service.

80 HMS *Albion* (R07) and HMS *Bulwark* (R08), again not to be confused with the current *Albion* class LPDs HMS *Albion* (L14) and HMS *Bulwark* (L15).

witnesses have recalled, these ships were under threat of being removed from service in the course of the 1981 Defence Review under the supervision of the then Defence Secretary, John Nott.[81] These plans were reversed shortly before the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, and the LPDs proved themselves to be vital in delivering a landing force ashore which retook the islands.[82] General Thompson's personal account to us of the events surrounding the initial decision in 1981 suggest that the nature of the capability was not fully appreciated by Ministers at the time the decision was made.[83]

48. The *Fearless* class ships were replaced on a like-for-like basis in the early 2000s with the *Albion* class LPDs HMS *Albion* and HMS *Bulwark*. HMS *Ocean*, a purpose-built LPH, entered service in 1998. The *Bay* class LSD(A) vessels, which sought to replace the '*Round Table*' class of logistic landing ships, began entering service in 2006. These vessels would be at the centre of the amphibious force identified in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review as being necessary to deliver a brigade-level landing force.[84] As discussed in paragraph 26, this ability ended after the 2010 SDSR with the sale of one LSD(A) and with one of the two LPDs put into an alternating cycle of extended readiness. The disposal of HMS *Ocean* will reduce the amphibious fleet further.[85]

49. With the disposal of the *Albion* class LPDs reportedly being considered, it is likely that the utility of using other vessels as amphibious platforms is being evaluated. The Government stated in the 2015 SDSR that it intends to build amphibious capability into one of the *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers. We note the remarks of the First Sea Lord in his Gallipoli Memorial Lecture delivered in November 2017 (which also contained a lengthy and thoughtful discussion of the future of the Royal Marines), that in the future the Royal Navy "may opt for multi-role platforms which can provide amphibious capabilities, but can also serve as an afloat forward base for a range of enduring maritime security tasks".[86] The forthcoming Type 31e class of frigates were one platform suggested as having a future amphibious role. An examination of the utility of our current amphibious vessels will allow an assessment of those ships most likely to be claimed to be capable of compensating for their deletion.

Albion class Landing Platform Dock

50. HMS *Albion* and HMS *Bulwark* entered into service in 2003 and 2005 respectively and are due to leave service in 2033 and 2034 respectively. These out of service dates, together

81 Councillor Anthony Carey (RMA0008); Surgeon Captain Edward Grant (RMA0015); Richard Deacon (RMA0044); Dr Mark Campbell-Roddis (RMA0052); William Taylor (RMA0074); Tom Wimsey (RMA0082); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094). Professor Dorman's work suggests that the wholesale disbandment of the Royal Marines was one option put on the table in 1981 to meet the required manpower reductions. It was rejected because of the effect abandoning the commitment to NATO's Northern Flank would have had on relationships with NATO allies, and the United States in particular. See Dorman, A, *John Nott and the Royal Navy: The 1981 Defence Review Revisited*, Contemporary British History, 15:2, p 108

82 HC Deb, 8 March 1982, c327W. See also Oral Evidence, *Work of the Department 2017,* 25 October 2017, HC 439, Qq71–72

83 Q26

84 Q6. The requirement identified by the 1998 SDR was one LPH (with the possibility of second LPH being provided by an aircraft carrier), two LPDs, two (later increased to four) replacement logistic landing ships, supported by the acquisition of four additional roll-on roll-off (RoRo) ferries. HM Government, Modern Forces for the Modern World, Cm 3999, July 1998

85 HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, Cm 9161, November 2015; 'HMS Ocean to be decommissioned in 2018, MoD announces', BBC News, 24 November 2015

86 Royal Navy, *First Sea Lord's Gallipoli Memorial Lecture,* 23 November 2017

with a description of their role as "a vital asset to the Royal Navy", were confirmed in a letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the then Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, in January 2017.[87]

51. The central advantage of the well deck design around which LPDs are built is that it allows fast and secure movement and deployment of landing craft. An *Albion* class LPD can embark and deliver a landing force and can operate up to eight landing craft at once. This enables the insertion of a force, from the sea, sufficiently large to be tactically useful, and adequately supplied with its supporting arms and heavy- and medium-weight equipment, to be able to sustain itself and fight if necessary.[88] General Thompson, after recalling the limitations that existed before the LPDs came into service, said:

> The LPDs, the *Fearless* and the *Intrepid*—now *Albion* and *Bulwark*—made all the difference in the ability to move heavy stuff ashore and maintain the logistic support needed.[89]

General Fry also highlighted the impact an increased requirement for heavy equipment and protected mobility vehicles has on the need for strategic lift:

> Equipment is getting heavier; it is not getting lighter. There was a time when we could undersling Land Rovers and they could be flown quite considerable distances. Because of the requirements today for protected mobility—a lesson we learned bitterly in Afghanistan—those vehicles are much, much heavier.[90]

Dr Roberts highlighted the risks of not being able to deliver this heavy lift when inserting a force into a hostile environment:

> If you go back through history … you can see where a capability gap in delivering the heavy lift, as [General Thompson] said, across the beach has put a very light force at huge risk. The same was almost true for Operation TELIC in 2003, where the Marines moved ashore but they needed heavy vehicles with them—that was the one deficiency they felt they had, so being augmented with armoured capability at the time of going in was absolutely critical. There is this idea that you need a balanced force: you need not just to put the light elements—the infantry; the fighting man—in right at the outset along with his artillery, which might be air transportable or might be ship-based; but critically, for the close-in fight, you require armour with you, particularly where you move inland. You are going to encounter an adversary who is usually, these days, pretty well matched in terms of capability.

87 Letter to the Chairman, dated 25 January 2017, from Harriett Baldwin MP

88 Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Gary McKenzie (RMA0036); Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065); William Taylor (RMA0074); Tom Dixon (RMA0076); Professor Paul Rogers (RMA0078); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085); Andrew Jackson (RMA0089); Commodore (Rtd) Richard Bridges and Major General (Rtd) David Pennefather (RMA0096); Human Security Centre (RMA0099)

89 Q5

90 Q6

52. The internal design of Royal Navy amphibious ships also extends to features that allow the safe embarkation and transport of large forces of heavily armed Royal Marines. Dr Roberts elaborated on this:

> they are not designed for normal people. They are designed for Royal Marines who carry ridiculous weights in their backpacks and carry heavy weapons as they walk through the ship, so even things like the ladders are not like you would normally find on merchant or normal naval ships. They are at a much shallower angle and have deeper treads to allow guys with bigger boots carrying enormous loads and weapons to walk up. They are designed so that, as you step onto the landing craft or the helicopter, you do it all together with your Jeep next to you for underslung loads or your ammunition pallets. All of it is absolutely designed around amphibious capability, and this is crucial to delivering it properly.[91]

53. A key aspect of the LPD platform is the sophisticated command and control (C2) systems that the vessels possess, and which are vital to co-ordinating and executing amphibious operations. As General Thompson explained:

> Somebody once rather arrogantly described amphibious operations as the scholarship level of warfare. One of the reasons is the array of communications you need to fight the various battles at various layers: the anti-submarine battle, controlling your own aircraft, anti-aircraft, controlling the task groups, surface actions; and then the managing of the landing itself, vectoring the landing craft, managing the air lift in; and of course, fighting the land battle, which is the ultimate object of the whole game.[92]

The *Albion* class are designed to act as command ships for an amphibious task force and have dedicated C2 facilities aboard for the relevant maritime and land staffs to control an operation. They are the only ships in the Royal Navy, alongside HMS *Ocean*, which have these facilities.[93]

54. A constant theme in the evidence we received on the wider utility of the LPDs is the flexibility they offer in tasks outside of their primary military role, and in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and non-combatant evacuation operations in particular.[94] The ability to operate over a beach or in a coastal area where ports and other infrastructure have been put out of action is of great value in these operations. The LPDs have been called into service repeatedly in this role. HMS *Bulwark* saved several thousand lives in assisting during the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean. Although neither *Albion* nor *Bulwark* was involved in the operations following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean in 2017 (Operation RUMAN), the ability that amphibious ships have to land equipment and

91 Q43
92 Q8
93 Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085); Commodore (Rtd) Richard Bridges and Major General (Rtd) David Pennefather (RMA0096)
94 Q24 [Nick Childs]

supplies has been shown more recently in the response provided by HMS *Ocean* and RFA *Mounts Bay*.[95] With *Ocean* shortly leaving service, the ability to mount these operations in the future would be further compromised without the LPDs.

