

Blast furnace closure leaves UK underprepared for war



The UK will be left ‘woefully underprepared’ for any potential conflict if steel blast furnaces are allowed to close, GMB has said.

In a [letter to Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Defence](#), the union says losing the ability to make steel from scratch will ‘significantly impact the security of our essential defence supply chains’.

New, or virgin, steel can only be made using the UK’s four blast furnaces – two at Port Talbot and two at Scunthorpe.

Tata has just announced the closure of the two Port Talbot blast furnaces and plans to replace them with an electric arc furnace, which can only produce recycled steel.



There are fears that British Steel plans to close the blast furnaces at Scunthorpe, leaving the UK with no way to make virgin steel.

Fresh steel is vital for warships and other parts of the defence industry.

The Ministry of Defence previously intervened to secure the future of Sheffield Forgemasters, and GMB calls on the Defence Secretary to act again to safeguard this essential sovereign defence manufacturing capability.

Matt Roberts, GMB National Officer, said:

“We live in a turbulent global environment.

“Both NATO’s defence chief and Mr Shapps himself have warned war in the next two decades is a possibility.

“Yet we are on the brink of losing our full ability to make our own steel, vital to our defence industry – not least in building warships. It’s utter folly.

“GMB is very clear: we must retain sovereign capability to make virgin steel.”

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