

# London's Times spearheads military campaign for more funding, accusing Labour of "betraying the country"

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Ahead of the UK Labour government's defence review this spring, the *Times* newspaper has issued the starkest demand yet—on behalf of the most predatory sections of the ruling elite—that billions more be handed over to the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Last Sunday, the newspaper published an article by Political Editor Steven Swinford and Defence and Political Correspondent George Grylls, stating that "The prime minister is said to believe the deterioration of public finances means he cannot hit a target for spending 2.5 per cent of GDP on the military by 2030."

An accompanying editorial described the government's position as "indefensible" and lambasted: "Labour is betraying the country by failing to urgently raise spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP. Government policy is now a significant threat to national security."

It went on: "It is now clear that Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves are in denial about the threats facing this country and are prepared to mortgage its future simply to avoid making painful decisions about spending."

Labour was "abandoning any pretence of being a responsible custodian of the nation's defences," especially unpardonable at a time when "America's security guarantee to Europe is increasingly being questioned by the Trump administration".

The *Times* is a mouthpiece for the most hawkish sections of the British ruling class, opening up its pages ever since Labour's election to articles pushing Starmer and Defence Secretary John Healey to divert more funding away from public spending and into the military. These layers are concerned that Starmer and his cabinet will not bite the bullet out of fear of the consequences for the class struggle.

As the paper disapprovingly cited from a senior government official: "If we try to hit the target by 2030 it will mean deeper cuts to public services in the run-up to the election. It feels like a non-starter." Another "senior Whitehall source ... said that hitting 2.5 per cent would effectively cause a return to austerity in unprotected departments."

The *Times* attacked the Treasury for treating the MoD as "just another department, taking its place in the queue with its begging bowl." Directly drawing the connection between military spending increases and attacks on the working class, its editors stated bluntly, "With each passing year more and more billions are squandered on benefits for the working-age 'sick' while Britain's defences crumble for want of a mere fraction of that amount."

Space was given to a military source to complain, "The Treasury is putting its fingers in its ears again, saying it has to be 2.3 per cent, maybe it can be 2.5 per cent in the distant future," and threaten, "But that is going to lead to some very bad headlines about cuts to the military at a time of war in Europe."

The *Times* is eager to provide those headlines. Just two weeks ago it presented Starmer with a mammoth military "shopping list", while screaming that "Britain is increasingly vulnerable to ballistic missile attacks."

He added that Trump's demands "that Nato members spend 5 per cent of national income on defence" was "not a figure plucked out of the air but what we were spending during the Cold War." A reportedly cordial conversation just days before between the US President and Starmer was "likely to be the last unless the prime minister instructs the chancellor to increase the defence budget now."

The *Sun*—owned by the Murdoch oligarchs like *Times*—ran a parallel campaign under the bellicose headline: “COLLISION COURSE”. Dannatt (again) told the paper that Starmer’s “planned delay” in upping spending was “outrageous” and “warned that No10’s paltry target of spending 2.5 per cent of GDP on defence was only enough to, ‘fill in potholes’.”

Former First Sea Lord and Labour Security Minister Admiral Lord West of Spithead chimed in on the “disgraceful” delay by declaring, “It’s no good saying we’ll do it when its affordable, by then we might have been in a war and lost.” The fact was, “Anybody who knows anything about defence knows our military is hollowed out.”

Five former Conservative defence secretaries—Sir Ben Wallace, Grant Shapps, Penny Mordaunt, Sir Gavin Williamson and Sir Michael Fallon—were canvassed to deliver the same message, with Mordaunt spelling out, “The UK must stay aligned with the US on all fronts—defence, trade, and regulation.” Staying aligned with the US really means Britain maintaining its role as American imperialism’s ally in the Middle East and provocateur-in-chief against its opponents Russian and China.

As these comments make clear, the real target demanded by a significant faction of the British ruling class is already far beyond 2.5 percent. The *Times* notes pointedly that “Trump has demanded that Nato members increase defence spending to 5 per cent of national income. However, the UK’s public finances have deteriorated and Rachel Reeves, the chancellor, is expected to announce further cuts to public spending.”

Implementing Trump’s demand would mean a surge in military spending not seen since the Second World War. Annual UK military spend is currently around £53 billion annually; 5 percent of GDP would be £127 billion, close to what the government expects to spend on working age and children’s benefits in 2024-5.

In December, the *Financial Times* reported that according to “internal Ministry of Defence calculations” military spending would have to rise to 3.6 per cent of GDP if the UK “wants to modernise its military while protecting its nuclear deterrent and meeting Nato obligations.”

The FT noted that “The figure would be a 56 per cent increase on current spending levels of 2.3 per cent...” equating “to about £93bn and take the UK closer to

Poland, which shares a border with Ukraine and spends more than 4 per cent of its GDP on defence annually.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote last week on the *Times* lauding Starmer’s Thatcher and Trump-inspired pledge to “cut the weeds of regulation”, part of a “growth” policy aimed at slashing state spending and social protections. As well as securing the fortunes of Britain’s super-rich and major corporations, this programme is aimed at securing the resources necessary for military spending increases—a process the *Times* is demanding take place much faster.

Starmer’s predecessor as Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was also declared a threat to “national security” by the *Times*, amid threats by the armed forces of a “mutiny” over his stance on the use of nuclear weapons. The paper played a key role in engineering his replacement by Starmer. It is seeking to put Starmer on notice that his own position depends on fulfilling the rapacious demands of British imperialism, with whatever savagery against the working class is required.



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