55. Placing one of the *Albion* class LPDs into extended readiness (i.e. into reserve, usually accompanied by a major refit) in 2010 resulted in only one LPD being available at any one time. HMS *Albion* entered extended readiness in 2011 and came back into service in 2017 after a £80 million refit.[96] HMS *Bulwark* has entered extended readiness in its place and will not re-join the Fleet until 2023. Written evidence has noted how the lack of a second LPD restricts planning options and leaves no margin for attrition or major equipment failure in the active LPD, particularly when the extra amphibious support from HMS *Ocean* is shortly to be lost.[97] In the oral evidence session we sought to explore whether the option of putting both LPDs into extended readiness rather than disposing of them completely was a viable option. General Thompson answered:

> First, you wouldn't be able to exercise with them, and therefore you would very quickly lose your expertise at how to use this instrument. Secondly, they probably wouldn't come out in time to meet the emergency. In extended readiness it takes something like a year to get them back into service, which is simply not enough time. You would be caught totally short-footed if you allowed yourself to get into that situation.[98]

Written evidence from Mr Andrew Jackson, who was involved in bringing HMS *Intrepid* out of a state of extended readiness in 1982 to allow her to participate in the Falklands Campaign, suggests, on the other hand, that an LPD could be brought out of extended readiness quickly if there were an operational imperative to do so.[99] As others have pointed out, finding a crew for the newly active vessel might not be so straightforward.[100]

56. We have received and published written evidence which argues that the Royal Navy could dispose of the LPDs and still sustain the necessary amphibious capability. Rear Admiral (Rtd) Chris Parry advocates a departure from the traditional and linear approach to amphibious operations as warfare changes, and believes that the introduction of the *Queen Elizabeth* class carriers provides an opportunity to adopt a more flexible joint approach which can exploit opportunities for amphibious action. While coherent, this argument still needs to address the issues associated with using aircraft carriers as amphibious platforms discussed below, particularly the challenge of putting vehicles and heavy equipment onshore and guaranteeing a level of logistic supply that is necessary for a landing force to sustain itself. His paper also assumes the use or retention of some kind of specialist littoral/amphibious platforms without being clear about what these platforms

95 Dominic Collins (RMA0026); Peter Booker (RMA0027); Mark Gibbs (RMA0032); Robert Jones (RMA0033); Pamela Chorlton (RMA0035); Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); Captain Ian P Somervaille (RMA0054); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Stephen Beckett (RMA0060); Dr G Y Shin (RMA0061); Adrian Raisbeck (RMA0062); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065)Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066); Geoffrey Roach (RMA0071); Luke Pollard MP (RMA0073); Professor Paul Rogers (RMA0078); Ronald Lockley (RMA0080); Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094); Human Security Centre (RMA0099)

96 Ministry of Defence (RMA0098)

97 William Taylor (RMA0074); Roy V Martin (RMA0077); Simon Orr (RMA0090); Chris Smith (RMA0092);

98 Q24

99 Andrew Jackson (RMA0089)

100 Stephen Chan (RMA0019); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065)

are.[101] Dr Mark Campbell-Roddis's written evidence argues that the LPDs should be disposed of, but HMS *Ocean* retained, as the focus of future amphibious warfare should be on airborne rather than sea-based assaults, and that any need for sealift can be fulfilled by the *Bay* class LSD(A) vessels.[102] We set out why we believe that other platforms would be poor alternatives in the sections below. Although we disagree with the ultimate conclusions of these two papers on the future of the LPDs, we commend their thoughtful approach to the future of operations and their view that there should be further investment in platforms which provide a wide range of amphibious theatre entry options.

57. **We strongly oppose the withdrawal of the *Albion* class LPDs from service ahead of their out-of-service dates in 2033 and 2034. They are purpose-built amphibious assault platforms which provide the primary means of deploying a landing force over a beach. There are no other ships in the Royal Navy which could conceivably sustain this capability in the future. The wider utility and the versatility of the LPDs beyond their primary roles in amphibious assault are substantial, and will be sacrificed if their disposal goes ahead.**

Helicopter carriers and aircraft carriers

58. Since her entry into service in 1998, HMS *Ocean*, the Royal Navy's first and only purpose-built LPH, has been the UK's primary airborne amphibious platform. The decision to withdraw her from service was announced shortly after the publication of the 2015 SDSR—the year the vessel completed a £65 million refit.[103] As an LPH, the *Ocean* was able, like her predecessor Commando Carriers, to embark a large force of Royal Marines and deploy them by helicopter. She also had the ability to deploy landing craft, although at a lower capacity than an LPD. As mentioned in paragraph 46 above, the UK pioneered the operational use of amphibious air assault and the optimal amphibious operation would allow for both airborne and sea-based theatre entry, with airborne landing of personnel freeing more space in landing craft for equipment. This increases the speed with which a balanced landing force can be put ashore, and allows for the possibility of 'vertical envelopment' of an enemy force.[104] The ship also boasts considerable command and control and medical facilities.[105] **The *Ocean* has repeatedly shown her worth, being at the centre of the UK's engagements in Sierra Leone, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Her disposal without replacement is a serious loss to the amphibious fleet and is rightly criticised throughout the evidence we have received.**[106]

101 Rear Admiral (Rtd) Chris Parry (RMA0050)
102 Dr Mark Campbell-Roddis (RMA0052)
103 HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, Cm 9161, November 2015; 'HMS Ocean to be decommissioned in 2018, MoD announces', BBC News, 24 November 2015; Tom Wimsey (RMA0082)
104 Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051); William Taylor (RMA0074); Commodore (Rtd) Richard Bridges and Major General (Rtd) David Pennefather (RMA0096). A discussion of the development of the doctrine of vertical envelopment can be found in Spellar, I, *The Role of Amphibious Warfare in British Defence Policy 1945–56*, Palgrave, London 2001, chapter 6
105 Ronald Lockley (RMA0080);
106 Q10; Gareth Staples-Jones (RMA0002); Grant Eustice (RMA0007); Steven Kendrick (RMA0012); Mark Rees (RMA0017); Tommy Thompson (RMA0022); Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Dr Mark Campbell-Roddis (RMA0052); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Tim Forer (RMA0068); Phil Chadwick (RMA0086); Nick Paton (RMA0087); Andrew Jackson (RMA0089); Plymouth City Council (RMA0095);

59. The 2015 SDSR indicated that one of the *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers would be enhanced to support the amphibious capability of the Royal Marines.[107] It is unclear exactly what these enhancements will be. MoD officials told the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that the carriers are not "bespoke amphibious shipping" and will not be able to carry or operate landing craft.[108] The Department subsequently wrote to the PAC and provided information on enhancements for communications, facilities for an embarked force, ammunition stowage and optimisation for helicopters. This letter also acknowledged issues relating to training and clearances for certain types of helicopter because of the need for the carriers to concentrate on certification for fixed-wing F-35s.[109] In its report on the development of carrier strike, the PAC has registered its concern at the uncertain future of the amphibious fleet, and at the level of risk that delivering carrier strike poses to other defence capabilities.[110]

60. Witnesses in oral evidence were sceptical about the ability of the aircraft carriers to act as amphibious platforms. Nick Childs said:

> the aircraft carriers are fabulous and have a huge deck with a huge hangar. In that sense, having, as part of the capability of the carriers, an ability to act in certain contingencies as an amphibious capability, and even as a hybrid capability with some jets and some helicopters and aviation, is an asset and is part of its broader utility for certain contingencies … it is not the same as a bespoke amphibious helicopter carrier, let alone an LHD, because of the internals of the designs—the fact that even *Ocean*, without a deck, has the ability to accommodate not only marines but vehicles and the like. And while it can also supplement that bespoke capability by providing extra aviation and providing reach—being able to help with delivering forces from over the horizon by aviation—that is still not enough if you want to deliver a fighting formation that still requires heavy equipment providers as well.[111]

General Fry added "All you could deliver from a *Queen Elizabeth* class carrier is probably less than a commando group with what it stands up in. There is no combat sustainability; there is no mobility when it gets there—it will be a non-persistent presence."[112]

61. Written evidence has also emphasised the importance of sealift. Without this, transport of any medium- and heavy-weight vehicles and equipment that cannot be airlifted will be impossible. Even where personnel and equipment are able to be transported by air, it is unlikely that the large numbers of aircraft that would be needed to transfer equipment, at the scale and in the time required, would be available. Substantial airlift between sea and land would also be hazardous without air superiority, which cannot always be guaranteed in the landing zone. Airlift involving large fixed-wing transport aircraft would generally

107 HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, Cm 9161, November 2015, para 4.47

108 Public Accounts Committee, Oral Evidence, *Delivering Carrier Strike*, 11 October 2017, HC 394, Qq29–31, Qq52–58, Qq84–87 [Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Military Capability)]

109 Letter to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, dated 27 October 2017, from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence. See also PQ 1214 4

110 Public Accounts Committee, *Delivering Carrier Strike,* Fourteenth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 394,

111 Q43

112 Q43

require access to an airstrip and, potentially, overflight rights from third-party states. Only through sealift can a balanced force, that can sustain itself onshore, be delivered over the beach without access to port facilities.[113]

62. A number of questions arise about the capacity of a *Queen Elizabeth* class carrier to act in a dual aircraft/helicopter carrier role. First among these is the ability to operate fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters simultaneously. Operating both roles simultaneously would mean that neither is being run at full capacity, compromising both the carrier's support of an amphibious operation by rotary and fixed-wing aircraft, and, indeed, its own fixed-wing air defence.

