

# A' THE BLUE BONNETS

Defending an Independent Scotland

Stuart Crawford and Richard Marsh



Royal United Services Institute

WHITEHALL REPORT 3-12

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Cover image: RSM Stevie Hardcastle holds his cap with a new regimental crest at the unveiling of the new Royal Regiment of Scotland crest at Edinburgh Castle. *Courtesy of David Moir/AP Photo.*



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Stuart Crawford and Richard Marsh

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## Preface

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**I**N 1997, the Scottish Centre for War Studies at the University of Glasgow published its first and, to date, only occasional paper, entitled ‘Some Thoughts on an Independent Scottish Defence Force’, by Jack Hawthorn. In it, the author set out his blueprint for how Scotland might go about organising its armed services upon becoming independent.

‘Jack Hawthorn’ was the *nom de plume* I chose to disguise the fact that I was a serving army officer in the Royal Tank Regiment, a career soldier of nearly twenty years standing at the time. In those days, any article for publication written by a serviceman or woman was vetted by the Ministry of Defence, and I knew an article on such a politically sensitive topic had little chance of seeing the light of day if processed through official channels. I therefore adopted the name of my maternal grandfather, whom I had never met, and attributed the authorship to him.

Shortly after publication, I informed the Ministry of Defence of my intention to resign my commission and stand in the first parliamentary elections for the restored Scottish Parliament in May 1999, as a candidate for the Scottish National Party (SNP). I contested the now defunct Roxburgh and Berwickshire constituency, and for a very short period of time was the SNP deputy defence spokesman. My *nom de plume* did not, however, stand up to the close political scrutiny that my role invoked, and in a brief flurry of media activity in January 1999, my part in writing the paper was revealed.

Since 1999, the debate on Scottish independence has moved on significantly, and the world has changed. The context has also changed in military terms, from the post-Cold War period in which the original paper was written, to the in many ways less certain and more fragmented strategic parameters of the early twenty-first century. Some fifteen years since the paper was published, and as Scotland heads towards a referendum on independence in 2014, I felt it was time to revisit the topic.

