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Executive Summary

Title: The Value of Royal Marine Deployments to Norway

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Thesis: To meet increasing defense demands in the new security environment, modest investment by the Royal Navy in military deployments to Norway would achieve a far greater impact for less money, than almost any other option open to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in the current security environment. Firstly, low real term costs deliver value for money as deployments support multiple national security objectives and redefine leadership in regional security through NATO. Secondly, emphasizing the importance of Great Britain's relationship with NATO will deepen strategic bilateral alliances with both the United States and Norway, but also serve to reassure the EU that Britain is serious about its security commitment. Finally, tangible demonstration of UK military capabilities in the High North produce the most cost-effective way to strengthen deterrence of Russian aggression and improve regional security.

Discussion: This paper aims to understand the emerging security environment facing Great Britain. Firstly, it will examine the problem, through the lens of the budget, the developing threat and United States expectation against a backdrop of post Brexit security relationships both in the High North and Europe. Secondly, it will examine how Britain can channel its commitment towards European security while maintaining its national security interests at the heart of defense. Finally, the paper will determine that Royal Marine deployments to the High North, despite needing modest investment, offers value for money as they cut to the core of addressing national security interests and reinforces bilateral and host nation relationships while offering a credible and balanced deterrent effect upon Russia.

Conclusion: Above all, this new security environment demands value for money. Through a modest annual investment of less than £3million, UK Defense in Norway could meet multiple national security objectives and have a far greater impact for less money than almost any other option open to the MOD in the current security environment. In addition, the number of countries that can make a meaningful contribution to NATO in the High North is limited yet the numbers who can contribute to defense on mainland continental Europe far higher and arguably better suited. Recognizing that bilateral and quadrilateral relationships are and continue to develop, the scale of Norway deployments must match even the most moderate of ambition. Genuine capability lies in the continuous yet balanced demonstration of deterrent, against a resurgent and increasingly confident Russia, but to be successful it needs to attract adequate resource to be credible.

Introduction

A post Brexit, global-facing Great Britain able to ensure national security and promote the prosperity of the nation will demand that the MOD think differently. During the associated near-term uncertainty, pressure on the United Kingdom's defense budget is only likely to increase, while emerging security challenges exploit the 'grey zone' or conduct hybrid warfare on the borders of Europe and at the seams of economic and political alliances. Limited funding will both challenge UK defense ambition and offer opportunity. Breaking with traditional force structures that have for so long been an anchor to military reform, addressing pressure from the United States to remain central to NATO, and redefining post Brexit security relationships with Europe are key to developing a more balanced MOD capable of meeting emerging threats.

In light of changes to the security environment facing the UK, the MOD must become smarter in the way it spends and operates. There is no longer room in British defense for duplication, and although certain security capabilities such as the nuclear deterrent and expeditionary forces invoke national redlines; the combination of fiscal austerity, the emerging security complex of potentially diverging EU, NATO, and national security interests, and increasing demand to meet such interests, has prompted the UK Government and MOD to evaluate and define its post-Brexit defense position with an additional assessment of the 2015 Strategic Defense and Security Review.¹ Ensuring that prosperity and liberal values remain central to the EU relationship is not up for debate, but how the UK channels its commitment towards European security now comes under greater scrutiny. Broader, credible, and more suitable alternatives to the traditional reinforcement of continental Europe can be offered. The UK military can bring to bear deep specializations centered around supporting Europe from the maritime flank. Not only does this offer flexible options at the national level for a global-facing nation, but it also provides NATO and EU

allies reassurance and deterrence in capabilities that all but a few nations can offer.

Conversely, better placed and more suited European nations can then focus on providing capabilities orientated to the continental mainland, notably backed by significant hard power from the United States.

In 2018, Great Britain is facing a new security environment that is defined by several powerful trends: increasing pressure on the defense budget, emerging security threats, and post Brexit security relationships with NATO and the European Union.² Above all this new security environment demands value for money. There are few better examples of value for money in UK defense than that of Great Britain's role as a credible security partner in support of NATO's northern flank. Exploiting the specialist capabilities of the British military in the High North, combined with allied combat power, has for many years been a model of how to maximize partner nation effectiveness in defense with low expenditure. Yet in recent years this efficiency has been undervalued and under resourced. While other national defense tasks may be deemed a higher priority, they require far greater financial support and do not deliver as much value.

To meet increasing defense demands in the new security environment, modest investment by the Royal Navy in military deployments to Norway would achieve a far greater impact for less money, than almost any other option open to the MOD in the current security environment. Firstly, low real term costs deliver value for money as deployments support multiple national security objectives and redefine leadership in regional security through NATO. Secondly, emphasizing the importance of Great Britain's relationship with NATO will deepen strategic bilateral alliances with both the United States and Norway, but also serve to reassure the EU that Britain is serious about its security commitment. Finally, tangible demonstration of UK military capabilities in the High North produce the most cost-effective way to strengthen deterrence of Russian aggression and improve regional security.