63. Although the correspondence from the MoD to the PAC indicates that communications systems are one area that would be optimised, if a carrier were to act as a command ship for an amphibious operation, it would need a sophisticated suite of C2 systems of equal or greater capacity than a current LPD, as well as the dedicated command facilities for the attached amphibious staff.[114] When asked at the 25 October evidence session whether the command and control capabilities that the LPDs provide would be replicated in the *Queen Elizabeth* class carriers, Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Military Capability) said:

> That is not replicated in the *QE*-class carriers… you would need to provide a platform of a similar type, if it is C2 of that type that you wish.[115]

64. Space for an embarked force is also a consideration. HMS *Ocean* has sufficient space for more than 900 personnel and associated equipment. Although there is space for a similar number of additional personnel on one of the carriers, over-and-above its normal crew complement, a proportion of this will be taken up by the personnel of the Carrier Air Wing if the vessel is intending to operate fixed-wing aircraft alongside rotary-wing aircraft. Internal optimisation for embarking and transporting heavily armed Royal Marines is also likely to be needed.

65. Much written evidence emphasised the proximity with which a carrier would need to operate to the shore. Witnesses were sceptical that such a high-value asset would be permitted anywhere near a coast in the possession of a hostile adversary, particularly an adversary that was armed with modern fast jets and anti-ship capabilities that could put the carrier at risk. Yet, the further from the shore the carrier is, the longer it would take for helicopters to transfer personnel, slowing the rate at which a force can be concentrated onshore.[116]

113 Stephen Chan (RMA0019); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065); Ronald Lockley (RMA0080); Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085); Simon Orr (RMA0090); Plymouth City Council (RMA0095); Commodore (Rtd) Richard Bridges and Major General (Rtd) David Pennefather (RMA0096); Human Security Centre (RMA0099)

114 Q43; Simon Orr (RMA0090)

115 Defence Committee, Oral Evidence, *Work of the Department 2017,* 25 October 2017, HC 439, Qq63–65

116 Q43 [General Fry]; Barry Collacot (RMA0013); Dr Martin Ridge (RMA0023); Peter Backlog (RMA0031); Robert Jones (RMA0033); Gary McKenzie (RMA0036); Jason Hunt (RMA0042); Mark Bullard (RMA0043); Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); Stephen Beckett (RMA0060); David Turner (RMA0063); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065); Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066); Tim Forer (RMA0068); Luke Pollard MP (RMA0073); William Taylor (RMA0074); Charles Pilton (RMA0075); Ronald Lockley (RMA0080); Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085); Carl Stephen Patrick Hunter (RMA0091); Robert Watt (RMA0101)

66. **The decision taken in 2015 to dispose of HMS *Ocean* without replacement is to be greatly regretted. Her unique capabilities and versatility as a platform have been demonstrated time and again on operations. Her disposal represents a serious loss to the amphibious fleet, and was the first indication that the Royal Navy's amphibious capability is being run down to release necessary manpower for fixed-wing aircraft carriers.**

67. ***We ask the Department to provide us with details on every aspect of the enhancement of the Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers to support amphibious capability set out in the 2015 SDSR, and the timescale for completion of the enhancement. We request information on whether it is planned for one or both Queen Elizabeth class carriers to operate as an LPH, and the modifications that this would require. If this is the case, we would also request details on whether it is intended for the carrier to operate fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft simultaneously—for example, the number of helicopter spots that can be operated while simultaneously maintaining fixed-wing launch and recovery capability. We request details on the intended command, control and communications systems that are part of this modification and how the capacity of these systems compares with those of an Albion class LPD. We understand that the number of F-35s that the carriers will operate has not yet been confirmed, but ask how many personnel would make up the Carrier Air Wing and how these personnel can be accommodated at the same time as an embarked amphibious force.***

68. **Several issues arise which would create problems for a carrier acting as an amphibious platform in any configuration. The most significant of these is that carriers can provide only an airborne amphibious capability and cannot transfer any equipment, vehicles or supplies that are too heavy to airlift. Unlike HMS *Ocean*, the *Queen Elizabeth* class has no capacity to operate landing craft. The proximity to the shore with which these high-value assets might have to operate is also, in an age of increasingly sophisticated anti-ship missile capabilities, very hazardous.**

69. **In combination with purpose-built amphibious ships such as the LPDs, the *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers could provide support to an amphibious operation. However, they are not primarily designed as amphibious ships and cannot operate as such in a stand-alone role. This makes them a poor substitute for an amphibious assault ship in this specialist role.**

Bay class Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary)

70. During the oral evidence session in October 2017, General Poffley said:

> We will examine both the capability of delivering troops from surface vessels and from rotary in the context of the prioritisations we make in the capability review.

A discussion then followed on the capability to deliver troops from surface vessels, including through the use of *Bay* class LSD(A)s. General Poffley continued:

> There is a range of different possibilities for all parts of the capability suite that could go forward. Clearly, *Albion* and *Bulwark* provide some very

> specific capabilities that, if they were not there, would either need to be replicated in a different form, or one would have to accept that you are making a compromise in that part of our operational portfolio.[117]

71. The *Bay* class LSD(A)s are one potential platform which might be considered to replicate this capability. The vessels began entering service in 2006. Four were originally constructed to replace the previous generation of logistic landing ships, with one, RFA *Largs Bay,* being sold to Australia in 2011 after only four years in service with the Fleet. As with their predecessors, their main function is to provide support and follow-on supply to amphibious landings spearheaded by the assault ships. They are able to transport vehicles, personnel and large quantities of supplies, with the capacity to operate landing craft and Mexeflote powered rafts. They also have a limited aviation capacity. Alongside HMS *Ocean*, RFA *Mounts Bay* has recently shown the extensive capacity of the platform in supporting disaster relief in the Caribbean as part of Operation RUMAN.[118]

72. While an excellent platform as a supporting vessel, the capacity of a LSD(A) to operate as a stand-alone amphibious asset in place of an LPD is open to considerable doubt. The LSD(A)s are able to operate just one large or two smaller landing craft at any one time—a significant reduction in sealift compared with an LPD. Dr Roberts thought that this substitution would be "deeply flawed" for this reason:

> The LSD(A)s … have the ability to offload and send in on a landing craft, and they can do it with heavy gear, but they can do one at a time—single operation—whereas *Albion* and *Bulwark* can do four together. This is really critical when you are putting anyone ashore on a beach that is not yours and you are not quite sure what you are going to experience. One or even two of these landing craft coming ashore presents considerable risk—far more than if you were able to land four together … Operational analysis today would indicate that four landing craft is the minimum capability at which you should be able to land on that beach.[119]

73. LSD(A)s have no command facilities or C2 equipment necessary for controlling amphibious operations. As one witness stated: "the LSD is utterly unsuited to command and control this most complicated of all forms of warfare".[120] The *Bay* class are Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships, rather than warships of the Royal Navy, and are largely crewed by civilian RFA personnel. As one written submission notes:

> Although proven to be courageous and loyal, [RFA personnel] are not trained for war to the extent RN officers and ratings [are].

The same submission makes the point that LSD(A)s are not built to the same military damage control standards as warships and lack sufficient manpower to fulfil warfighting and damage control tasks concurrently.[121]

117 Defence Committee, Oral Evidence, *Work of the Department 2017*, 25 October 2017, HC 439, Qq49–66

118 Tommy Thompson (RMA0022); Stuart Broome (RMA0045); Sue Crouch (RMA0064); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094); Ministry of Defence (RMA0098)

119 Q6. See also Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Gary McKenzie (RMA0036); Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085); Human Security Centre (RMA0099)

120 Lt Col (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051). See also Tim Forer (RMA0068); Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085)

121 Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken (RMA0085)

74. The LSD(A)s are also in high operational demand. One is normally in the Gulf to support mine countermeasures operations and a second is assigned to Atlantic Patrol Tasking (North), which includes being in readiness in the Caribbean for the hurricane season. It would be difficult for the LSD(A)s to take a greater share in amphibious operations without reducing these standing tasks.[122]

75. **The *Bay* class LSD(A)s are valuable vessels for supporting amphibious operations alongside amphibious warships and have recently shown their suitability for conducting a range of tasks including disaster relief operations. For the reasons we have set out, they are, nevertheless, no substitute for dedicated amphibious assault warships.**

Type 31e frigates

76. In his Gallipoli Memorial Lecture, the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, discussing the future of specialist multi-role amphibious shipping, said:

> The Type 31e General Purpose Frigate will also provide an ideal platform to host an embarked military force, forward deployed to British Overseas Territories, and to regions of concern to the UK.

