



Ministry
of Defence

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THE EARL OF MINTO
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

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18 March 2024

Dear Reg,

During the debate on 809 Naval Air Squadron on 11 March 2024, you asked a question about possible future modifications to the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers to allow for catapult-launched aircraft.

At present, the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) aircraft carriers are configured to operate short take off / vertical landing fixed wing aircraft, specifically the crewed F-35B Lightning II and are also capable of operating a wide variety of rotary winged aircraft types. I can also confirm that the scale and configuration of UK carrier deployments is tailored to the task, threat and location and is kept under constant review.

The aviation capabilities of the QEC will evolve in the coming years and operation of a wider variety of aircraft is being considered as part of a detailed analysis to scope and assess options. The Royal Navy is committed to developing capabilities that will allow it to develop combat mass while remaining at the forefront of technology, and this includes a strong focus on uncrewed air systems.

I hope this explains the position. I am placing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely

THE EARL OF MINTO

The Lord Empey Kt OBE
House of Lords
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