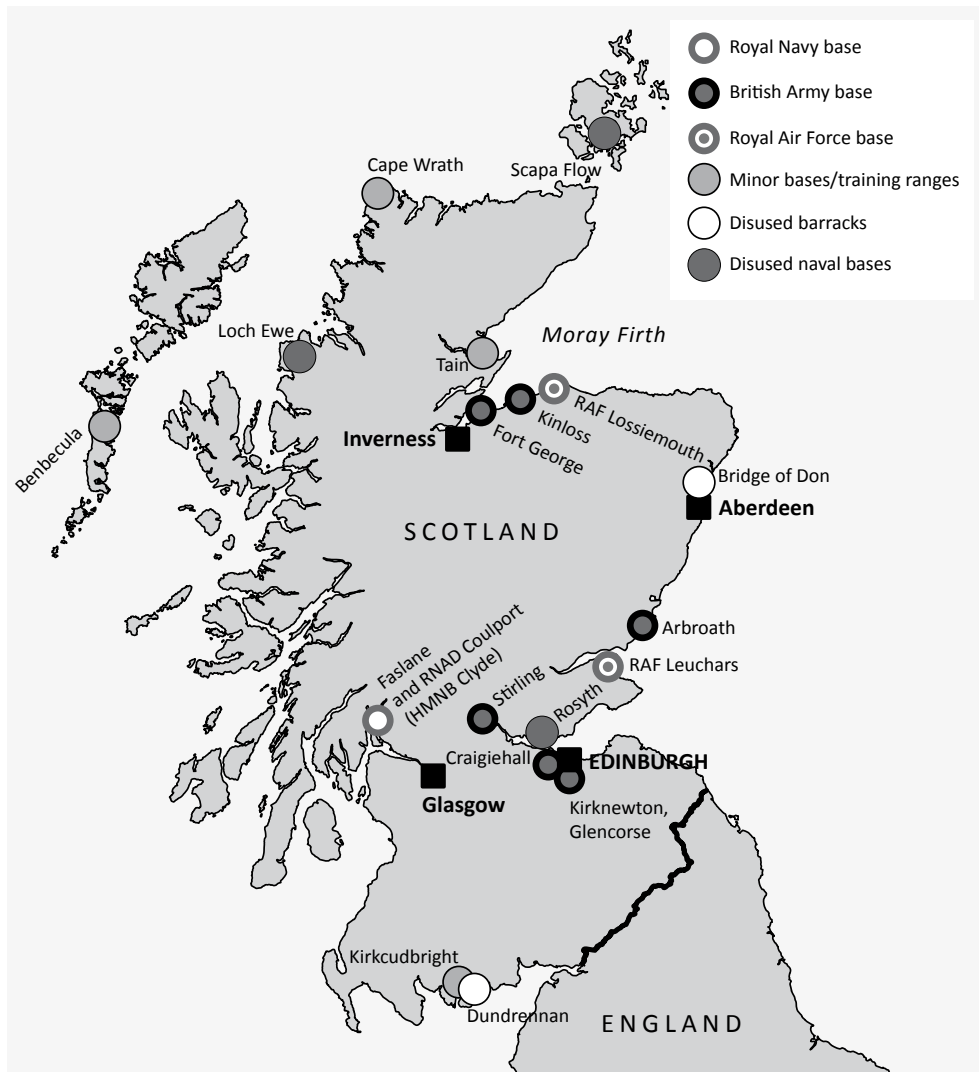
This ‘new’ publication is in fact essentially a revision of the original, which is now out of print. Accordingly, it involves a degree of repetition, and draws on much of the original thought contained in the first publication, for which no apology is made. However, it has allowed me to correct some of the more fundamental errors and misapprehensions contained in the original paper, and to update the hypothesis to reflect the changes that have occurred since then.

Finally, the major flaw in the original publication was that it made no attempt to cost the proposals for an independent Scottish Defence Force. This has been rectified in this edition, and I am grateful to my colleague

and co-author Richard Marsh for his essential contribution to making this report a much more worthwhile exercise.

**Stuart Crawford**  
September 2012

**Map 1: Selected Present and Former Military Installations in Scotland.**





## I. Introduction

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THE Scottish Parliament, restored in 1999 after just short of 300 years of direct government from Westminster, has now been in place for thirteen years. During this time it has grown and matured, and in parallel Scotland's only major party promoting Scottish independence, the SNP, has changed similarly – from opposition in the first two sessions of parliament, to minority government in the third, and finally to majority government in the fourth.

Unsurprisingly, the SNP's political *raison d'être*, independence for Scotland, has moved to the very forefront of political debate in Scotland, and to much greater prominence within the UK as a whole, over the same period. The return of an SNP government in Scotland at the May 2011 parliamentary election brought with it a manifesto commitment to hold a referendum on Scottish independence within the five years of the 2011–16 session.

That there will be a referendum seems to have been accepted by both separatists and unionists; everything else – timing, the question (or questions) to be posed, who should get to vote, which independent body should oversee the plebiscite – have been subject to disagreement, although agreement on some of these issues seems close. There have been two public consultations, one each sponsored by Westminster and Holyrood, asking the Scottish electorate how it thinks a referendum should be carried out.

So, at the time of writing, the debate on Scottish independence is in full swing and dominates political discussion in Scotland. All aspects are subject to scrutiny, including how an independent Scotland would deal with, amongst a myriad of other matters, such things as monetary policy and currency, membership of the EU, membership or otherwise of NATO, and that hoary old chestnut which is North Sea oil, a nationalist *cause célèbre* since the 1970s. It has even been mooted by the SNP that, if an independence referendum is won by a clear vote favouring a separate Scottish state, the Scottish parliamentary election in May 2016 could be the first held in a new sovereign state distinct from the rest of the UK.