77. The outline specification for the Type 31e issued by the Royal Navy in September 2017 said nothing specific about amphibious capability. Space for an extra 40 augmentees, in addition to normal crew, was in the specification as an adaptable requirement.[123]

78. **With the understanding that the tender process for the Type 31e Frigate is still ongoing, the Royal Navy's specification information for the vessel suggests that it would be able to embark only a force of tactically negligible size, let alone the equipment and supplies necessary to sustain a landing force ashore. While some capacity for aviation is also included in the Type 31e specification, it is not at all clear how an embarked force would be moved to its objective. *We ask the MoD to give us further details on the amphibious role that is contemplated for the Type 31e, particularly in relation to the size of a landing force that could be embarked, the space for its equipment and how such a force might be delivered to its objective.***

Charter or requisition of civilian vessels

79. Both amphibious and conventional operations in the recent past have often required the Government to use civilian vessels to augment sealift capacity. 45 civilian ships were chartered or requisitioned for the Falklands Campaign[124] and over 60 merchant ships were required to transport equipment to the Gulf at the outset of Operation TELIC in 2003.[125]

80. The Ministry of Defence, in co-operation with the Department for Transport, keeps a record of the numbers of militarily useful British registered vessels. The latest figures show

122 Stephen Chan (RMA0019); Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Gary McKenzie (RMA0036)

123 Royal Navy, 'Ministry of Defence announces procurement programme for Royal Navy's T31e frigates', 7 September 2017

124 Freedman, L, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign,* Volume II (Revised and Updated Edition), Routledge 2007, chapters 31 and 32, p 732

125 Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lt Gen (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066)

continual year-on-year decreases in the numbers of registered vessels.[126] Our predecessor Committee noted in its report on Strategic Lift in 2007 that the commercial shipping market is shrinking.[127] The numbers of commercial vessels available to the Government would now be considerably lower.

81. Alongside the ships of the Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the department retains four *Point* class roll-on, roll-off strategic sealift vessels on charter under a PFI arrangement with Foreland Shipping. It was decided in 2011 that the number of vessels that the MoD retains on charter be reduced from six to four. This reduction became effective in 2012.[128]

82. **Previous operations have relied on civilian commercial vessels being chartered or requisitioned ('taken up from trade') to provide sealift for personnel, equipment and supplies. This relies on being able to obtain suitable civilian vessels at short notice. Noting both the decline in the numbers of registered militarily useful commercial vessels and a reduction of the number of *Point* class ships that are chartered by the department to support operations, we seek reassurance that the need for strategic sealift is being adequately prioritised. *We ask the MoD to explain the process which it and the Department for Transport use to identify and register militarily useful vessels. Given the decline in these numbers since the last review of strategic sealift requirement in 2011, we also request the Department to revisit this issue, with a view to taking steps to halt the decline. We further request an update on the current status of the agreements in place with Foreland Shipping relating to the Point class vessels, and an explanation of why two of them were released from the contract arrangements in 2012.***

Local communities

83. A point often lost in discussions on military capability is the effect that reconfigurations have on the communities where these capabilities are based. Plymouth is the current home of the amphibious fleet and the Government has given a commitment to support the city as a hub of amphibious specialisation in the future. As well as the reforms to the Defence Estate discussed in Paragraphs 42–43 above, a new £30 million Amphibious Centre of Excellence was opened at RM Tamar in 2013.[129] The disposal of the *Albion* class LPDs and a reduction in the number of Royal Marines will have a profound effect on the city. Plymouth City Council estimates that the disposal of the LPDs would put 1,176 jobs directly at risk and remove £61 million of gross value added from the economy of Devon and Cornwall. The effect on the regional supply chain dependent on the Naval Base would be wider and would have an adverse impact on an advanced marine engineering skills base.[130]

84. **Disposal of the LPDs and the reduction in strength of the Royal Marines would have a profound effect on Plymouth, a city which shares a long association with the amphibious fleet and which has been designated as a future Amphibious Centre of Specialisation. As well as the impact it would have locally, it would represent a substantial waste of hundreds of millions of pounds of investment that has been put**

126 Ministry of Defence, *UK armed forces equipment and formations 2017*, July 2017, Tables 3 and 4
127 Defence Committee, *Strategic Lift,* Eleventh Report of Session 2006–7, HC 462, paras 26–32
128 HC Deb, 2 September 2013, c 45W. See also Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Human Security Centre (RMA0099)
129 Peter Backlog (RMA0031); Paul Facer (RMA0053); Luke Pollard MP (RMA0073); Plymouth City Council (RMA0095);
130 Plymouth City Council (RMA0095). See also Luke Pollard MP (RMA0073)

into these units and this capability. ***We ask the Department to provide us with details of the work that it has done in the course of the National Security Capability Review on examining the impact on local communities, and how it will be incorporated into the work of the Modernising Defence Programme.***

6 The future of amphibious warfare

Global strategic trends

85. The latest edition of the publication on global strategic trends out to 2045 produced by the Ministry of Defence's own Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) predicts that by 2045, 70% of the world's population will live in cities, and that this population movement from rural to urban areas will result in the existence of around 280 megacities (defined by DCDC as cities with a population of 20 million or more). It further suggests that a number of these cities will be in littoral areas, with growing susceptibility to the effects of climate change, rising sea levels and other extreme weather events.[131] A second DCDC publication looking at the future operating environment out to 2035, characterises what it calls the 'urban and littoral challenge':

> For our Armed Forces, the urban environment will be one of the most challenging areas to operate in. The city, and its surrounds, will become an increasingly complex and ambiguous tapestry of multiple actors with shifting allegiances, in which we may be required to operate in a variety of ways, from major conflict at range to peace support and humanitarian operations. Where cities are located on the littoral—a complex operating environment in its own right—the complexities of the urban environment will be amplified and even more dynamic. This will exacerbate further the operating challenges.[132]

86. Even in the absence of conflict, there is a greater likelihood of a need for humanitarian intervention and disaster relief by sea, which amphibious platforms are best placed to deliver. Growing urbanisation also increases the probability of military operations taking place near or in these urban environments. There is an increasing recognition and discussion of this trend and its military consequences within doctrine and commentary in the United States.[133] The littoral and amphibious aspects of these future challenges should not be ignored.[134]

Direction of UK international foreign and defence policy

87. There is a clear emphasis in UK foreign and defence policy on re-establishing a presence outside the Euro-Atlantic area. In December 2016 the Foreign Secretary announced that Britain should once again be seeking to engage 'East of Suez'.[135] This followed undertakings in the SDSR 2015 to deepen defence ties with nations including

131 Ministry of Defence, *Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2045 (5th Edition)*, Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, June 2014, p 17

132 Ministry of Defence, *Future Operating Environment 2035 (1st Edition)*, Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, August 2015, p 32. See also Paul Lloyd (RMA0025); Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030); Lt Col (Rtd) Charles Wilson (RMA0056); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065); Brigadier (Rtd) Tom Lang (RMA0069); Ronald Lockley (RMA0080); Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083); Ernest Blaber (RMA0084); DefenceSynergia (RMA0065)Simon Orr (RMA0090); Carl Stephen Patrick Hunter (RMA0091); Col (Rtd) Ian Moore (RMA0094)

133 See for example United States Marine Corps, *Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment,* December 2017; Williams, P and Selle, W, *Military Contingencies in Cities and Sub-Megacities*, US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, December 2016; Gentile, G et al, *Reimagining the Character of Urban Operations for the US Army,* RAND Corporation, 2017

134 Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030) presents a thoughtful argument on urbanisation of the littoral being an opportunity that can be exploited by an amphibious force.

135 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Foreign Secretary speech: "Britain is back East of Suez"', 9 December 2016

Japan and South Korea.[136] Naval assets including HMS *Sutherland* and HMS *Argyll* will be deployed to the Asia-Pacific region in 2018.[137] Regional hubs for defence engagement have been set up in West Africa, the Gulf and Singapore.[138] As has been demonstrated in the past, amphibious platforms are particularly suited to operations in the Gulf, in the Indian Ocean and in Asia-Pacific, given the importance of maritime power in these regions and the ability of the vessels to operate thousands of miles from their home base. With continuing instability in the Middle East, in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula, there is a clear need for a hard-power edge to this presence.

International amphibious capability

88. The global trend amongst both allies and adversaries indicates an increase in amphibious capability. In oral evidence Dr Roberts noted that the largest amphibious operation in living history was executed by Russia during the 2008 war with Georgia:

> Russian naval infantry landed 11,500 people and annexed an entire country or a state of a country—a significant portion of land—with ground-based air support but without sea-based air support. They did it within about 96 hours. It was a flawless amphibious operation from those who we have often written down in our own intelligence estimates.[139]

Dr Roberts also noted developments elsewhere:

> You can look at the amphibious capabilities of the Chinese navy, the PLAN, which are very significant and growing enormously at a pace that will make them larger than the US Marine Corps by 2025, with two divisions capable at the moment and designed to annex countries, not simply areas of land. They are exercising against opposed beachheads. They are expecting losses that the Russians have experienced in Ukraine. We are talking about between 2,000 and 3,000 people dying in 15 minutes from serving troops. That is the level at which our adversaries are preparing to take risk in amphibious operations.