To examine how investing in Norway and the Northern flank might deliver value for money, strengthen Britain's position in NATO and reassure EU partners, the paper will cover four key points. Firstly, it will examine the security environment that presents itself to Great Britain: the budgetary constraints, the increasing threat, subsequent rising demand for defense tasking, and the continuing nuances associated within the NATO/EU construct that will affect post Brexit security relationships. Secondly, it will seek to establish how the UK can reevaluate its position in European defense, and where it can provide best value for money to meet national and multinational demands. Third, it will focus on how the UK can deliver smarter defense by utilizing its partnership with Norway as the most cost-effective way to improve deterrence of Russia. It will emphasize the positive dividend that low cost deployments can generate, meeting national security interests and deepening relationships in the region. The paper will conclude that the new security environment facing the UK is one of great importance and although modest investment in the High North is only a solution in part, its disproportionate and positive impact illustrates a smarter way forward for UK defense to operate outside of its more traditional roles. In addition to fulfilling key national security priorities of the United Kingdom, the role of the British military in the High North also provides a cost-effective leadership capability that helps to resolve principal security relationship needs from both the US and the EU.

Part 1: The United Kingdom's Security Environment

The ambition to operate as a truly independent global actor in the national interest is extremely challenging for the MOD in the current defense climate.³ The Falklands campaign, two separate interventions in Sierra Leone, and Monserrate provide examples and perhaps indicate the level of aspiration the UK seeks to maintain. Furthermore, while the UK is embedded in several alliances which may restrict independence but also build consistency

and reliability there is still a desire in UK defense to operate independently, albeit at a small scale. The potential danger of being either ill equipped or under manned to deliver national security outside of the UK homeland is very real, as capabilities continue to be hollowed out due to financial pressure. Services need to be clear on what they must deliver and what makes a capability credible versus what they aspire to or traditionally wish to deliver. In June 2017, the National Security advisor Mark Sedwill was tasked with conducting an evaluation of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), now formally known as ‘*Modernising Defence*’ due to mounting fiscal pressure.⁴ By December 2017, Theresa May was offered the resulting Defense cuts from the MOD predicated upon the \$20Bn deficit in the defense budget – the options were described as “ugly, ugly and ugly” and promptly rejected.⁵ The primary concern for the MOD in the emerging security environment is, therefore, unequivocally financial. As a result, finding the means to deliver best value for money to meet increasing demand while handicapped by diminishing forces is a factor to be considered by Whitehall. The final part of the security dilemma facing the UK is the impact upon relationships: how to maintain a central position in NATO, reassure the US that Britain will continue to take a leading role, and deliver the promise of maintaining security with the EU in a post Brexit climate.⁶

Reticence by the British Government to make tough decisions on defense structure and capability is exacerbated by the institutional challenges of a minority government and the unprecedented uncertainty of Brexit. There are no easy decisions, but finding balance within UK Defense can be done better. Regardless how confident or willing Service chiefs are to challenge traditional security interests, they have to overcome continuously amended fiscal constraints. Consequently, UK Defense must consider the following factors; Firstly, deeper specialization in capabilities less common to NATO and in areas where the MOD has

traditionally excelled would allow state investment to be maximized. But it remains unlikely that significant capability decisions such as a reduction or total cut in weapon systems or personnel would be made in the near-term due to political instability. Under the current climate there is a risk that capabilities will continue to be hollowed out, reducing the range and scale of UK military operations and using technology to cover multiple functions. Significant synchronization with NATO would counter defense cuts and optimize combat effectiveness, notably at a time when Britain's relationship with the EU is under pressure. Secondly, New Trident (Dreadnought SSBN), Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carriers, and F35B programs have committed a huge portion of the budget for the foreseeable future. Their combination of fiscal commitment is likely to affect the land domain and Service activity budgets more than other areas of MOD funding as costs have already been sunk into large scale projects and contracts. Third, plugging into defense systems already in existence, or conversely minimizing roles replicated by other Alliance nations would make more economic sense in the current climate. As a result, financial decisions will shape the sort of relationship Britain has with Europe and impact how global UK defense can actually afford to be.

