

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY CONNÉTABLE OF ST. JOHN
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 16th APRIL 2013**

Question

Further to the UK government's intention to make large cuts in its defence budget, what action, if any, is being taken to reduce Jersey's contribution to UK defence and, if none, why not?

Answer

The arrangements for Jersey's voluntary contribution toward the UK Government's international representation, defence and assistance to citizens abroad are set out in the current inter-governmental agreement approved in November 1988.

The current agreement is for the provision of a Territorial Army Engineer Squadron. There are no current proposals to review the general commitment to the provision of the Squadron. The Island continues to enjoy substantial benefits from being represented by the UK through some 150 Embassies worldwide and in many international forums, from consular assistance to British nationals overseas and through support for Jersey businesses in other countries.

In my view, an overall view needs to be taken of our relationship with the UK Government and any decisions in relation to the review of the principle of our commitment to the Inter Governmental Agreement should fully take this into account.

The current Inter Governmental Agreement is a voluntary commitment not linked in any way to the overall UK Government Defence expenditure. Accordingly, it is not based upon any percentage basis of that and, in particular, is not based upon any pro rata share based upon relative population or relative tax income. Indeed, if it were based on either of these then the contribution would have increased in past years.

The significance of Jersey's contribution is not just financial, but much more importantly it provides a practical means by which Jersey men and women can have a direct and important role as part of Britain's armed forces, giving active service in conflicts in other countries.

In practice, the Home Affairs Department keeps a close watch upon the cost of running the Squadron as is shown by the costs in recent years. The figures below exclude the cost of the provision of the IMLO post, the functions of which have now been transferred to the Lieutenant Governor's Department.

ACTUAL COSTS					FORECAST COSTS		
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Jersey	427,414	454,439	423,869	435,553	542,699	483,089	469,684
UK	460,780	524,440	503,351	452,940	479,716	537,338	559,998
Total	888,194	978,879	927,220	888,493	1,022,415	1,020,427	1,029,682

The advantage to the Island of providing a defence contribution, which is locally based, is clear from the fact that nearly half of the costs of running the Squadron is spent locally. There are also other significant benefits to the Island in having a locally based Territorial Army Engineer Squadron based in the Island in terms of links with the UK military, availability of skills to assist with a major civil emergency and training and work experience for locally based people.

Guernsey and the Isle of Man also make equivalent contributions in different ways for their international representation, defence and consular assistance, and as far as I know they have no intention of cutting back on their contributions.

The final decision in relation to the provision of an Island contribution towards the UK defence budget rests with the States Assembly. However, it should be noted that this Assembly approved the continued financing of our TA Squadron for 2013-2015 as recently as September 2012 and this with full knowledge of the UK Government's intent to reduce its Defence budget.