Iran and North Korea were also mentioned as nations investing in amphibious capability.[140]

United States

89. The United States Navy has recently taken delivery of the LPD USS *Portland*, with the next in class expected to be delivered in 2021. The 355 ship force-level goal that the US Navy has established saw an increase in the requirement from 34 to 38 amphibious

136 HM Government, National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom, Cm 9161, November 2015, para 5.71–5.82

137 Ministry of Defence, 'HMS Sutherland to deploy to Asia Pacific, Defence Secretary announces on-board', 24 November 2017

138 Ministry of Defence, 'Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon hails importance of UK's defence network', 10 January 2017

139 Q32; 'Georgia: Russian troops seize a strategic prize in swift advance', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 2008

140 Q32

ships, 13 of which will be LPDs. The *Portland* will also serve as the test platform for the US Navy's prototype directed energy weapon.[141] The next class of amphibious ship to replace the existing LSD class is in development.[142]

Russia

90. Russia sought to buy two *Mistral* class LHDs from France, but the contract was cancelled following the aggression in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014.[143] The Russian Navy has sought to continue replacing its older LST models with a newer class of landing ship.[144] A new class of LHD is also being developed.[145]

China

91. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) launched its fifth LPD in June 2017, with a further two under construction. Earlier in March 2017 it was reported that construction had begun on China's largest ever LHD amphibious vessel. This was accompanied by reports that China is planning a significant expansion of the PLAN Marine Corps up to a total of 100,000.[146]

Other nations

92. **France** currently operates three *Mistral* class LHDs. **Australia** purchased a *Bay* class LSD(A) from the UK in 2011 and had two LHDs delivered in 2014 and 2015.[147] In 2015, **Italy** ordered a new LHD which is due for delivery in 2022,[148] and **Turkey** awarded a contract for a new LPD for delivery in 2021.[149] **Egypt** completed the purchase of the two *Mistral* class LHDs from France that were originally intended for Russia in 2016.[150] In 2017 **India** announced the approval of the construction of a class of four new LPDs[151] and **Japan** commissioned a second LPH into its Navy.[152] **South Korea** is due to commission a second LHD into its Navy in 2018 to operate alongside its existing flotilla of smaller landing ships.[153]

93. There was a discussion in oral evidence about the value that international partners place more widely on the UK's amphibious capability. Dr Roberts's view was that:

> If you offered a US military commander either a British carrier or a British amphibious group, they would take the amphibious group any day … From

141 'Surface Navy 2018: Officials believe they will field 38 amphibious ships', *Jane's Defence Weekly,* 10 January 2018
142 Congressional Research Service, *Navy LX(R) Amphibious Ship Program: Background and Issues for Congress*, 8 December 2017
143 'France halts first Russian Mistral delivery in response to Ukraine crisis', *Jane's Defence Weekly,* 4 September 2014
144 'Russia orders second Ivan Gren-class landing ship', *Jane's Navy International*, 17 October 2014
145 'Russia develops Priboy LHD for export customers', *Jane's Defence Weekly,* 7 June 2016; 'Russia to build first helicopter carrier by 2022', TASS, 25 May 2017
146 'China expanding its amphibious force', Jane's Defence Weekly, 5 April 2017; 'China building navy's biggest amphibious assault vessel, sources say', South China Morning Post, 30 March 2017
147 'Evolving Expeditionary Capabilities', Jane's Defence Weekly, 23 May 2017
148 'Italian Navy orders new amphibious assault ship', Jane's Defence Weekly, 3 July 2015
149 'More details emerge on Turkish LPD', Jane's Defence Weekly, 1 February 2016
150 'Egypt receives second Mistral LHD', Jane's Defence Weekly, 19 September 2016,
151 'Government gives green signal to build worth over Rs 20,000 crore', Economic Times, 21 May 2017
152 'Japanese navy commissions second Izumo-class helicopter carrier', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 March 2017
153 'Evolving Expeditionary Capabilities', Jane's Defence Weekly, 23 May 2017

> the discussions I have had in DC this year, it strikes me that amphibious capability is actually a lot more critical to the special relationship than carrier power.[154]

General Thompson said that his experience was the same. Nick Childs differed slightly, pointing out that the US Navy is struggling to meet their deployed carrier commitments, and that "both are critical capabilities as far as the US is concerned".[155] Dr Roberts was more direct when he was asked what our allies would think of us reducing our amphibious capability:

> To use very lazy language, they think we are mad. No one invests such an amount of national capital—intellectual, physical and monetary—in a huge capability and a huge number of ships—sailors, airmen, concepts, relationships—just to simply delete it on the basis of a review that might be a defence review, but without any of the coverage, discussion, or debate around it. It would do us tremendous danger in terms of our reputation as a thinking nation, as a rational actor in a military space, to make such a decision. It does not bear any relationship to the way we are talking about foreign policy or the threats that we have.[156]

94. **Global trends point to an increasing proportion of the world's population living in coastal and littoral zones. There is growing awareness that future conflicts are likely to take place in or near 'megacities', and a large proportion of these cities will be on or near a coastline. An amphibious capability opens a range of military options in such an environment.**

95. **The Government has put a renewed emphasis on the UK having an increased role outside the Euro-Atlantic area and there have been continued discussions of returning to a presence East of Suez. Amphibious platforms, with their inherent flexibility and capacity to operate at considerable distance from the home base, are ideally suited for this role. The uncertain situation in Asia-Pacific, with continuing tensions in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula, would make having a flexible, sea-based platform, with the ability to deliver amphibious infantry trained to operate in extreme environmental conditions, highly desirable.**

96. **At a time when all of the world's major defence powers are investing in amphibious units, the United Kingdom is reportedly considering divesting itself of these vital assets. Our allies place a great deal of value on amphibious capability. Both allies and potential adversaries see the value in their amphibious platforms and are seeking to increase their strength and capacity. Once this capability is disposed of, it cannot be regenerated quickly or easily. Its deletion or reduction by the Modernising Defence Programme would reinforce the view that the exercise is wholly divorced from strategic reality. Such a step would signal that we are moving further away from co-operating with our allies and matching our competitors.**

97. **The international investment in amphibious capability demonstrates the continuing relevance of amphibious operations to modern warfare. Doctrine and platforms will continue to adapt as both the nature of these operations and the**

154 Q34
155 Q34
156 Q45

technology behind them change. Nonetheless, the ability to strike an enemy from a secure sea base, the ability to insert a force at a point where an enemy is vulnerable and not expecting to be attacked, and the ability to concentrate, reinforce and resupply faster than an enemy is able to do the same, are basic points of advantage in warfare. In restricting these, the UK would be decreasing the range of tactical options available to commanders, and assuming a greater level of risk in operations.

7 Conclusion

98. **The United Kingdom's unique experience and expertise in amphibious operations are assets which should be sustained. Their relevance to modern warfare is clear and the evidence submitted to our Inquiry overwhelmingly confirms that they will continue to be relevant in the future. We reject the argument that the capability to project force from the sea over a beach is obsolete. With a diversifying and uncertain picture of future threats, the UK should be enhancing, not diminishing its options. Disposing of our amphibious capability would not only put the interests of this country at serious risk, but would also be a drastic waste of tailor-made vessels, expensively refitted for another 15 years' use, and of a military specialism that has been fostered across all three Services.**

99. **The Royal Marines have always shown resilience and flexibility in absorbing the changes that have arisen as the nature of warfare evolved. In recent years, however, the Corps has had to face a succession of challenges which are putting 3 Commando Brigade's status as a highly trained, high readiness commando force, that is able to deploy independently at scale, under threat. These challenges have also been having an appreciable effect on the formerly high morale and sense of unit pride—traditionally the hallmarks—of the Royal Marines. This was evident even before the reports of the cuts being considered as part of the NSCR, which are likely dramatically to reduce capacity and morale much further. After more than three-and-a-half centuries of service to the nation, Her Majesty's Corps of Royal Marines is in danger of being sacrificed to short-term Treasury bookkeeping.**

100. **Along with the Royal Marines, the *Albion* class ships lie at the heart of UK amphibious capability. There is no substitute for these dedicated and sophisticated platforms. Attempts to create stop-gap solutions, with vessels that are not designed for the purpose, will result in the assumption of wholly unacceptable levels of operational risk. We understand that the Royal Navy and Royal Marines will need to adapt, as they move towards what the First Sea Lord has called a 'carrier-centric future'. However recent defence reviews have made this adaptation a reductive rather than a constructive process, informed largely by resource constraints and consequential manpower shortages, rather than by any coherent strategic concept or any identifiable operational requirements.**

101. **The fundamental flaw in the NSCR process was its assumption that as the threats facing the UK are intensifying, reductions in military capabilities, prescribed by the SDSR only two years earlier, must be inflicted. The answer to new and intensified threats must be augmented capabilities—not massively reduced ones such as the deletion of amphibious forces and specialised ships. The Modernising Defence Programme must not proceed on the same contradictory basis as the NSCR. It should result in a level of finance and resource being made available to the Naval Service which allows both the carriers and amphibious capability to be supported. The price of one cannot be the destruction of the other.**

Conclusions and recommendations

The National Security Capability Review

1. The NSCR is still ongoing and we will examine the process and its substantive outcomes when it has concluded. Even with the Defence element of the NSCR being separated from the rest of the review, as has recently been announced, the conclusions and recommendations in this report have continuing relevance to the process that this sorry episode has demonstrated. The entanglement of Defence with other issues under the control of senior National Security Council/Cabinet Office officials has led to an unacceptable lack of Ministerial accountability. We warmly welcome the new Defence Secretary's success in regaining control of the Defence Review process, but we remain concerned at the post-Levene disintegration of the Chiefs of Staff Committee as the primary source of direct military advice to the Government. (Paragraph 12)