Great Britain is also experiencing significant pressure from the Trump administration not to reduce its defense capabilities and to continue to play a leadership role in NATO. In fact, NATO allies increasingly draw wider criticism from the US Department of Defense for systemically low levels of defense spending. For example, US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis recently recognized the issue when addressing the Council in Feb 2017, noting that "America will meet its responsibilities, but if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to this Alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defense."⁷ Given changes in threat posture and significant political shifts, reform or reinforcement of NATO would appear, at best, warranted across Europe. Only five of the member states currently spend the target 2% or more of their GDP on Defense.⁸ Although

this looks likely to rise to eight nations by the close of 2018 and by 2024 a total of 15 nations have pledged to meet the target.⁹ Historically very few Alliance member states have a good record of meeting or maintaining such a pledge.¹⁰ As a base line, GDP offers an indication of worth or capability, but it does not necessarily measure an effective contribution to NATO or the amount of participation.¹¹ The aggregated defense spending of NATO European members (\$250million) and the US (\$600million) far outstrips Russia's paltry \$70million annual spending.¹² Conversely, Russia is very effective in operating under such fiscal constraint further illustrating that despite the UK Defense budget coming under considerable pressure exacerbated by Brexit maintaining it at 2% is critical. General Nick Cater the newly appointed Chief of the Defense Staff, who argued the case further and took the unprecedented step of publicly criticizing Defense spending while serving, warned that Britain needed to "invest to keep up with Russia."¹³ Moreover, the current £20Bn black-hole in UK defense spending will only increase the pressure.¹⁴

Since annexation of the Crimea in 2014 the foreign policy of Moscow continues to posture aggressively in Syria, Georgia, the Eastern Ukraine, and around the Nordic-Baltic states, or through exploitation of cyber means.¹⁵ Countering Russian brinkmanship is seen with growing regularity around the UK as well as European borders.¹⁶ Within this context and the uncertainty of Brexit, Prime Minister Theresa May went to great lengths to reassure the EU that the UK "will always stand by our allies" adding "the UK is unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe's security."¹⁷ The new threat from Moscow is particularly manifested in the High North. Russia continues to maintain bastion defense, primarily protecting Sea Lines of Communication and exploitation of natural resources should the recession of sea ice endure. The UK and to a certain extent Norway continue to underinvest in military capabilities¹⁸ that would maintain the status quo, but it is the dynamics within

Europe that has dramatically altered the geo-political landscape and provides opportunity for a resurgent, revisionist Russia. Increasingly, a confident Moscow directs operations on the European rim at a time when EU security is trying to determine its identity.¹⁹

Countering increasing security challenges and emerging threats is constrained by the scale of affordability. The current, full time trained strength of the British military sits at just under 140,000.²⁰ Yet demand and scope of capability is rising, and while traditional roles in NATO have been maintained there is limited capacity to operate up to medium scale (War-Fighting Divisional) intervention.²¹ Traditionally the UK military operates in three primary security roles, notwithstanding homeland defense and protection of overseas territories; firstly, the British Army of the Rhine focusing on an Armored Division, more latterly a Brigade to assist in the defense of mainland continental Europe; secondly, Maritime/Air defense of the North Atlantic to include the Greenland, Iceland, and the UK gap (GIUK) in an attempt to deny and counter breaking out from Soviet bastion defense in the High North. Related to which is a supporting role to NATO's northern flank comprising of 3 Commando Brigade. Finally, and perhaps more obviously the Nuclear deterrent in the form of Polaris and more latterly Trident SSBN launched missile. In addition, the UK as a Command and Control authority within NATO is both respected by member states and highly valued by the US especially in regards to the North Atlantic.²² Other capstone commitments and traditional areas of strength remain extant but nonetheless compete for money and resource: the provision of Very High Readiness battalions; the Striker (mixed Armor) brigade as an integral linchpin of a British Expeditionary Force, Special Forces, and Maritime combatants. More recently the Queen Elisabeth class Aircraft Carriers and anticipated F35Bs 5th generation fighter can now be added to this list of capabilities that could be deemed sacrosanct. It is, therefore, worth considering the alignment of UK Defense in order to identify an appropriate locus for reform. Furthermore, negating institutionalized nepotism

associated with change to Service structures and/or manpower implications only serves to exacerbate the complexity of limited financial resource. Notwithstanding, the security picture around the European rim could hardly be more precarious; therefore, interoperability, pooling and sharing of assets, including fair financial commitment should be uppermost in the thinking of Service Chiefs and should bridge any cultural or national cleavages as a mechanism to interlock with NATO or the EU.

Overcoming the divergent character of cultural or national perspectives is arguably best served by NATO. Furthermore, the importance and strength of the Alliance as “the stabilizing force in Europe”²³ is well recognized and central roles remain a high priority to both the UK and the US. Secretary of Defense Mattis was unambiguous in emphasizing the prominence and utility of NATO, stating that “NATO remains our number one alliance.”²⁴ But his traditional forthright clarity ran in both directions; warning NATO members of the need to transform to stay relevant and the requirement to face up to the reality of current security challenges. Great Britain’s continued participation is not in doubt, but the manner in which it adds value to the collective defense of Europe is under scrutiny on both sides of the Atlantic. Given Britain’s current roles in NATO’s Maritime and Land Component Commands, leadership capabilities within UK Defense are perhaps an obvious, and most welcomed role by which the UK can contribute to the European security narrative, NATO, Allied Rapid Reaction Command Headquarters and NATO Maritime Command in Northwood being two prime examples. The threat of contraction within NATO and a change in the UK security status outside of the EU might yet wake European states from their security ambivalence, but it will also increase pressure on the MOD to define its role in NATO and reassure the United States it will not shy away from its collective security commitments.

