

UK draws up plans to back US military attack on North Korea

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The British government is in discussions with the Trump administration on its role in a military confrontation with North Korea. On Monday, the *Daily Mail* published an article that included detailed information on the British military's plans to back the US military. The article cited Royal Navy, government and civil service sources.

The *Mail* said a war against Korea would involve Britain sending a fleet to the Korean peninsula, along similar lines as what Britain did in its war against Argentina in 1982. The *Mail* stated, "One option involves deploying Britain's new aircraft carrier—due to be handed over to the Navy later this year—to the region before she has undergone flight trials."

Under this scenario, the £3 billion HMS Queen Elizabeth, carrying 12 F-35B fighter jets, would join US warships off the Korean peninsula. The Queen Elizabeth carrier is currently involved in a sea trial around its Portsmouth base and not due to enter full service until 2020. However, the article noted that the ship "will be commissioned at the end of this year." It continued, "Navy sources said she could technically then be sent to war."

The article stated, "In 1982, aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* was rushed into service early for the war with Argentina." The report cited a "Navy source" saying, "In the Falklands we had to react to an event and HMS *Illustrious* was accelerated to respond. This was a reaction to protect British territory, however. In this case [North Korea], the UK would be part of a united global coalition. We would see what support we could give."

The newspaper also cited a "senior Whitehall source, who said, 'We have plenty of ships to send... the Type-45 destroyers, the Type-23 frigates. Britain's new aircraft carrier could be pressed into service early if

things turn south.'"

The information cited by the *Mail* was also reported in the *Telegraph*, the *Daily Express*, the *Sun* and the *Metro*.

The *Mail* article follows the belligerent speech made last week by UK Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon at the Conservative Party's annual conference. A substantial part of his speech dealt with the necessity to prepare for future armed conflict.

Fallon warned of an increased threat of "Russian aggression," saying Moscow was engaged in the "the highest level of submarine activity since the Cold War," with "thousands of troops exercising on NATO's borders." He omitted to mention the now permanent stationing of troops on Russia's western border by NATO, with the UK playing a central role.

He told the conference that Britain already had an armed forces presence in 25 countries, but what was immediately required was "stepping up our response."

"North Korea firing ballistic missiles over Japan" was a "threat to our security." On this basis, he said, "From Asia Pacific, to the Middle East, to Europe we are deepening our defence ties with allies and partners. And we have no greater ally, Conference, than the United States."

He added, "In [US] Defence Secretary Jim Mattis we have a true friend of our nation with whom I work closely on Russia, on North Korea, and on the campaign against Daesh [Islamic State]."

Fallon declared that his government was "renewing our nuclear deterrent," including "building four Dreadnought class submarines." Britain already meets the NATO target—insisted on by the US—that member states spend 2 percent of GDP on defence, he said, adding that Britain has the fifth biggest defence budget in the world. But "we should aim to do better still."

In a further pointed reference to North Korea, Fallon said that the UK would deploy “our ships, our planes, and, yes, our troops on the ground where we and our allies are asked to help.”

The squandering of additional billions on military spending was also demanded by Sir Gerald Howarth, a defence minister in the previous government of David Cameron. At a fringe meeting on defence policy, which he chaired, Howarth said, “I’m alongside those who have left the Armed Forces who believe that the budget is inadequate ... We need more ships, more men and we do need adequate supply. I think the budget has got to be increased.”

Fallon told the same fringe meeting that after the disastrous military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, “I don’t think it follows from that we should say to ourselves we are never going to deploy combat troops ever again. I think that is far too sweeping and I think we need to be ready to prepare our public.”

He continued, “If you have this and you are asked to help in a specific situation where there aren’t those local forces, then there may be circumstances in which we should be ready to do so again. I do not think we should be squeamish about that.”

On taking over as prime minister following the resignation of Cameron after last year’s Brexit referendum, Theresa May stated that she would be prepared to push the button on a nuclear strike that would kill 100,000 men, women and children. Fallon repeated the threat that his government was prepared to use nuclear weapons against North Korea or another adversary.

Attacking statements made by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn that he would not a launch a “first strike” nuclear attack, Fallon said to applause, “It is all very well Jeremy Corbyn saying he would never use nuclear weapons, but Manchester and London are closer to Pyongyang than Los Angeles. Being prepared, in the most extreme circumstances, to use nuclear weapons is what separates a prime minister from a pacifist.”

Last month, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies published a paper, “Preparing for War in Korea.” Authored by Malcolm Chalmers, it stated apocalyptically, “During this first phase of the war, heavy casualties—both military and civilian—would be expected on both sides. Tens—and perhaps hundreds—of thousands would be killed by the

end of the week, and many more wounded and traumatised. Large parts of both North Korea and South Korea would become scenes of carnage, with millions of refugees seeking shelter in areas spared from the initial destruction, and many of these attempting to flee to neighbouring countries.”

The paper warns, “If nuclear weapons were used, the damage could be much greater. A single nuclear weapon used on Seoul could lead to hundreds of thousands of additional fatalities within a week, and many more injured and sick.”



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