2. Our predecessors, along with other Committees such as the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, have been critical of the process surrounding previous SDSRs: in contrast to earlier exercises, such as the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, there has been very little consultation and engagement outside Government during the review process. Unfortunately, we see no evidence of this state of affairs changing in the NSCR. Bodies that would expect to be consulted in the course of these reviews have not been 'brought in' to the process, and have struggled to receive substantive answers to many questions that have arisen. This is a particularly serious omission where Parliament is concerned. Decisions of this magnitude should be debated in Parliament and information provided to select committees to allow for proper scrutiny. Parliament should also have real influence on the review process. Presenting the outcome of a review of this nature to Parliament without any prior Parliamentary input or scrutiny is totally unacceptable. This is not entirely the fault of the Ministry of Defence, as the NSCR is being co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office. Nonetheless, a lack of engagement will only encourage the emergence of rumours and leaks that distract from the overall review. The Department may dismiss such reports as 'speculation', but they are inevitable in a secretive—indeed a closed—process without proper external engagement, given the scale of the force structure reconfigurations that are reportedly being considered. The Department may wish to reflect upon this in future defence and security review exercises. *We recommend that the Modernising Defence Programme be used as an opportunity finally to involve those organisations, individuals and institutions—including Parliament—which have previously made valuable contributions to strategic defence reviews.* (Paragraph 13)

3. The Secretary of State and other Defence Ministers are accountable to Parliament for *all* the policies, decisions and actions of their department. This is a long-standing constitutional principle which is articulated in the Ministerial Code. It is not acceptable for Ministers to avoid answering questions on force structure and manpower changes on the basis that these were decisions taken by the Service Chiefs, as if Ministers are devoid of responsibility to account for these decisions. If this is the way that the Levene Reforms have been interpreted by the Department, then this is an interpretation made in error. It is not possible for any Department of State to arrange itself internally so as to insulate Ministers from Parliamentary

accountability or allow them to hide behind officials. The Service Chiefs are more distant from strategic decision-making than they have been at any point in modern history. The decisions they are required to make on force structure are often invidious choices, entirely restricted by the political and financial parameters, set by Ministers, on how resources are allocated. The Department should be aware that we will not accept an abdication of accountability by Ministers, and will expect Ministers, led by the new Secretary of State, fully to account for and explain the policy rationale behind force structure changes that emerge from this or any future Defence review process. (Paragraph 14)

Amphibious warfare

4. The more recent doctrine and tasking of amphibious units places great emphasis on unopposed landings, ideally at night, to maximise stealth, surprise and the amount of time available to get reinforcements and equipment ashore before the enemy is in a position to counterattack. Any assessment of current UK amphibious capability based on a 'D-Day'-style conception of amphibious landings, in the teeth of all-out enemy resistance, completely misses the point. (Paragraph 18)

5. The institutional expertise the United Kingdom possesses in amphibious warfare has been hard won, and continues to be maintained today in UK Armed Forces by a group of specialists, mainly found in the Royal Marines and in the Royal Navy's amphibious fleet. Dispensing with a unique cadre of military expertise from across the three Services, or reducing it to the level where it cannot be deployed on a strategically meaningful scale, would be an irreparable act of folly. The UK is one of the few nations that have a sovereign capability in this specialism. Reductions of the type and scale that are reportedly being contemplated would wipe this out, and there would be no going back. It would be yet another step away from full-spectrum capability. (Paragraph 24)

The Royal Marines

6. We are concerned by the reduction in the strength of the Royal Marines inflicted since 2010, and the further reductions that will follow from the restructuring of 42 Commando. 3 Commando Brigade is required to generate high readiness forces, often entailing units being at short notice to move for extended periods. With the operational tempo remaining high, sustaining Lead Commando Group at high readiness on a reduced strength will put further strain on personnel and equipment. We believe that reductions on the scale contemplated would bring 3 Commando Brigade below the critical mass needed for it to maintain readiness and conduct its standing tasks, let alone be deployed at a tactically significant strength on operations. This is without the further dramatic cuts in personnel that are reportedly being considered. *The Department should tell us how the readiness of 3 Commando Brigade and Lead Commando Group is to be sustained following the restructuring announced in April 2017.* (Paragraph 32)

7. 3 Brigade's position as a formation that is dependent on elements from all three Services to be deployable makes it particularly vulnerable at a time when all Services are facing considerable manpower pressures. It is the unique nature of the Brigade

that gives it its strength, and reductions in supporting elements from other Services and branches would also compromise its capacity as a deployable fighting force. (Paragraph 33)

8. The Royal Marines and attached commando units famously have one of the most rigorous and demanding military training regimes in the world, enabling them to be ready to survive, manoeuvre and fight in a variety of roles and in extreme environmental conditions. Amphibious operations place a premium on specialist training in all parts of the chain of command to plan and execute these complex military tasks. Exercises are vital for putting this training into practice, for maintaining readiness, and for maintaining a credible, high visibility deterrent. Cuts to training and exercises because of lack of resources are another sign of the neglect of this capability. *We require the Department to set out in detail, for each training serial or exercise due to involve elements of 3 Commando Brigade that has been run at reduced capacity or cancelled in FY 2017–18: a) the individual units that did or were due to participate in that serial or exercise; b) the extent of reduction in capacity; c) the cost of running the serial or exercise at full capacity; d) the reason for reduction in capacity or cancellation, and e) whether the serial or exercise will be reinstated at full capacity in FY 2018–19 and, if not, why not?* (Paragraph 37)

9. It is a matter of particular embarrassment that resource constraints have affected training and exercising with our allies. These opportunities for joint training are invaluable for defence co-operation and for sustaining interoperability. These relationships, which have been forged by the Royal Marines with their American and Dutch counterparts, are models of defence co-operation. Running down the ability of 3 Commando Brigade to participate in a meaningful way in these exercises has the potential to do serious damage to this country's defence relationships with our closest allies. It also puts at risk our standing commitments to NATO, at a time when the organisation that is the cornerstone of our defence policy needs our full support. (Paragraph 38)

10. The contribution made to UK Special Forces by the Royal Marines is disproportionate to the size of the Corps and is indicative of the quality of the people who pass through its ranks. The growth in the use and tasking of Special Forces in recent years makes a continuing 'pipeline' of trained and resilient personnel vital. Reducing the strength of the Royal Marines will substantially reduce the recruitment pool available, and reduce Special Forces' amphibious warfare expertise. (Paragraph 41)

11. We welcome the decision to consolidate HQs of a number of units in 3 Commando Brigade to a new location in the Plymouth/Torpoint area. This is in keeping with the Department's overall objectives to make better use of the Defence Estate and reduce its cost, and will have the benefits of consolidating units within the Brigade. *But the Department should communicate clearly and often with the personnel affected and their families as the reforms to the Defence Estate proceed, and we would urge that the work in relation to Plymouth/Torpoint site is completed and its outcome communicated as soon as is possible.* (Paragraph 43)

12. Given the number of challenges the Corps is facing, it is unsurprising that the combination of these factors is beginning to have a serious effect on morale and Service satisfaction. The Royal Marines have historically exhibited a higher than

average level of morale, Service and unit satisfaction than across the other parts of the Armed Forces. AFCAS 2017 shows that the Royal Marines have seen large decreases in these categories. While falling morale and satisfaction across all Services deserve urgent attention from the Department, these notably dramatic reductions, within units that are known for their distinctive ethos and level of 'espirit de corps' are a matter of particular concern. The reports that have emerged about the NSCR will have done nothing to improve morale amongst the Royal Marines and attached units, and may well do further damage. *The Department has indicated in its written evidence that work has been initiated to gather data on outflow and morale to inform future action plans. We wish to receive detailed information on the work that is being done, the nature of the data being gathered, the level of resource and staffing being dedicated to this exercise, and other steps that are being taken to arrest these alarming reductions in morale.* (Paragraph 45)

Amphibious ships

13. We strongly oppose the withdrawal of the *Albion* class LPDs from service ahead of their out-of-service dates in 2033 and 2034. They are purpose-built amphibious assault platforms which provide the primary means of deploying a landing force over a beach. There are no other ships in the Royal Navy which could conceivably sustain this capability in the future. The wider utility and the versatility of the LPDs beyond their primary roles in amphibious assault are substantial, and will be sacrificed if their disposal goes ahead. (Paragraph 57)

14. The *Ocean* has repeatedly shown her worth, being at the centre of the UK's engagements in Sierra Leone, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Her disposal without replacement is a serious loss to the amphibious fleet and is rightly criticised throughout the evidence we have received (Paragraph 58)

15. The decision taken in 2015 to dispose of HMS *Ocean* without replacement is to be greatly regretted. Her unique capabilities and versatility as a platform have been demonstrated time and again on operations. Her disposal represents a serious loss to the amphibious fleet, and was the first indication that the Royal Navy's amphibious capability is being run down to release necessary manpower for fixed-wing aircraft carriers. (Paragraph 66)