Against this background, it is perhaps timely to return to the issue of how an independent Scotland might organise its defence policy and its armed forces, the Scottish Defence Forces (SDF). Possible roles, organisation and deployment of the SDF will be discussed, but more importantly this report will address what the independent armed services of an independent Scotland would be for, and how they might be organised and deployed to achieve the answer to that fundamental question. Passing reference will be made to the examples provided by the armed forces of other nations of a similar size to Scotland – primarily Denmark, Norway and Eire, which arguably provide the

best comparators. The analysis will also look at what might be considered to be Scotland's 'share' of UK military assets.

### **Background and Context**

The modern Scottish political context has developed dramatically over the past fifteen years. Then, at the time of writing the original Scottish Centre for War Studies occasional paper, the idea of Scottish independence was still the political dream of a few; now, it is a distinct possibility and the aspiration of many, many more. Then, speculation suggested that Scotland might achieve independence by 2007; now, it is openly discussed as being possible by 2016. Then, the debate, such as it existed at all, was open-ended; now it is certain that there will be a plebiscite within the next two years. By the end of 2014, it seems, we will know the settled will of the Scottish people.

Let us assume, therefore, for the purposes of this report, that Scotland votes Yes in the autumn 2014 referendum for full independence, and that negotiations will start immediately to determine when and how Scotland will remove itself politically from the rest of the UK (henceforth, the 'rUK'). By plumping for full independence rather than some 'halfway house' of increased devolution, the country has become responsible for all the trappings of state, including its own armed services. How those might be constituted is the question now in hand. Before going on to address how the SDF might be organised, however, there are a number of external factors which need to be considered, that will determine their shape and size, or indeed whether Scotland needs them at all. The immediate requirement is to attempt to define the strategic context in which Scotland finds itself, and also to identify what are the likely risks and threats to the soon-to-be-independent state.

Scotland represents approximately 8.4 per cent of the total UK population, a third of the UK landmass, and half of the UK's coastline. Despite being relatively small and sparsely populated, Scotland's geographic position bestows upon it a certain geostrategic importance, at least in regional terms. The country is well placed to exert influence over the sea routes from the North Sea into the Atlantic and also the northern exit from the Irish Sea. It also lies directly under transatlantic air routes, as the 1988 downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie so shockingly illustrated, and shares a border with its larger neighbour, England. It is well endowed with naval and air facilities from which to patrol and guard such routes, far out into the Atlantic if required. Scotland also retains, together with the rUK, the historically significant attribute of providing a secure staging area for military operations off the coast of mainland Europe, a role particularly valuable to the US and other nations during two world wars – and the Cold War – during the last century.

In terms of other strategic assets, Scotland is not overly blessed. Clearly oil and gas are the most important, with the most recent estimates indicating that there might be reserves worth up to £1 trillion remaining in Scottish waters. No matter how the Scottish-English border might be extended into the North Sea on independence, it is clear that the lion's share of the reserves would be retained by Scotland. Then there are the fishing grounds, of course, over which there has been conflict before. An independent Scotland would take over from the rUK in EU fishery negotiations and might need to take a (more) robust stance on protecting this asset. Scotland's other big revenue earners, tourism and whisky, would not seem to be under any immediate threat from avaricious foreign nations, nor would the burgeoning renewables industry; although any interruption in trade would have serious implications across all of these sectors.

However, it is generally acknowledged that potential military threats to an independent Scotland and its strategic assets and national interests would seem to be very low. The UK government's 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) stated that the probability of large-scale military attack against the UK by another state was low, and it therefore prioritised counter-terrorism, cyber-attack, natural hazards and preventing international military crises.<sup>1</sup> Whilst several aspects of this document would not apply to an independent Scotland – the maintenance of the nuclear deterrent being the most obvious example – it is probably reasonably safe to say that the same approach to future defence might be adopted by a Scottish government. Scotland is unlikely to face a *major* military threat in the foreseeable future; on the other hand, there will always be the possibility of terrorism or economic disputes.

