

The Government has announced the future shape of the army after the conclusion of operations in Afghanistan. Defence planners need to look ahead, so the Labour Party is looking beyond the next election. This process began in February this year when it unveiled its Shadow Defence Review. Today it revealed some of its thoughts on the matter of defence equipment and a possible approach to its relationship with defence industry.

By Nick Watts, Great North News Services  
Jim Murphy Shadow Secretary of State for defence outlined Labour's defence policy as springing from a conception of what the UK's role in the world would be. This would guide a "whole government" approach to such matters as sovereign capability and how best to safeguard the jobs in the UK defence industrial sector. Rather than the current government's "off the shelf" approach, Labour will adopt a "make / buy" test. It will consider how defence procurement contracts can include the ability for UK industry to up-grade and improve equipment throughout its service. Murphy also recognized that defence procurement was a professional career path in its own right, and that MOD civil servants and service personnel should be able to pursue this career without it becoming a dead end.

In opposition politicians have the opportunity to reflect on how they would manage affairs if and when they are returned to office. It is probably too early to start measuring the furniture at MOD, but every party has to begin afresh when it finds itself cast out of office. Policy ultimately has to be meshed together at the leadership level and numbers put by departmental expenditure and programmes. This is usually fudged to avoid providing a target for other parties to criticize. There is the question of Trident renewal, which Labour would appear to be support. Also there is the Scottish referendum to get past. If this does not result in a vote to remain in the Union, a lot of plans could go out of the window.

There may be much to criticize in the way that the SDSR was conducted and the outcomes, but the public will always be asking "what would you do"? On this particular issue the UK's defence industry will be looking for as much clarity as possible. Beginning a dialogue with industry and other stakeholders now is as much about winning support for a position within the party's policy making machinery ahead of the next election, as it is about transparency. While it is on the long march of opposition, Labour will have time to reflect on its policies and keep its powder dry for 2015.

This comes as the Labour Party has announced that it has persuaded a range of companies to offer veterans job interviews. Various spokesmen have said:

"John Lewis is delighted to be able to offer guaranteed interviews to qualified veterans, we see a great advantage in having this additional pipeline of individuals. As veterans they will have had access to the extensive training offered by the Armed Forces and gained a wide array of transferable skills which John Lewis can further build on."

"Tottenham Hotspur Football Club is delighted to announce that it will be supporting the Veterans Interview Programme being launched by Rt Hon Jim Murphy MP. As part of our support for this immensely worthwhile initiative, the Club has set out a new policy to ensure that any veteran of the UK Armed Services applying for a position is guaranteed an interview. We shall also be working with our suppliers and contracted agencies to encourage them to adopt a similar policy."

"We recognise that ex-Service personnel can bring significant skills and qualities to the workforce, which have been developed during their time in the armed forces including their ability to be well organised, interact with others, and thrive under pressure. The Club has already successfully employed a veteran in a key role within the organization and regularly employs ex-military agency personnel for events such as tours and away trips."

"Greggs are concerned about the increasing number of members of the Armed Forces who are looking for employment, in an already difficult employment climate. We want to play our

part in providing training, mentoring and hands-on interview experience that could help provide individuals with a greater opportunity to get a job.<br /><br />"We work with various employment programmes and are delighted to be able to support the Veterans Interview Programme to give veterans the chance to re-settle into civilian life. Having served their country, often in very difficult circumstances, we think this programme is an excellent opportunity to give something back to those people who have dedicated their lives to serving others."<br /><br />"Timpson respects the important contribution of people serving in the armed forces and as such, we recognise that a significant number of ex-service people have the potential to be star colleagues in our business. Recruiting people from the armed forces is a pretty sensible thing to do and as such we actively seek to employ ex-service personnel by giving the very minimum of an interview."<br /><br />"Shopdirect believe focus needs to be on helping ex forces people to get to interview stage for a job and then preparing them for interview process. This is especially important as many people will not have had to look for a job for many years."<br /><br />"We at New Look are proud of the hard work and sacrifices Forces personnel make on our behalf. On paper many veterans may not appear qualified but they have a huge number of transferable skills especially in (but not limited to) the areas of management and leadership.<br /><br />"We are excited about the Veterans Interview Programme because we think it will assist deserving veterans and introduce us to some highly qualified candidates. It is a great concept and we are honoured to be involved."<br /><br />"Celtic Football Club is pleased to support this initiative. We endorse the view that many such veterans bring a range of impressive and relevant skills and experiences with them, and would be happy to consider them as part of a fair and objective selection process".<br /><br />"The Scottish FA would like to support the Veterans Interview Programme. Although a relatively small organisation, vacancies do arise at the Scottish FA, and some may be suitable for veterans if they have transferable skills. With that in mind, we would welcome applications from this section of our community."</p></div><div data-bbox="876 949 917 963" data-label="Page-Footer"><p>2 / 2</p></div>