Brexit implications remain the unknown factor. The June 23, 2016 referendum on remaining in the European Union set in train a course of events that will have far reaching impacts on the rule of law, trade, economics, and migration in the UK for generations to come. The unprecedented upheaval created by Brexit will test Anglo-European relationships at every level, but redefining the European security architecture, relationships, and roles in the common defense of Europe should, in practice, be slightly less complex, and one area all member states can approach with a relative degree of positivity. In a recent speech in Munich Prime Minister May recognized that the UK and EU must “do whatever is practical and pragmatic in ensuring our collective security,”²⁵ and called for new security arrangements to be effective by 2019. But she went on to warn that “rigid institutional restrictions and deep-seated ideology” should not jeopardize the security of UK citizens.²⁶ Reinforcing the long-established committee structures of NATO can bring stability in the European security sector. The upheaval of Brexit is perhaps an opportunity to implement reform and reestablish the priority of collective defense in fellow Alliance members. The Alliance provides an ideal opportunity to examine, break free from the institutional structures described by Prime Minister May and overhaul security as opposed to starting from an entirely new position such as a physical form of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). NATO has broader utility and can call upon the values of the Alliance to re-introduce much needed stability that will be vital to counterbalancing Russia and improving internal European security.

Part II: Where Should Britain Invest its Defense Capabilities?

UK participation in NATO will remain at the forefront of any new security relationship but will still demand value for money. Furthermore, the importance that the UK-US bilateral relationship plays in leading NATO heavily influences MOD ambition. The

result of these two factors determines the increasing importance of how and where Great Britain chooses to contribute to European security. The dynamics of NATO's security architecture runs far deeper than the relationship between Great Britain and the United States, but it is that UK-US relationship nested within NATO that holds sway. Moreover, the extent to which European states have become reliant upon the United States for military resolve in the post-Cold War era has given rise to a dangerous level of security ambivalence. In part, this can be explained by the diverse perspectives of European member states. National power cultures, are often described in neorealist terms such as bandwagoning, balancing and buck-passing indicating why NATO has endured.²⁷ European political institutions have exploited NATO as an opportunity to focus upon domestic issues and illustrates why alternatives to the Alliance are rarely debated. Bandwagoning, Anders Wivel claims, has become the behavioral norm for European security. This is because the alternative, balancing (against) US power is financially and politically difficult, the capability gap too wide, and arguably substitute allies in China and Russia remain, at best, unlikely.²⁸ Yet dependency upon the US, though arguably part of bandwagoning, has, it appears metamorphosed into buck-passing or free riding defense spending for many EU states.²⁹

NATO reinforcement can be achieved by the UK through numerous channels. Traditional participation of the continental mainland is not necessarily a route Britain need pursue, as central European powers are better configured to this arena than the maritime flanks of Europe. The number of countries that can make a meaningful contribution to NATO in the High North is very limited yet the numbers of those who can contribute to defense on mainland continental Europe are far higher and arguably better suited. That said, significant diplomatic leverage will be required to coerce Germany, Austria and the Visegrad Four to accept such a position of responsibility, illustrated by the surprise over the UK withdrawal from the EU Battle Group.³⁰ Placing a maritime/amphibious concept to the forefront of the

UK's leadership roles in NATO and the deployment of expeditionary forces to both the Nordic-Baltic region appear, at face value, more tangible than thickening support to the continental mainland. The Army's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia is a prime example of smart defense application, delivering value for money, countering the Russian threat and reinforcing NATO relationships and standing. In March 2017 Britain embarked on providing an eFP in the Baltics and Poland.³¹ Although considerably more expensive than annual Norway deployments, to date costing circa £32.5m, £8.5 were in establishment costs and the Estonians have borne all infrastructure costs. Two key areas are worthy of consideration: firstly, the majority of this funding came from the Conflict Prevention fund and did not impact the Army Commitments budget. Secondly, the pre-deployment training came from the Army Core Training budget part of which was Cold weather specialist training delivered by the Royal Marines in Norway. As a model, the framework battlegroup of 800 in Estonia supported by a further 200 French and Danish troops highlights the type of initiative that is geographically aligned to British interests, provides a modest and proportionate level of deterrent, and sends the right message of unity to NATO that Britain is a forward leaning member state. Similar deployments would generate a great deal of equity in NATO but equally signals to Russia that the UK is committed to the Defense of Europe.³²

