

British prime minister says UK will cut international aid to increase defense spending



FILE PHOTO: British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer © Global Look Press / Jussi Nukari
The cut is part of a plan to make Britain spend 2.6% of its GDP on defense starting 2027, the prime minister has said

London, February 25 RHC)-- Britain is set to cut its foreign development assistance funding from 0.5% of its Gross National Income (GNI) down to 0.3%, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer told the parliament on Tuesday. The cut is necessary in order to increase spending on defense, he stated.

The move requires “extremely difficult and painful choices,” Starmer said, referring to the aid cut. “That is not an announcement I am happy to make,” the prime minister told MPs, vowing to “do everything we can” to “rebuild a capability on development.” He still maintained that defense was “the number one priority of this government.”

According to Starmer, the UK would still “continue to play a humanitarian role in Sudan, in Ukraine and Gaza.”

“These cuts will mean millions of children not having access to critical health care, not having enough to eat, and missing out on their learning. At a time of increased global insecurity and instability, this decision will undoubtedly risk lives,” said Dr Philip Goodwin, the CEO of UNICEF UK, the British chapter of the agency providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.

London plans to raise its defense expenditures to 2.5% of its GDP by April 2027 – three years earlier than previously planned – under Starmer’s Plan for Change, according to a government statement. The prime minister also vowed to increase the spending to 3% of GDP in the next parliament, citing “global instability,” the Ukraine conflict, “increasing threats from malign actors” and climate change, according to his office.

The definition of defense spending will be expanded to include security and intelligence agencies, bringing total expenditures under the article to 2.6% of GDP, according to the statement.

According to NATO data, Britain spent 2.3% of its GDP on defense in 2024. In the 2023/24 financial year, that spending amounted to £53.9 billion (\$68.2 billion).

Expenditure is expected to rise to £56.9 billion (\$72 billion) in 2024/25 and to £59.8 billion (\$75.7 billion) in 2025/26, parliament data shows.

An additional 0.2% of GDP, or some £13.4 billion (\$16.9 billion) in annual expenditures, starting 2027 would hardly have an impact on the UK’s overall defense capacity, the Guardian reported, citing defense officials. The funding would still be insufficient to rebuild and transform the nation’s military, the media outlet’s sources said.

[SOURCE: RUSSIA TODAY and REUTERS]

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