16. *We ask the Department to provide us with details on every aspect of the enhancement of the Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers to support amphibious capability set out in the 2015 SDSR, and the timescale for completion of the enhancement. We request information on whether it is planned for one or both Queen Elizabeth class carriers to operate as an LPH, and the modifications that this would require. If this is the case, we would also request details on whether it is intended for the carrier to operate fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft simultaneously—for example, the number of helicopter spots that can be operated while simultaneously maintaining fixed-wing launch and recovery capability. We request details on the intended command, control and communications systems that are part of this modification and how the capacity of these systems compares with those of an Albion class LPD. We understand that the*

number of F-35s that the carriers will operate has not yet been confirmed, but ask how many personnel would make up the Carrier Air Wing and how these personnel can be accommodated at the same time as an embarked amphibious force. (Paragraph 67)

17. Several issues arise which would create problems for a carrier acting as an amphibious platform in any configuration. The most significant of these is that carriers can provide only an airborne amphibious capability and cannot transfer any equipment, vehicles or supplies that are too heavy to airlift. Unlike HMS *Ocean*, the *Queen Elizabeth* class has no capacity to operate landing craft. The proximity to the shore with which these high-value assets might have to operate is also, in an age of increasingly sophisticated anti-ship missile capabilities, very hazardous. (Paragraph 68)

18. In combination with purpose-built amphibious ships such as the LPDs, the *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers could provide support to an amphibious operation. However, they are not primarily designed as amphibious ships and cannot operate as such in a stand-alone role. This makes them a poor substitute for an amphibious assault ship in this specialist role. (Paragraph 69)

19. The *Bay* class LSD(A)s are valuable vessels for supporting amphibious operations alongside amphibious warships and have recently shown their suitability for conducting a range of tasks including disaster relief operations. For the reasons we have set out, they are, nevertheless, no substitute for dedicated amphibious assault warships. (Paragraph 75)

20. With the understanding that the tender process for the Type 31e Frigate is still ongoing, the Royal Navy's specification information for the vessel suggests that it would be able to embark only a force of tactically negligible size, let alone the equipment and supplies necessary to sustain a landing force ashore. While some capacity for aviation is also included in the Type 31e specification, it is not at all clear how an embarked force would be moved to its objective. *We ask the MoD to give us further details on the amphibious role that is contemplated for the Type 31e, particularly in relation to the size of a landing force that could be embarked, the space for its equipment and how such a force might be delivered to its objective.* (Paragraph 78)

21. Previous operations have relied on civilian commercial vessels being chartered or requisitioned ('taken up from trade') to provide sealift for personnel, equipment and supplies. This relies on being able to obtain suitable civilian vessels at short notice. Noting both the decline in the numbers of registered militarily useful commercial vessels and a reduction of the number of *Point* class ships that are chartered by the department to support operations, we seek reassurance that the need for strategic sealift is being adequately prioritised. *We ask the MoD to explain the process which it and the Department for Transport use to identify and register militarily useful vessels. Given the decline in these numbers since the last review of strategic sealift requirement in 2011, we also request the Department to revisit this issue, with a view to taking steps to halt the decline. We further request an update on the current status of the agreements in place with Foreland Shipping relating to the Point class vessels, and an explanation of why two of them were released from the contract arrangements in 2012.* (Paragraph 82)

22. Disposal of the LPDs and the reduction in strength of the Royal Marines would have a profound effect on Plymouth, a city which shares a long association with the amphibious fleet and which has been designated as a future Amphibious Centre of Specialisation. As well as the impact it would have locally, it would represent a substantial waste of hundreds of millions of pounds of investment that has been put into these units and this capability. *We ask the Department to provide us with details of the work that it has done in the course of the National Security Capability Review on examining the impact on local communities, and how it will be incorporated into the work of the Modernising Defence Programme.* (Paragraph 84)

The future of amphibious warfare

23. Global trends point to an increasing proportion of the world's population living in coastal and littoral zones. There is growing awareness that future conflicts are likely to take place in or near 'megacities', and a large proportion of these cities will be on or near a coastline. An amphibious capability opens a range of military options in such an environment. (Paragraph 94)

24. The Government has put a renewed emphasis on the UK having an increased role outside the Euro-Atlantic area and there have been continued discussions of returning to a presence East of Suez. Amphibious platforms, with their inherent flexibility and capacity to operate at considerable distance from the home base, are ideally suited for this role. The uncertain situation in Asia-Pacific, with continuing tensions in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula, would make having a flexible, sea-based platform, with the ability to deliver amphibious infantry trained to operate in extreme environmental conditions, highly desirable. (Paragraph 95)

25. At a time when all of the world's major defence powers are investing in amphibious units, the United Kingdom is reportedly considering divesting itself of these vital assets. Our allies place a great deal of value on amphibious capability. Both allies and potential adversaries see the value in their amphibious platforms and are seeking to increase their strength and capacity. Once this capability is disposed of, it cannot be regenerated quickly or easily. Its deletion or reduction by the Modernising Defence Programme would reinforce the view that the exercise is wholly divorced from strategic reality. Such a step would signal that we are moving further away from co-operating with our allies and matching our competitors. (Paragraph 96)

26. The international investment in amphibious capability demonstrates the continuing relevance of amphibious operations to modern warfare. Doctrine and platforms will continue to adapt as both the nature of these operations and the technology behind them change. Nonetheless, the ability to strike an enemy from a secure sea base, the ability to insert a force at a point where an enemy is vulnerable and not expecting to be attacked, and the ability to concentrate, reinforce and resupply faster than an enemy is able to do the same, are basic points of advantage in warfare. In restricting these, the UK would be decreasing the range of tactical options available to commanders, and assuming a greater level of risk in operations. (Paragraph 97)

Conclusion

27. The United Kingdom's unique experience and expertise in amphibious operations are assets which should be sustained. Their relevance to modern warfare is clear and the evidence submitted to our Inquiry overwhelmingly confirms that they will continue to be relevant in the future. We reject the argument that the capability to project force from the sea over a beach is obsolete. With a diversifying and uncertain picture of future threats, the UK should be enhancing, not diminishing its options. Disposing of our amphibious capability would not only put the interests of this country at serious risk, but would also be a drastic waste of tailor-made vessels, expensively refitted for another 15 years' use, and of a military specialism that has been fostered across all three Services. (Paragraph 98)

28. The Royal Marines have always shown resilience and flexibility in absorbing the changes that have arisen as the nature of warfare evolved. In recent years, however, the Corps has had to face a succession of challenges which are putting 3 Commando Brigade's status as a highly trained, high readiness commando force, that is able to deploy independently at scale, under threat. These challenges have also been having an appreciable effect on the formerly high morale and sense of unit pride—traditionally the hallmarks—of the Royal Marines. This was evident even before the reports of the cuts being considered as part of the NSCR, which are likely dramatically to reduce capacity and morale much further. After more than three-and-a-half centuries of service to the nation, Her Majesty's Corps of Royal Marines is in danger of being sacrificed to short-term Treasury bookkeeping. (Paragraph 99)

29. Along with the Royal Marines, the *Albion* class ships lie at the heart of UK amphibious capability. There is no substitute for these dedicated and sophisticated platforms. Attempts to create stop-gap solutions, with vessels that are not designed for the purpose, will result in the assumption of wholly unacceptable levels of operational risk. We understand that the Royal Navy and Royal Marines will need to adapt, as they move towards what the First Sea Lord has called a 'carrier-centric future'. However recent defence reviews have made this adaptation a reductive rather than a constructive process, informed largely by resource constraints and consequential manpower shortages, rather than by any coherent strategic concept or any identifiable operational requirements. (Paragraph 100)

30. The fundamental flaw in the NSCR process was its assumption that as the threats facing the UK are intensifying, reductions in military capabilities, prescribed by the SDSR only two years earlier, must be inflicted. The answer to new and intensified threats must be augmented capabilities—not massively reduced ones such as the deletion of amphibious forces and specialised ships. The Modernising Defence Programme must not proceed on the same contradictory basis as the NSCR. It should result in a level of finance and resource being made available to the Naval Service which allows both the carriers and amphibious capability to be supported. The price of one cannot be the destruction of the other. (Paragraph 101)

Annex 1: Comparative figures on amphibious vessels

Vessels building or planned are indicated in parentheses.

	LPD	LPH / LHD	LSD	LST
UK	2	1	3	0
USA	10 (2)	9 (2)	12 (2)	0
Russia	0	(1)	0	19(1)
China	5 (2)	(1)	0	29
France	0	3	0	1
Australia	0	2	1	0
India	1	(4)	0	9
Japan	0	2	0	1
S Korea	2	2	0	4
Italy	1	2(1)	0	0
Egypt	0	2	0	3
Turkey	(1)	0	0	4

Sources: The Military Balance 2017, International Institute for Strategic Studies, with additional information from footnote sources from the 'International amphibious capability' section of chapter 6.

Key:

LPD — Landing Platform Dock
LPH/LHD — Landing Platform Helicopter / Landing Helicopter Dock
LSD — Landing Ship Dock
LST — Landing Ship Tank

For a full description of these classes of vessel, see page 20, Box 1.

Annex 2: Selected web forum submissions

The Committee received 954 submissions through the web forum which serve to reinforce the detailed analyses set out in oral and written evidence on which this Report is based. A few representative samples of web forum submissions are reproduced below.