The United States has called upon Alliance members to pay their way, and therefore security solutions must rely on increasing not only financial backing outside of the US but also cooperation. Maxime Larive argues that Europeans have yet to understand "what the European way of war" is, and although a desire for a more physical approach to the CSDP exists and generates much debate in France and Germany taking advantage of the void potentially left by the UK is arguably no less difficult.³³ Furthermore, although Chancellor Merkel and President Macron understand the opportunity to reform, with the French

President recently calling for the EU to have “autonomous capacity for action” through a joint military force,³⁴ and a “shared budget and common policy,” it exemplifies two hurdles that after almost 70 years, NATO let alone the EU finds challenging to overcome.³⁵ As a result, although both France and Germany continue to make overtures towards a centralized EU military architecture, initiatives such as the CSDP get caught between promoting liberal norms and multilateralism and increasing military power to promote prosperity and security.³⁶ In a time of uncertainty therefore, the European way of war does not need a new model. Instead, Europe has a shining 70-year-old NATO model with a proven track record. What Europe needs is the correct level of investment, demonstration of resolve, acceptance of responsibility and committed interoperability; all of which Great Britain can deliver upon through NATO, provided it chooses carefully how and where to commit capability given limited financial resource.

Part III: How Can Britain Deliver Smarter Defense?

The new security environment in which a global facing Great Britain now operates creates a complex dichotomy of security agendas in order to ‘protect, project, and promote’ national security objectives. The GIUK Gap, the North Atlantic and Nordic-Baltic region, perhaps aligns the UK more naturally to its own bespoke security complex than central Europe. The region is vital to UK national interests, to the extent that Britain can ill-afford to ignore or pay lip service to it. Enduring economic ties, the most prolific of which sees approximately 29% of UK primary fuel energy coming from Norway is supported by bilateral agreements to strengthen maritime capability; improve command structures; and increase training, exercises and presence.³⁷ A coordinating and central role in the North Atlantic Quad, the US, UK, Norway, and Denmark (as well as reinforcing the Baltics) has potential to genuinely cement Britain’s defense role in a European security architecture,

arguably allowing other Alliance member to focus elsewhere.³⁸ Understandably, the nation states bordering the North Atlantic have national as well as collective responsibilities to defend the region, but given its proximity, the increase in human commerce and activity due to sea ice recession, and increasingly hostile brinkmanship of Russia the UK could do worse than re-apportion Defense alignment to this area. RUSI recently highlighted the need for a new security approach to the North Atlantic, and although primarily focused in the maritime domain supporting activity to maintain influence over the region was seen as vital.³⁹ Furthermore, regional involvement advances the US desire for the UK to maintain leadership roles within NATO and reassure the EU that Britain is sincere in its security pledge to Europe.

Fostering stronger military cooperation and interoperability by explicit partnering with a Host Nation and building upon established and respected relationships must be central to the UK's security narrative. Exploiting existing, unique, and internationally recognized capabilities is one method of generating space within the constrained defense budget. Norway deployments generate fiscal breathing space for little cost. Furthermore, training in the High North provides a dividend beyond just the Royal Marines. Ultimately it develops military options to rapidly aggregate and employ forces across Northern Europe through organizations and exercises such as the Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime), (JEF(M)) and NATO's Trident Juncture and Cold Response exercises.⁴⁰ This permeates down to tactical interoperability with JEF elements of the field Army trained by the Royal Marines for cold weather operations in preparation for eFP in the Baltics. In addition, new capabilities such as the F35B fifth generation fighter and P8 Orion Maritime Patrol Aircraft all have bilateral/quadrilateral military partnering roles, deepening cooperation in the region.⁴¹ Duplication of effort must be at the forefront of any argument regarding the continued deployment of the Royal Marines to the High North. The Royal Marines afford UK Defense

excellent value for money; time served averages nearly 7.5 years as opposed to 4.5 in the Army, and they provision nearly 50% of personnel to UK Special Forces.⁴² Notwithstanding their Very High Readiness (VHR) role, the Royal Marines provide specialization above standard infantry units, in both mountain and cold weather operations as well as the amphibious domain. Objectivity is important, but factually the Royal Marines brand offers a great deal to UK Defense and has an extremely influential relationship with USMC partners.⁴³ A similar, highly cost effective efficiency of the Royal Marines is demonstrated by the fostering of strong quadrilateral relationships with the USMC, Royal Netherland Marine Corps, and the Norwegian Army during deployments to Norway. It is just those sorts of relationships that both protect the UK's national interests and increase its position and standing of within the security framework of Europe. Former Defense Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon stating that Britain views "Brexit as an opportunity not to step back from European defense but to step up to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security. In particular, we're bolstering our bonds with NATO, the cornerstone of our defense."⁴⁴

