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10 May 2021

Dear Geraint,

I undertook to write to you following your question on the cost of this year's Carrier Strike Group deployment, otherwise known as CSG21 (Defence Oral Statement, 26 April, Col. 80).

As I outlined at the time, this is a novel, complex and exciting deployment which extends from our home waters in the Atlantic via the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and on into East Asia. Generating cost estimates is a complex process for several reasons, including: the fact that this is the first deployment of the Strike Group, whose elements have not deployed in this way before; the vast distances involved; the many months' duration of the deployment; and the potential for the programme to change as a result of weather or events. An initial Navy Command forecast of costs specifically incurred for CSG21 – in other words those "net additional costs" which reflect the difference between owning the capability and deploying it – has suggested a figure of approximately £63m.

This estimate does not yet include the net additional costs of the Carrier Strike Group's air wing, whose flying hours will be met by the Core Flying Programme in the first instance, or for the potential cost of operational commitments undertaken during the deployment. We will develop more precise estimates as the deployment continues, but wholly accurate statements of costs will only be possible once the deployment has finished. As we develop a clearer picture this will allow us to refine our cost modelling, so that we are better able to estimate the costs for future deployments.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP

Geraint Davies MP
House of Commons
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