The Royal Navy is stretched to its limits and requires [substantial] investment to protect the UK and its territories around the world. HMS *Albion* has recently shown its unique capabilities to assist during the recent hurricanes. How else would we be able to support those in need, or do we just not provide that level of support in future and let people fend for themselves? Threats are changing and evolving in ways that cannot be predicted, the Royal Marines have the capability to deter and counter threats; again, they are currently cut close to the bone; further cuts will demoralise them and leave the UK weak. Fully appreciate times are hard and finances are tight but the Navy and Marines are at a point where there is no fat left and any cuts strike at capacity and capability vital to the UK and its dependants.

John Garnet

The Royal Marines and UK amphibious capability are important to our defence. I feel very strongly that they should be funded fully. It is time we stopped cutting our defences we only have our armed forces to rely on in many scenarios.

Jaclyn Horrod

The Royal Marines have been deeply involved in every conflict since 1945 and this dangerous period in our history is definitely NOT the time to reduce [them] and their amphibious capability.

Christopher Maycock

In my view it would be a terrible mistake for the Royal Navy/Royal Marines to lose the amphibious capability that they currently have. The type of small scale interventions by shipborne forces is only likely to increase, and to be totally reliant on helicopter delivery of such forces is totally impractical.

Anthony G Bruce

The Royal Marines and UK amphibious capability need their funding to be increased not only for matters of the defence of the realm but for their valuable expertise in dealing with emergencies, both natural and man-made, at home and in the Commonwealth.

Kathleen Grundy

I live in the South West and the Royal Marines are integral to the city and its naval history. The two new aircraft carriers seem to be going to Portsmouth when they could have come to Plymouth. We need HMS *Albion* and HMS *Bulwark* to stay in Plymouth and help protect the country.

Sheila Yates

These cuts have gone far enough. Sometimes keeping a capability is more important. The

R.M. need these vessels and to get rid of them would mean yet another downgrading of our ability to protect ourselves or our allies should the need arise.

James Neale

As a Royal Marine officer who served Queen and country for 26 years I am dismayed at the possible reduction of the Corps. We are military insurance for our country, ready to respond to any threat. So we need to be at the highest state of readiness with the best possible assets. The Corps has a historic vein running through it which must be maintained to enable the expertise and experience to be retained for future generations of Royal Marine Commandos.

Anthony Smith

As already stated, the RM and amphibious landing capability is vital for the UK. We need these highly trained personnel, and ships, for possible deployment. The effect of cutting such a capability sends yet more wrong messages to potential aggressors. Morale in what would be left will be devastating, we must keep to the current structure. No further defence cuts, full stop.

Simon Girling

As an Ex-Commando Gunner I feel that the Government should look again at our amphibious capabilities and not look at discarding *Bulwark* and *Albion*. They are vital for not only our defence but that of other nations and allies within NATO and beyond. The Royal Marines are our highest ranked fighting force other than the SAS and Para Regiments and should never be discarded or minimised.

Bernie Watters

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 30 January 2018

Members present:

Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis, in the Chair

Leo Docherty	Mrs Madeleine Moon
Rt Hon Mark Francois	Rt Hon John Spellar
Graham P Jones	Phil Wilson

Draft Report (*Sunset for the Royal Marines? The Royal Marines and Amphibious Capability*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 101 read and agreed to.

Annexes agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 6 February at 10.45 am.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 5 December 2017	*Question number*
Lieutenant General (Rtd) Sir Robert Fry KCB CBE RM, Commandant General Royal Marines 2001–02, **Major General (Rtd) Julian Thompson CB OBE RM**, Commander, 3 Commando Brigade, 1981–83, **Nick Childs**, Senior Fellow for Naval Forces and Maritime Security, International Institute for Strategic Studies, and **Dr Peter Roberts**, Director, Military Sciences, RUSI	Q1–63

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

RMA numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1 Gabriele Molinelli (RMA0030)

2 Andrew McNeillie (RMA0046)

3 Brian Williams (RMA0047)

4 Captain RN Colin Hamilton (RMA0041)

5 Captain RN Ian Somervaille (RMA0054)

6 Carl Stevens Patrick-Hunter (RMA0091)

7 Charles Wilson (RMA0056)

8 Colonel (retd) Ian Moore (RMA0094)

9 Commander retired Richard Blott (RMA0058)

10 Commander RN Nigel MacCartan-Ward DSC AFC (RMA0055)

11 Commodore (Rtd) Michael Clapp CB RN and Rear Admiral (Rtd) Jeremy Larken DSO RN (RMA0085)

12 Commodore Richard Bridges RN (Rtd) & Major General David Pennefather RM (Rtd) (RMA0096)

13 Councillor Anthony Carey (RMA0008)

14 David Turner (RMA0063)

15 DefenceSynergia (RMA0065)

16 Dr G Y Shin (RMA0061)

17 Dr Mark Campbell-Roddis (RMA0052)

18 Dr Martin Ridge (RMA0023)

19 Dr Mike Denning (RMA0005)

20 Grant Eustace (RMA0007)

21 HH The Lord Parmoor Michael Parmoor (RMA0057)

22 Human Security Centre (RMA0099)

23 Justin Smallwood (RMA0004)

24 Lee Coates (RMA0001)

25 Lieutenant Colonel (Rtd) Ewen Southby-Tailyour (RMA0051)

26 Mark Rees (RMA0017)

27 Martin Bowles (RMA0100)

28 Master Jonny Jewell (RMA0018)

29 Miss Pamela Chorlton (RMA0035)

30 Ministry of Defence (RMA0098)

31 Mr Adrian Raisbeck (RMA0062)

32 Mr Alan Wombell (RMA0049)

33 Mr Andrew Jackson (RMA0089)
34 Mr Barry Collacott (RMA0013)
35 Mr Charles Pilton (RMA0075)
36 Mr Chris Chambers (RMA0079)
37 Mr Chris Smith (RMA0092)
38 Mr Christopher Ferguson (RMA0003)
39 Mr David Harris (RMA0088)
40 Mr David Mathews (RMA0006)
41 Mr David Page (RMA0009)
42 Mr Derek Grieve (RMA0028)
43 Mr Dominic Collins (RMA0026)
44 Mr Ernest Blaber (RMA0084)
45 Mr Gareth Staples-Jones (RMA0002)
46 Mr Gary McKenzie (RMA0036)
47 Mr Geoffrey Roach (RMA0071)
48 Mr George Elton (RMA0020)
49 Mr Jason Hunt (RMA0042)
50 Mr Kevin Goble (RMA0081)
51 Mr Luke Pollard MP (RMA0073)
52 Mr Mark Bullard (RMA0043)
53 Mr Mark Gibbs (RMA0032)
54 Mr Murdo Mackenzie (RMA0083)
55 Mr Patrick Hopper (RMA0103)
56 Mr Paul Facer (RMA0053)
57 Mr Paul Lloyd (RMA0025)
58 Mr Peter Backlog (RMA0031)
59 Mr Peter Booker (RMA0027)
60 Mr Peter Calliafas (RMA0034)
61 Mr Peter Pennington (RMA0072)
62 Mr Philip Tidy (RMA0038)
63 Mr Richard Deacon (RMA0044)
64 Mr Richard Tyrrell (RMA0011)
65 Mr Robert Jones (RMA0033)
66 Mr Robert Watt (RMA0101)
67 Mr Roger Parkes (RMA0059)
68 Mr Ronald Lockley (RMA0080)
69 Mr Roy V Martin (RMA0077)
70 Mr Simon Orr (RMA0090)

71 Mr Stephen Gripton (RMA0016)
72 Mr Steven Kendrick (RMA0012)
73 Mr Stuart Broome (RMA0045)
74 Mr Tim Forer (RMA0068)
75 Mr Tim Reid (RMA0037)
76 Mr Tom Dixon (RMA0076)
77 Mr Tommy Thompson (RMA0022)
78 Mr William Taylor (RMA0074)
79 Mrs Sue Crouch (RMA0064)
80 Ms Yvonne Walsham (RMA0039)
81 Nick Paton (RMA0087)
82 Phil Chadwick (RMA0086)
83 Plymouth City Council (RMA0095)
84 Professor Gwythian Prins (RMA0102)
85 Professor Paul Rogers (RMA0078)
86 Rear Admiral (Rtd) David Snelson and Lieutenant General (Rtd) Sir James Dutton (RMA0066)
87 Rear Admiral Chris Parry (RMA0050)
88 Rev'd David Osborne (RMA0010)
89 Ross Wilson (RMA0014)
90 Stephen Becket (RMA0060)
91 Stephen Chan (RMA0019)
92 Surgeon Captain (D) Edward Grant (RMA0015)
93 Susan Robinson (RMA0097)
94 Tom Lang (RMA0069)
95 Tom Wimsey (RMA0082)
96 United Nations Association UK (RMA0104)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

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First Report	Gambling on 'Efficiency': Defence Acquisition and Procurement	HC 431
Second Report	Unclear for take-off? F-35 Procurement	HC 326
First Special Report	SDSR 2015 and the Army: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016-17	HC 311
Second Special Report	Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2016: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2016-17	HC 310
Third Special Report	Investigations into fatalities in Northern Ireland involving British military personnel: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016-17	HC 549