How each member state supports the Alliance is critical as underinvestment will continue to be the norm and only serve to exacerbate diverging national and regional security demands. Consistency has been a limited commodity when considering state military contributions to NATO.⁴⁵ It is vital therefore that Great Britain remains credible, ensuring the Government provides clear and unambiguous intent to reinforce the Alliance narrative. Valuable national security objectives should be entirely complimentary and where possible inter-woven with the NATO narrative. Furthermore, credibility can be fostered by backing up NATO rhetoric with tangible military deployments on the continent. But the MOD must be cognizant not to over promise and under deliver, given the likelihood is that the UK will struggle to maintain 2% of its GDP on defense as the short-term cost of Brexit makes an

impact.⁴⁶ Royal Marines deployments to Norway can fulfil strategic MOD ambition for a low, real term, cost through multi-lateral, complimentary UK-US-NOR deployments, which also serve to bolster US forward presence and power projection in the region. Despite the threshold cost for a deployment being circa £2.8 million the Royal Navy has often withdrawn funding to balance the books; the 2018 deployment did not even allow for a formed unit to deploy, illustrating a low-water mark in the past two decades.⁴⁷ The habitually low-level investment by the MOD equally reflects the low-level of overall competence in Cold Weather capability. Notwithstanding some deep expertise within the Mountain Leader specialization, there is little more than two battalion's worth of Royal Marines personnel currently trained or equipped for a harsh mountain and Arctic environment. It is therefore the wider, multilateral benefits of Royal Marine Winter Deployments that consistently deliver against esteemed national security objectives that remains undervalued.

Targeted partnering and deepening of bilateral and multilateral (US, Norwegian) relationships in the region will continue to drive down cost and allow the High North to compete with other regional security demands outside of Europe, namely the Middle East. However, above all, the two significant allied stakeholders that demand the most MOD investment are Norway as the Host Nation, and the United States, through the USMC as a key strategic military partner. In 2015 the SDSR specifically cited the RM involvement in the region, "continue to provide a specialist capability, with expertise in amphibious, arctic and mountain warfare."⁴⁸ This signals a return to form when NATO's protection of the Northern Flank was largely predicated upon US and Norwegian mass blocking the prominent land lines of communication, with RM units occupying the high ground in order to exploit maneuver.⁴⁹ Little has changed, and despite recent rises in Norwegian defense spending,⁵⁰ construct of the Norwegian Army and Naval forces remains small, increasing the importance

of utilizing NATO troops prepared and trained to fight in such an environment; limited to the Royal Marines, the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, elements of the US and Canadian Army and more recently a reinvigorated USMC Cold Weather program.⁵¹ The Norwegian Long Term defense plan 2016 equally mirrors the RUSI observations and cites strengthening NATO's ability for collective Defense through Alliance relationships and interoperability at the heart of their strategy.⁵² The 2016 Military Exercises and Training MOU between the respective defense departments epitomizes the longevity of this cooperation and the intent to maintain it.⁵³ The proposal in Whitehall led to the establishment of the Norwegian Army and Royal Marines Working Group to inform and provide the Norwegian MOD with a level of UK ambition and commitment to exercise in Norway, negating years of *ad hoc*, annually negotiated deployments.⁵⁴ Furthermore, it helps to facilitate more permanent infrastructure development for deployed forces akin to that experienced by the Joint Helicopter Force based in Bardufoss.⁵⁵ As part of the UK's Joint Helicopter Command, the Royal Navy established a small-scale training organization in Bardufoss to conduct Cold Weather rotary wing aviation training from mid-October to April for over 48 years. Although it does not attract permanent status, the Norwegian MOD invested in military infrastructure and accommodation for the aviation squadrons and has made a similar offer to the Royal Marines, Dutch Marines, and USMC. The intent is to co-locate in Bardufoss and provide a central hub for specialist Allied training, which not only serves to fulfil a number of tactical objectives, but also sends a subtle strategic message of deterrence over the border to Russia without being overtly aggressive. This message is slowly gaining traction within the MOD. As part of the 'Modernising Defence' review, the Royal Navy is attempting to align Norway deployments onto an operational footing, in coordination with both the eFP in the Baltics and large-scale NATO exercises such as Trident Juncture and Cold Response.⁵⁶ The aim is to ring-fence and

secure the funding and consequently the deployment in line with House of Commons Defense Committee recommendations.⁵⁷

