

News

# 'Too few' warships in

Fleet has fallen well below critical mass required to deal with threats such as Russia, MP warns

By Alan Farmer  
Foreign Correspondent

THE Royal Navy has a "catastrophically low" number of warships, which could leave Britain vulnerable to future threats, MPs warn today.

The number of frigates and destroyers is "way below" what is needed and could fall further by "catastrophically more" until 2030, warns the Ministry of Defence's critics in a report on its work on

the building programme. The Commons Defence Committee says it has "serious concerns" about the funding and the future of plans to modernise the ageing fleet.

The Navy's 13 Type 23 frigates are due to begin retiring at the rate of one a year from 2023, but the MoD has yet to agree a deal to replace them with the new Type 26 and Type 27 designs.

In total the Royal Navy has 13 frigates and six destroyers, down from a combined total of 23 in 2010.

MPs also sharply criticised the MoD for the "extraordinary mistakes" in the design of Type 26 destroyers after it emerged they had faulty engines and will need costly repairs.

The MoD 28-page report, called the

survey of the Fleet, said it was an "unacceptable finding" that the figures had not been designed to compare to last year's.

Julian Lewis, the committee chairman, said: "For decades, the members of Royal Navy senior crews have been given a choice to make."

"The fleet is not as big as the critical mass required for the many tasks which cannot be done by the other services."

"What remains of our surface fleet now faces a prolonged period of uncertainty as the biggest class is replaced in its entirety and all our destroyers are being replaced, major structural work on the remaining frigates." The commit-

# Navy to keep UK safe

we said that shipping below the current 27 ships area for a short time would be "completely unacceptable" and leave the UK facing the maximum possible risk with the Russian fleet from countries such as Russia.

"As an island nation, the importance of the Royal Navy to UK defence must not be underestimated," the committee added.

"Our starting point in this report is our conviction that the current number of frigates, destroyers and patrol ships adequately reflects the pressing threats and vulnerabilities facing the UK and its interests overseas."

Frigates are due to leave service at the rate of one a year between 2020 and 2026 but MPs said the Government has

not set out the necessary detail on how and where the Type 26 and Type 27 replacements will be delivered. MPs said the delay seemed to be caused by a lack of money. Their report

**'The current number of frigates, destroyers and patrol ships adequately reflects the pressing threats and vulnerabilities facing the UK and its interests overseas'**

comes only three days after it was declared that warships will be left without anti-air missiles and be forced to rely on naval guns because of cost-cutting.

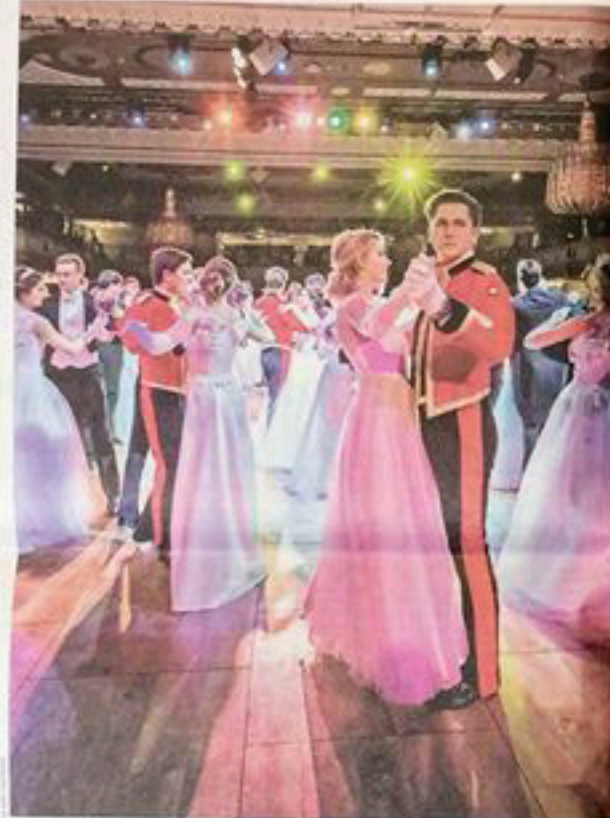
The Navy's 20-year strategy will be set out by the Navy's frigates and de-

stroyers in 2020 without explanation of why there will also be a two-year gap between the new ships and the old ships being replaced.

