

Thousands more jobs than first thought at stake from shipbuilding contract



MoD: placing £1bn order in the UK could support 16,400 jobs

GMB, the union for shipbuilding workers, has revealed that keeping a crucial £1 billion order for new military support ships in the UK could support up to 16,000 jobs – according to Ministry of Defence documents.



The analysis of government shipbuilding spending and prosperity, which was obtained by GMB under the Freedom of Information Act, suggests that £1 billion spent on the Fleet Solid Support order could support between 11,600 and 16,400 jobs.

These figures are higher than the union's 'cautious' estimate of 6,700 jobs, which was calculated on a different basis.

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Ross Murdoch, GMB National Officer and CSEU chair

The news comes ahead of defence questions in the commons today while tomorrow Defence Procurement Minister, Stuart Andrew, faces MPs on the Defence Select Committee.

Meanwhile just days ago the All Party Parliamentary Group on Shipbuilding and Ship Repair urged the government to keep the order in the UK.

The new Fleet Solid Support ships are needed to service the UK's £6.3 billion Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers and their strikeforce of new F-35 fighter planes.

Despite the fact the ships are exempt from EU procurement rules – and the French Government recently awarded a similar order to French shipyards without a bidding process – the Ministry of Defence has up until now insisted on running a full international competition.

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However, the new Defence Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, is reportedly considering a change in approach.



Shipbuilding and ship repair employment in Great Britain has fallen from an **estimated 122,200 in 1981 to under 32,000 in 2016** – threatening the UK’s sovereign defence manufacturing capability.

Ross Murdoch, GMB National Officer and CSEU chair, said:

“The thousands of UK jobs at stake – not to mention the wider benefit to the economy – make this decision a no brainer for the new Defence Secretary, and we cautiously welcome reports that she is willing to look at this issue again.

“Ministers are not bound by normal EU rules on competitive tendering when it comes to military ships, so Penny Mourdant doesn’t have to worry about that either.

“ We can’t let our proud shipbuilding tradition be sold down the river if the work goes to artificially subsidised international competitor shipyards instead.

“We have a highly skilled shipbuilding workforce in the UK that is more than capable of making these ships at a fair market price.

“We can’t let our proud shipbuilding tradition be sold down the river if the work goes to artificially subsidised international competitor shipyards instead.

“In a year which has seen Appledore close and hundreds of jobs shed at Rosyth Cammell Laird, this is an easy way to keep Britain’s shipbuilding industry afloat.”

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