The annual UK (Royal Marines) expenditure to train in Norway generates a real term cost of only £2.8million, approximately 0.1% of Royal Navy Commitments budget.⁵⁸ This figure approximately equates to the provision of a three-month Cold Weather training program for a battalion size group. This incorporates the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) cold weather training package, or Specialist to Arms training (StA), to include raiding craft, over-snow mobility and artillery. This also includes completed UK participation in major subsequent exercises such as the biennial NATO COLD RESPONSE series alongside Norwegian, USMC, and Dutch ground forces. It is worthy of mention that genuine levels of interoperability and therefore deliverable deterrence has historically been limited to the strategic level with limited attention given to interoperability due to the scale of these maneuver exercises. The disjointed level of interoperability is often described anecdotally by the British Defense as cooperating in ‘Norway not with Norway.’ This interoperability shortfall with partners must be addressed at both the tactical and operational level, if the Royal Marines’ ambition to ‘*fight tonight*’ alongside the USMC⁵⁹ is to be realized and importantly executed in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, the investment Force Integration Training (FIT) or tactical interoperability has often been overlooked or reduced in exercises due to cost. 2017 saw the first switch in a tactical direction with the introduction of the Norwegian hosted JOINT VIKING invitation exercise for both the UK and US military, in recognition that any credible opposing force would aim to exploit the seams of NATO and the pretense of interoperability.

The second strategic key affiliation that supports investing in Royal Marine deployments to Norway is that of the historic, arguably unique, relationship with the USMC. The bond has been deepened notably over the past decade and formalized in the Royal

Marines/Royal Navy – USMC Interoperability pathway.⁶⁰ Borne out of initiatives by the First Sea Lord and the Commandant General these programs have increased the numbers of permanent exchange staff and fostered capability development initiatives. The delivery of Cold Weather Warfare training to USMC personnel in Norway is a prime example of exploiting British specialization synchronizing with USMC combat power. The USMC recently completed the third iteration of Cold Weather training in Norway in early 2018. This is a unique and bespoke package in UK defense delivered through Royal Marine Cold Weather specialists at the request of the USMC to their combat arms as they look to re-establish their CW capability.⁶¹ It is likely to continue for the next 5-10 years using USMC Marines from the USMC Reaction Force – Europe (MRF-E) in order to generate baseline experience within the Corps. This initiative is both a highly visible and desired contribution to US/UK defense cooperation, heralded by the new Secretary of State for Defense Gavin Williamson as a prime example of hard and soft power combining to deliver ‘Modern Defense.’⁶² Utilizing the Royal Marines (including the Netherlands Landing Force) and USMC in partnership with the Norwegian Armed Forces to reinforce the northern and maritime flank of NATO makes a potent argument. Not only is the ethos and understanding of all three militaries predicated on years of cooperation, but they are arguably better suited, trained and equipped than any other force to operate in the region.⁶³ As a direct consequence, they make a powerful contribution to European defense.

Despite being able to coordinate and maintain regional defense interests of the region since 1949, opposing national and supra-national cultures have been allowed to fester at a time when the Alliance is facing its most challenging security complex since the height of the Cold War. Assuming Putin’s Russia broadly conforms to acceptable levels of rational activity, the threat of a large scale conventional attack would appear fool-hardy and may only occur as part of a wider decline to the international system. The goal of re-establishing the

buffer states, however, remains a more realistic priority to the Kremlin.⁶⁴ Operating in the ‘grey zone,’⁶⁵ affords Russian brinkmanship a degree of maneuver, allowing them to exploit areas of weakness and destabilize regional security. There is a limit to which the international community will acquiesce but Russia can be confident they can proceed largely unchecked if the Eastern Ukraine is the current metric. Consequently, Russian exploitation requires robust yet measured counterbalance in order to provide credible deterrent or potentially denial. The Norwegian policy of balancing reassurance with deterrence demands tact; too much emphasis or a full-scale demonstration has the potential to invoke a Russian response and reflects Norwegian nervousness about allowing a permanent force in the region.⁶⁶ Annual maneuvers with small units (Brigades), and a regular drumbeat of Allied Cold Weather training has historically fallen within the range of what is considered acceptable in the current political climate.⁶⁷ Royal Marine involvement in the region spans some 50 years, peaking with brigade level deployments during the 80s and 90s and interconnected with a NATO framework that opposed regional dominance by Russia. A similar framework is arguably warranted in the new security environment.

Presence in the GIUK gap and NATO activity in support of Norway does get Moscow’s attention. The containment effect it has on Russia’s freedom of navigation and access for its own nuclear deterrent system in the High North should not be underestimated.⁶⁸ Consequently NATO and Britain see the GIUK gap and the North Sea of increasing strategic importance and although it competes with the Baltic as a priority for expenditure, neither should be ignored at the expense of the other as they are a mutually supporting deterrent.⁶⁹ Ballistic Missile Defense systems are also worthy of mention as a list for Russian irritants; growing NATO capability, including the integration of ships radar systems into this program will further test Russian-NATO interactions.⁷⁰ Therefore, UK defense spending on GIUK gap, North Sea capabilities (such as the P8 Orion alongside Norwegian and US partners), and

investment in Royal Marine deployments to Norway offers a justifiable option that can meet multiple national security objectives for the MOD. Furthermore, there are few countries that could or should make meaningful contributions to NATO's Northern flank. If given the option of a larger British footprint on the European mainland or having to supply capability to the High North, few continental European states could replace the British military deployment in the High North. Most European militaries are under prepared and equipped to face the geographic/environmental reality of operating in the Arctic.