As the MoD spokesman said: "We are leaving in a growing Royal Navy by building two new classes, the new Type 26 Global Combat Ship, Destroyer Escort and various class refit, modernisation and offshore patrol vessels."

"We are also developing a new class of Lighter General Purpose Frigate that by the 2030s will not grow out of the fleet."

"The major programme of investment will ensure that the Royal Navy will remain one of the world's most modern and powerful navies with a global reach."



The Russians came out. A flourish of 18th-century Moscow came to London as young women in dazzling white gowns danced the night away with their escorts at the Grosvenor House Hotel in May Fair at the weekend. The debutantes, aged between 16 and 23, enjoyed champagne and caviar as a chamber orchestra played favourites such as Waltz of the Flowers from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker at this year's Russian Debuts at the Grosvenor House Hotel in May Fair at the weekend. The ball's patron is Princess Olga Andreyevna Romanoff, a descendant of Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia.

## Queen called on to fund part of palace refit

By Laura Dugdale  
Political Correspondent

THE QUEEN should "consider" contributing to the £100million renovation costs required to carry out a 10-year programme of work at Buckingham Palace, senior Labour MPs have said.

John McDonnell, the shadow health secretary, suggested it should be a "one-off" £20m bid to help fund the work to improve the safety of the palace.

Mr McDonnell, who has previously proposed that senior civil servants, could be supported by the sale of the Brighton and Hove property, said he was "pleased" to see the Queen's "generous" support for the renovation work. He said the Queen's "generous" support for the renovation work is "a very welcome sign" and that the Queen's "generous" support for the renovation work is "a very welcome sign".

It came as Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, told the PM's 10th anniversary show that it was right the Queen was to fund the renovation work.

The Palace has no funds, with general Sir Peter Luff, the palace's business manager, said he also believed the Queen could "consider" giving a "loan" to the renovation work, which is £100m in total. "She's one of the wealthiest people in the country. Why not?"

The work will be funded by a mix of the Sovereign Grant, the money given to the Queen based on profits of the Crown Estate, and should be approved by Parliament within six months.

## Make your husband take our name, peer told female heirs

By Ffion Williams

A PEER's daughter is being hit with a surprise inheritance as she is expected to be told that any female heirs who inherit the family fortune should take her husband's name, it has emerged.

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, peer and former MP, has said he will pass on his £100m fortune to his daughter, Lady Montagu, and that female heirs should take her husband's name to inherit the money.

The late Lord Montagu, a father of two sons and two daughters, is a descendant of the National Motor Museum, as the £100m fortune belongs to the New Forest, Hampshire, where he has his home and is "dedicated to his work".

Lord Montagu's daughter, Lady Montagu, is a peer's daughter and is expected to be told that any female heirs who inherit the family fortune should take her husband's name to inherit the money.



## Seven-year-old signed up to have body frozen after death

By Jane Matthews

Public health officials will talk to the insurance company that funded the cost of a 7½-year-old British girl who was preserved after her death.

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## Ministers 'breaking pledge' to plant trees as flood defence

The Government has been accused of failing to deliver its promise to fund "natural" flood management schemes such as planting trees.

A Freedom of Information request by Friends of the Earth to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) revealed there was no funding earmarked specifically for natural flood management.

The campaign group said the lack of funding went against previous promises to fund "natural" flood management schemes such as planting trees.

Friends of the Earth and the charity Riverwatch have called for at least £200million for natural flood defences in this year's Autumn Statement.

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## Met officers write off 70 police cars in year

By Ffion Williams

SCOTLAND YARD crushed and wrote off more than 70 cars, including a £100,000 SUV in a year.

Freedom of Information figures show that 70 police cars were written off in 2019, a 12% increase on 2018. The most expensive was a £100,000 SUV.

A spokesman for the Metropolitan Police confirmed 70 vehicles had been written off. He said the Met

was well behind and the pre-pandemic year was estimated to be £400,000.

The data also showed that 47 compensation payments totalling £201,322 were made to members of the public after their cars were damaged in collisions with police cars in the past year.

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