



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on March 28, 2024

Top U.K. General: Our Army Would Last “a Couple of Months” Against Russia

On March 26, the deputy chief of the U.K. Defense Staff, Lieutenant General Robert Magowan, admitted to a parliamentary defense committee that the U.K. Armed Forces are not prepared for a potential confrontation with an adversary such as Russia.

The military gravely lacks the resources, particularly ammunition, for any such conflict, he declared.

The amount of money the government spends on ammunition, though “significant,” “does not meet ... the threats we face,” Magowan stated, adding that the military would have to manage “operational risk” related to the lack of resources. Magowan insisted that the U.K. was “ready for war,” but not with a nation such as Russia.



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When further questioned by MP Mark Francois, a former minister of state for the Armed Forces, about the chances of holding out against Russia, the general acknowledged that U.K. forces would hardly last longer than “a couple of months in a full-on shooting war.”

Defense Secretary Grant Shapps, who also appeared before MPs on March 26, claimed that there was no reason to worry, since the U.K. would not likely have to face Russia alone. “It’s important to understand that because we are in NATO ... we would never be in that situation,” he stated.

The comments came just a month after an inquiry by the Defense Committee found that the U.K. Armed Forces were “increasingly overstretched” and thus unprepared for dealing with Russia.

A year-long review of the U.K.’s defense capabilities published in early February concluded that the government would “never achieve warfighting or strategic readiness” without major reforms.

The document also said that the military is suffering from a recruitment crisis and is short at least 5,000 soldiers, leaving a total “trained strength” of fewer than 80,000. At that time, the committee was also told by former defense chiefs that the Armed Forces had been “hollowed out” at least since 2010 and could not tackle any major adversary in a “peer-on-peer conflict.” The troops “would have exhausted their capabilities after the first couple of months of the engagement,” the report said, per *The Telegraph*.

Moscow has repeatedly stated that it had no plans to involve itself in a military confrontation with the U.S.-led bloc or any of its members. President Vladimir Putin said earlier this year that Russia “has no interest ... geopolitically, economically or militarily ... in waging war against NATO.”

In mid-March, Putin also said that he doubts that “anyone is interested” in a direct military



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confrontation between Moscow and NATO, since that would mean that “we’ll be one step away from World War III.”

Likewise, a recent poll conducted by Civey on behalf of *Focus* magazine from March 11 to 13, involving 5,000 Germans aged 18 and older, revealed that most respondents had little to no confidence in the German military’s ability to defend the nation in case of attack. Three-quarters of respondents say they don’t believe in the Bundeswehr’s capabilities, with only 10 percent expressing confidence in the armed forces.

Around 30 percent feel “no confidence at all” that the military would be able to stand up to a potential adversary, the poll found. Another 45 percent have “low confidence” in the military, with 15 percent undecided. Only two percent said their trust is “very high,” while eight percent said it is “rather high.”

Regarding funding, a strong majority (69 percent) of Germans said the army needs more money, with 64 percent saying Berlin should spend more than two percent of its GDP on national defense.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius argued last November that the Bundeswehr needs a thorough overhaul to become “war-capable.” Based on the survey, around 73 percent of Germans agree with Pistorius, with 64 percent backing the reintroduction of compulsory military service, which was abolished in 2011.

Despite this, only half as many respondents (32 percent) said they were personally willing to take up arms and “actively participate in defensive combat operations” if the nation comes under attack. Around 44 percent said they would never take up arms under any circumstances.

The parliamentary commissioner for the Bundeswehr, Eva Hoegl, recently presented a yearly report on the state of the armed forces, which indicated that the military is plagued by thinning ranks and inadequate equipment.

“The Bundeswehr is aging and shrinking,” the commissioner stated, adding that the dropout rate in the military is “still very high,” while the number of new applications is even lower than last year.

The shortages in personnel and equipment have come under scrutiny as Germany continues to actively send military aid to Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. Berlin has emerged as the second largest donor of military aid, spending around \$19 billion on arms for Kyiv, as per the Kiel Institute for World Economy.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has vowed to double the military aid to Ukraine this year, igniting concerns among some MPs. In November 2023, MP Johann Wadephul warned that some “crucial” Bundeswehr units would not last longer than two days in battle.

In mid-March, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas declined to offer guarantees to Parliament that she would not deploy the Baltic country’s ground forces to Ukraine to participate in the conflict with Moscow.

Only Estonia and Lithuania have shown any interest regarding the notion of sending soldiers to Ukraine, after French President Emmanuel Macron proposed at the end of February that all options ought to be considered to prevent Russia from winning.

Some MPs asked Kallas to guarantee that Estonian Defense Forces would not be deployed to the conflict.

“I do not make such promises, because circumstances may change,” she [replied](#). “According to your



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interpretation, it seems that interference could be [defined as] anything. Our military assistance to Ukraine could also be regarded by Russia as interference.”

“We have clearly chosen a side here, and this side is Ukraine, because Russia is a direct threat to us,” Kallas added.

She told the MPs that Tallinn intends to help train Ukrainian troops, not send its own soldiers to the battlefield.

The former Soviet republic joined NATO in 2004, alongside Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Estonia has a force of around 4,200 active-duty troops, which can theoretically be expanded into a wartime army of [43,000](#). For its part, Ukraine suffered 125,000 casualties during the six months of its counteroffensive in 2023, as claimed by Russian [estimates](#). The government in Kyiv has allegedly hidden or downplayed its losses, but President Volodymyr Zelensky said in December that 500,000 more troops were needed at the front.



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