One of the key strengths of the UK-US-Norwegian relationships lies in high readiness amphibious capability of the UK and Netherlands Landing Force.⁷¹ In sum, it is a rapid intervention force that can exploit the maneuver attributes of the Amphibious task group in the multiple archipelagos and complex mountainous terrain of northern Norway. The adaptive force can be delivered to Norway's point of need to deny a larger force; equally, it can buy time or secure locations for potential reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOMI) of NATO forces in the Baltics or Norway.⁷² It is to the latter that the strength lies in the current system with lighter RM and NL forces, linking with Norway to support a larger influx of US combat power

Conclusion

The security complex facing Great Britain and the MOD cannot be overstated. Evermore complex security challenges produce a rising demand for resources, but clash with budgetary pressures to reduce defense spending. In addition, Britain faces unprecedented uncertainty over Brexit and redefining roles/relationships within NATO and the EU. Getting the best value for money to provide national security and build prosperity for a global Britain is what matters most. The UK's current Defense situation demands optimization and duplication is unnecessary, primarily within the MOD but also within the wider security

context of NATO. Furthermore, traditional institutional structures and deployments of wider UK forces should not constrain future development or the manner in which the UK conducts its defense duties.

Above all this new security environment demands value for money. There are few better examples of value for money in UK defense than Great Britain's role as a credible security partner in support of NATO's northern flank. Through a modest annual investment of less than £3 million pounds, UK Defense in Norway could meet multiple national security objectives and have a far greater impact for less money than almost any other option open to the MOD in the current security environment. Delivering a moderately larger and consistent annual deployment will reinforce bi-lateral and multilateral relationships, reaffirm an unconditional commitment to both the EU and NATO, and demonstrate resolve by acting as a regional deterrent, all of which represents considerable value for money. The number of countries that can make a meaningful contribution to NATO in the High North is limited yet the numbers who can contribute to defense on mainland continental Europe far higher and arguably better suited. Britain should therefore, re-exploit its role on the maritime flank of Europe, tout its exemplary Command and Control capabilities and aim to galvanize Alliance members with continued investment in the GIUK Gap and Northern Flank defense.

Moderately enhanced Royal Marine deployments to NATO reinforce this rhetoric simply by maintaining the commitment budget at £2.8million. Furthermore, a confident Royal Navy might tender an alternative view to the SDSR, utilizing Army shortfalls in manpower and promoting continued investment in the Royal Marines as well as the wider Royal Navy. Such an offer would increase support to the Britain's Very High Readiness expeditionary capacity, including intervention in the High North and supply to Special Forces in wider support to National, EU, and NATO security. The rhetoric from Secretary Mattis at the 2017 NATO summit should haunt European leaders and remind them of the importance of equal

burden sharing in collective defense, “Americans cannot care more for your children’s future security than you do. Disregard for military readiness demonstrates a lack of respect for ourselves, for the Alliance, and for the freedoms we inherited, which are now clearly threatened.”⁷³ His poignant words also illustrate that Britain, as the second biggest contributor to NATO defense, also has a significant role to play in EU security that it is willing to continue. The volatility of UK-EU-Russian relationships and the security environment in Europe is perhaps best summed up by recent events in the UK surrounding the chemical weapons attack on retired Russian Colonel Skirpal.⁷⁴ Arguably, this reinforces the growing danger of the Russian threat and makes a strong case for maintaining strategically aligned combat forces such as the Royal Marines in Norway.

Genuine capability lies in the continuous yet balanced demonstration of deterrence, but it needs to attract adequate resource to be credible and deliver optimal military strategic effect. The Arctic is not an environment into which any organization could be pitched and then be expected to operate; it remains a place for deep expertise, which the Royal Marines currently provide in support of our national interests and NATO allies. The UK should not lose this rare and valuable capability for such tiny savings in the MOD budget.

Whilst the Royal Marines capability is modest, it is underfunded and 2018 witnessed an historic low in the scale of the UK deployment to Norway. The value for money these deployments represent is grossly overlooked by the MOD, perhaps with the exception of the strength they provide to regional bilateral and quadrilateral relationships. However, if UK Defense remains serious about delivering the type of arctic capability mandated in SDR 15,⁷⁵ deployments to Norway must match even the most moderate of ambition. Attracting adequate funding is subsequently a force multiplier; meeting vital national security interests; reinforcing the UK’s position in NATO; and delivering a potent, yet balanced, deterrence posture that minimizes the risk of combat deployment.

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