

*Former British military chiefs say
UK must consider conscription to
prepare for possible war with
Russia*



British Royal Marines servicemen hold Union Jack after the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) military exercise Baltic Protector 2019 in the former Soviet military town near Skrunda, Latvia, July 2, 2019. (Photo by Reuters)

London, March 13 (RHC)-- Former British military chiefs have warned that the Labour government of the United Kingdom “must” consider conscription “now” before being “too late” in an attempt to boost military readiness for a possible war with Russia. Urging the British government to consider conscription to bolster military readiness in response to what they called the growing threat from Russia, British daily the Sun reported on Wednesday.

Figures such as Sir Richard Shirreff, former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and Colonel Hamish De Bretton Gordon expressed concerns that the UK's current army size of approximately 70,000 active troops is insufficient to deter potential Russian aggression, advocating for “selective conscription” to bolster NATO's eastern defenses and prepare for possible conflicts.

“The government should rule nothing out at the moment. I can’t see how an army of just 70,000 is going to be able to deter Russia in the long term and maintain the mass it needs,” Shirreff said.

“If you look at the size of our regular Army, it’s tiny and they’d find it difficult to deploy a brigade for any period of time. You need mass, and you achieve mass through alliance and through creating larger forces, but you’ve also got to build up your own Army,” he added.

The calls come amid actions by European nations like Poland and Latvia, which have reinstated conscription to strengthen their defenses against Russia. This is while UK government officials, including Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Pat MacFaddon, have stressed that London is “not considering” introducing conscription.

However, defense experts dismiss such a mindset as wrong, arguing Labour should rule “nothing out at the moment” and that without increasing troop numbers and modernizing military equipment, the UK may be vulnerable in future conflicts.

“Militarily, Britain needs to look at all the options as has been described. We are not in a position at the moment to fight a ground war,” Gordon warned.

“There's no way we'll avoid [conscription] unless we surrender, and I don't think anybody in this country is going to surrender without a fight, especially to [Russian President Vladimir] Putin,” the retired senior officer further said.

Veteran Air Marshal Greg Bagwell, who served in the Royal Air Force (RAF) for 36 years, also said that he believed the UK's military requires an additional 26,000 personnel across all branches, cautioning that the current force of 130,000 is insufficient for a strong defense.

“There are 70,000 in the Army and 30,000 in the Navy and RAF and you might think that's not bad to have 130,000. But they're not all going to be on the front line, they're not all going to be in planes or ships,” the airman said.

The debate over conscription is part of a broader discussion on national defense strategies. The UK government has announced plans to boost defense spending to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2027, with an aim to reach three percent in the following years, depending on economic conditions.

London says this funding is intended to modernize the armed forces and address current military shortcomings.

In light of these discussions, the UK is conducting a Strategic Defense Review, led by former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, to assess and update defense policies, aiming to address possible challenges from countries like Russia and China and ensure that the UK is prepared to meet evolving global threats.

Early this month, former British defense secretary Penny Mordaunt also warned that the UK must “wake up” to what she called the imminent Russian threat and strengthen its defenses before it was too late.

“What we lack is the political will. We need to wake up and recognize if we fail to bolster defense we will pay a terrible price,” she said at the time.

Prompted by President Donald Trump's suggestion that the U.S. may no longer support their defense, the UK and Europe are urgently strengthening NATO defenses in the Baltics to counter a potential future threat from Putin, who has been in a war with neighboring Ukraine since February 2022.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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