

Note from AFA President -- RAF

AFA members, Congressional staff members, civic leaders, and DOCA members, almost unnoticed in Washington this month was a piece announcing major cuts to the UK military. With these cuts, the headlines below says it all – The Royal Air Force will shrink to its smallest size since World War One.

We should be concerned about this for several reasons. First the UK have been our staunchest ally ... and has provided the most troops in our current operations, more than any other nation in the world. If the RAF shrinks, so inevitably will UK commitment to NATO, to Coalitions like the Iraqs and Afghanistans of the future. We should also worry that the US and other allies will follow suit ...

For your consideration.

Mike

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/7931465/RAF-to-shrink-to-World-War-One-levels.html>

RAF to shrink to World War One levels

The RAF will shrink to its smallest size since the First World War, under unprecedented cuts being proposed at the Ministry of Defense.

By Thomas Harding, Defense Correspondent
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The RAF will shrink to its smallest size since the First World War, under unprecedented cuts being proposed at the Ministry of Defense.

In the most significant changes to Britain's defenses since the post-Suez review of 1957, ministers and officials plan to scrap large parts of the Armed Forces.

The Services will lose up to 16,000 personnel, hundreds of tanks, scores of fighter jets and half a dozen ships, under detailed proposals passed to The Daily Telegraph.

But the RAF will bear the brunt of the planned cuts. The Air Force will lose 7,000 airmen – almost one sixth of its total staff – and 295 aircraft. The cuts will leave the Force with fewer than 200 fighter planes for the first time since 1914. In addition, the Navy will lose two submarines, three amphibious ships and more than 100 senior officers, along with 2,000 sailors and marines.

The Army faces a 40 per cent cut to its fleet of 9,700 armored vehicles and the loss of a 5,000-strong brigade of troops.

The Telegraph has also learnt that the "black hole" in MoD finances, caused by orders which have been made but cannot be paid for, is approaching £72 billion over the next decade – double the amount previously suggested.

While the Strategic Defense and Security Review is yet to be finalized, officials have drawn up a series of likely options to meet cuts of 10 to 20 per cent demanded by the Treasury.

By the end of this month the Defense Strategy Group, comprising ministers and military chiefs, will be presented with a number of recommendations that they will refine and pass to the National Security Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, in September.

In October, after agreement with the Treasury, an announcement will be made in Parliament on precisely what cuts the Forces face as part of the comprehensive spending review of Whitehall budgets.

If implemented, the cuts will mean that Britain will almost certainly depart the world stage as a major military power and become what military chiefs call a "medium-scale player".

The proposed cuts – which are certain to face a critical reception from the public – are being considered without resolving the question of who pays for the Trident replacement. The MoD hopes that once voters realize the scale of the cuts to the Armed Forces, George Osborne, the Chancellor, may spare some parts of the military. The plans will lead to the RAF losing its status as the fifth biggest air force in the world.

The entire force of 120 GR4 Tornado fighter-bombers looks destined for the scrap heap to save £7.5 billion over the next five years. The Tornado was supposed to be in service until 2025, but with a major overhaul due in the next five years costing £10 million for each aircraft, it is now under threat.

The cut will mean job losses as RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Marham totaling almost 5,000 personnel.

Under the plans, the number of Eurofighter Typhoons is likely to be reduced further from 160 to 107 planes based at a single RAF airfield to save £1 billion. The entire fleet of 36 Hercules transport aircraft, the workhorse in Iraq and Afghanistan, is to be phased out and replaced by an order of 22 new A400M planes.

The £3.6 billion project for nine Nimrod MR4 reconnaissance aircraft is also vulnerable, along with a number of other surveillance planes.

The proposals include a swathe of cuts to the Army's armored regiments with the loss of Challenger 2 tanks, AS90 guns and Warrior armored vehicles.

While the Army is likely to lose a few thousand soldiers in the coming year, reducing its numbers to about 100,000, it is braced to lose an entire brigade of about 5,000 when combat troops withdraw from Afghanistan in 2015. It is understood that 7 Armored Brigade or 20 Armored Brigade, both based in Germany, are the most vulnerable.

Infantry battalions will be increased from about 600 troops to 750 as a lesson from Afghanistan has been the loss of combat effectiveness through leave and casualties, according to the plans.

The Royal Marines also face coming under direct Army control from Navy command and the possibility of being grouped into a "super elite" unit alongside two Parachute Regiment battalions.

A senior Whitehall source said: "These are not Tory cuts, these are Labor cuts as a result of their irresponsible overspending. However, a lot of this comes down to how much political appetite there is to do this."

An MoD spokesman said: "The Defense Secretary has made clear that tough decisions will need to be made but the complex process of a Strategic Defense and Security Review will be concluded in the autumn and speculation at this stage about its outcome is entirely unfounded."

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