



Ministry
of Defence

SECRETARY OF STATE
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16 July 2018

Dear Nia,

UK COMBAT AIR STRATEGY

I thank you for your long-term interest in the Government's approach to securing key skills and capabilities in critical Defence industrial sectors. I am sure we can agree that Combat Air is a sector that delivers significant benefit to the UK and building on the good work being undertaken in my Department to deliver the National Ship Building Strategy, I am pleased to be able to inform you I will be announcing the publication of the Combat Air Strategy today at the Farnborough International Air Show and in parallel placing a copy in the Library of the House.

The risks facing our world-class industrial base, the requirement to replace Typhoon in the 2030s, evolving international dynamics and the significant global market opportunity for a replacement for current '4th generation' capabilities mean the UK must make a clear statement of intent in this area.

Development of the strategy has drawn heavily on expertise from across Defence, wider Government, academia, think-tanks, industry and international partners, with the approach adopted, driven by the developing themes of the Modernising Defence Programme. In particular, contributions from the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions have been invaluable.

The strategy defines a clear way ahead to preserve our national advantage and maintain choice in how it is delivered. The Ministry of Defence will work with wider Government, industry and international partners to deliver the strategy by taking the following steps:

- The Ministry of Defence (MOD) will continue to invest in upgrading Typhoon to maintain its world-class capabilities for the coming decades.

Nia Griffith MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Defence
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

- The MOD will provide investment in key UK design engineering skills and a means to generate UK Intellectual Property by implementing the Future Combat Air System Technology Initiative. The initiative was established by the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and builds on recent UK technology investment.
- The MOD will initiate the UK's capability acquisition programme to define and deliver the future capabilities required when Typhoon leaves service by 2040. An initial acquisition decision will be made by the end of 2020.
- UK Government and industry will work together to achieve a more open and sustainable industrial base which invests in its own future, partners internationally and breaks the cycle of increasing cost and length of Combat Air programmes.
- The UK will take a strategic approach to key Combat Air decisions. This will maximise the overall national value the UK derives from the sector; balancing military capability, international influence, economic and prosperity benefits.
- Effective international partnering in Combat Air is fundamental to the delivery of our national goals and management of cost. The UK will work quickly and openly with allies to build on or establish new partnerships to define future requirements and how they could be delivered in a mutually beneficial manner.

By preserving our ability to maintain operational advantage and freedom of action, the strategy will ensure we have greater choice in how we deliver future capabilities and are able to maximise the economic and strategic benefits of future Combat Air acquisition programmes.

I have committed to reporting annually to Parliament on progress implementing the Strategy. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Williamson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

THE RT HON GAVIN WILLIAMSON CBE MP