

# PEACELINE



## What does the government's budget mean for military spending?

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's recent budget announcement conspicuously sidestepped discussions on military spending, leaving the issue unaddressed and not allowing these concerns to cast a shadow over the UK's fiscal landscape.

Data sourced from NATO underscores the substantial scale of the UK's military expenditure, revealing that in the fiscal year 2021, the nation's investment in defence amounted to a staggering \$69.4 billion when adjusted for constant prices and exchange rates. This figure alone exceeds the cumulative military spending of several of its European counterparts, including Germany, Denmark, Czech Republic, and Belgium combined. As such, while austerity measures and budget cuts ravaged essential services, the military continued to enjoy lavish funding.

Despite these exorbitant expenditures, military spending fails to yield tangible economic benefits. Unlike investments in infrastructure or education, military expenditure does not create lasting assets or contribute to ongoing economic activity. Instead, it perpetuates a cycle of destruction, as weapons deployed in conflict zones serve only to obliterate rather than generate value. Moreover, the UK's oversized military budget perpetuates a culture of militarisation, fuelling conflicts and exacerbating global tensions. Participation in campaigns like the bombings in the Middle East undermines diplomatic solutions and perpetuates instability, ultimately jeopardising national security rather than enhancing it. The recent failures of the Trident missile launches serve as a stark reminder of the risks associated with pouring billions into a programme that does little to enhance national security. Despite the UK's substantial military spending, it remains ill-equipped to address modern security challenges effectively, relying on ineffective deterrents.

Nevertheless, former defence ministers, Sir Michael Fallon, Sir Gavin Williamson, and Ben Wallace, urged Jeremy Hunt to increase military spending to 3% of GDP by the conclusion of the next Parliament, demonstrating that, despite the lack of mention of the military budget, there is still a prevailing culture and belief within the government that seeks to prioritise and enhance defence expenditures.

The recent budget announcement's neglect of discussions on military spending underscores the need for a reassessment of national priorities. Advocating for a shift towards investments in diplomacy, conflict resolution, and social welfare is paramount. As the world grapples with increasingly complex challenges, it is imperative for policymakers to consider alternative approaches that prioritise peace and human well-being over militarisation and conflict.

Send news and any topics of importance to: [PeacelineCND@gmail.com](mailto:PeacelineCND@gmail.com)

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## What does the shift in US-Israel relations mean for Gaza?

*London CND Chair Carol Turner looks at the likely long-term impact of recent events.*

Seven aid workers killed in an IDF attack have seen powerful voices raised demanding western government stop supplying arms to Israel. US Democrats are calling on President Biden to stop arming Israel. In Britain, a letter from 134 MPs and peers demanded the government ‘immediately suspend export licenses for arms transfers to Israel’, It was swiftly followed by an open letter from over 600 legal practitioners calling on the government to ‘suspend the provision of weapons and weapons systems to the government of Israel’. PCS, the civil servants unions, has also suggested it will considering legal action to prevent members from being forced to carry out illegal acts.

These events have brought to a head the strain in relations between Israel and the US which led to the first UN resolution calling for a ceasefire, UN Security Council Resolution 2728 (2024) on 25 March. Tension became clear in December when Prime Minister Netanyahu announced plans for his military operation in Rafah. The US insists this is ‘a major mistake’. But diplomatic efforts to change Netanyahu’s direction have failed to achieve results.

Rafah is not the first sign of strain in US-Israel relations. An intelligence report of 5 February, the Annual Threat Assessment 2024 predicts Israel will struggle to achieve its goal of destroying Hamas. It expresses concern that Netanyahu’s coalition ‘may be in jeopardy’, and poses the possibility of ‘a different, more moderate government’ in Israel.

On 14 March, Chuck Schumer, the Democratic majority Senate leader, described as the most senior Jewish elected official in the US, called for elections to replace Netanyahu. His ‘political survival [was] taking precedence over the best interests of Israel,’ Schumer said. Efforts to overturn Netanyahu’s government have come from others quarters too. Ehud Olmert, a former Israeli prime minister told BBC Newsnight: ‘every minute that [Netanyahu] is prime minister he is a danger to Israel.’ Benny Ganz who joined Netanyahu’s war cabinet after the 7 October Hamas attack is now calling for early elections.

None of this signals a fundamental break in US relations with Israel, however. Neither had it resulted in moves to resolve the untenable situation Palestinians in the Occupied Territories face. Rather it reflects Biden’s concern that the impact of Netanyahu’s military action in Gaza has significantly undermined international support for Israel which is proving a hindrance to US influence in the Middle East.

It is not yet clear how far events of the past week will lead to significance change in the humanitarian aid situation or Israel’s military strategy in Gaza. Despite Netanyahu’s personal unpopularity in Israel and the differences that exist in the Knesset, all the political parties share an over-arching goal – that of protecting the existence of the state of Israel. Uptil now, this has meant the Knesset is unwilling to distance itself from Netanyahu’s military strategy, even though some politicians and parties are critical of the details.



# Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament



**Stop arming Israel: join local and regional actions this Saturday, 13 April**

## News roundup

### Decisions and Revisions: Israeli Nuclear Deterrence and War With Iran

Israel's nuclear deterrence of a nearly-nuclear or newly-nuclear Iran will depend on the manner in which it is supported by sufficiently advantageous fusions of strategic thinking and international law

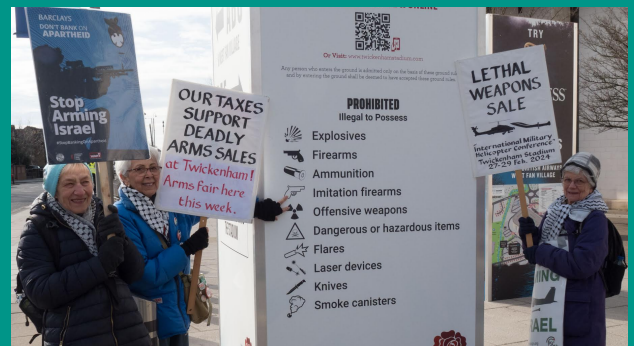
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### By sending nuclear weapons to the United Kingdom, could the United States be fuelling nuclear proliferation?

In January 2024, The Telegraph disclosed US plans to store nuclear weapons at Lakenheath for the first time in 15 years. In the 1990s, there were 33 underground storage vaults at Lakenheath.

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## Recent activism



## Upcoming events

**Forest Hill CND Plant and  
Cake Fair in conjunction  
with Friends of Mayow Park  
Forest School**  
*Grow Mayow Park Community  
Gardens*  
**Saturday 18th May**