Most commentators would tend to agree, therefore, that the chances of a credible military threat to an independent Scotland would be close to zero and, if such a threat were to emerge at all, it would likely be limited to infringements of airspace and coastal integrity, and the security of oil and gas rigs and other economic assets like fishing grounds. It could be argued that such security concerns could be met by enhancements to the police or by the establishment of some sort of gendarmerie, and the question is frequently asked whether an independent Scotland would actually need any armed forces in the classic sense at all.

It is important to consider, therefore, the wider functions of armed forces generally. This topic was explored in detail by David Chuter in 1996,<sup>2</sup> and his work is summarised here. First, armed forces are required to ensure the survival of the state against internal enemies. They are in effect the state's 'ultimate argument' against non-democratic insurrection and uprising. In addition to this, there are a host of other tasks associated with assisting the civilian authorities, like helping with disaster relief, ensuring essential

services like refuse collection and ambulance services continue during periods of industrial dispute, and so on. Secondly, armed forces protect the state from external aggression, and act as 'the political affirmation of sovereignty and identity which results from a visible determination to define and patrol frontiers and areas of interest with military forces'. Clearly this includes policing of airspace and sea routes and, of particular relevance to Scotland, the guarding of oil and gas installations, amongst other things.

The third main reason for having armed forces, Chuter suggests, is to promote stability in regions of the globe where a state has political, economic or strategic interests. This does not necessarily mean the despatch of military forces, either unilaterally or as part of a coalition or alliance, to impose the state's will on another by force. Much more likely is the achievement of political ends by low-level military assistance, exchange training, military links through attendance at foreign staff colleges, and diplomacy – the latter a traditional role of the visiting warship in a foreign port. There may also be a need to rescue nationals from an area in conflict, or embassy staff in the face of some crisis, again either unilaterally or in coalition or alliance with others.

These three major aspects aside, though, the use of armed forces becomes largely a matter of choice: as, for example, participation in peace or stability operations under the auspices of international organisations like NATO or the UN. Use of armed forces in such voluntary ventures can enhance a state's standing in the international community and gain it a 'seat at the conference table' when international matters are debated or resolved. Notwithstanding protests to the contrary, it is probably fair to say that the UK's involvement in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade fall into this category of 'wars of choice'. Whether an independent Scotland would have become involved in these conflicts is a matter of conjecture, although in the current political climate the answer would probably be no.

Be that as it may, and if we accept Chuter's thesis, then there is a clear requirement and purpose for armed forces in an independent Scotland. What needs to be considered against this background is the appropriate configuration of the SDF, according to the level of military operations in which it might be involved. The spectrum of conflict in which armed forces operate ranges from diplomacy ('showing the flag' and 'forward presence') via peace support and intervention operations all the way to general war. It is highly unlikely that any nation, other than perhaps the US, Russia, China or possibly India, would wish to participate willingly in general war, at the high-intensity end of the conflict spectrum, outside of an alliance or coalition. An independent Scotland would most definitely not. At the same time, other current and potential operations for the UK armed forces, for example the reinforcement of Dependent Territories and military garrisons overseas – the Falklands being the classic example – are more unlikely tasks for the SDF;

Scotland is unlikely to want to have dependent territories and garrisons overseas, although it may find itself with some inherited responsibilities as part of any independence settlement, especially those with a strong historical Scottish link.<sup>3</sup>

It is much more likely that the SDF would become involved in the full gamut of operations at the lower end of the scale, whilst possibly retaining the potential to become involved at higher levels as part of regional or international military alliances and coalitions. The security structures within which the SDF might operate are already in place. The UN and NATO are the obvious examples,<sup>4</sup> but there are others like Partnership for Peace (PfP), which seems to be a 'halfway house' for states inclined towards NATO. There are currently twenty-two countries participating in this bilateral arrangement with NATO.

SNP policy at the time of writing aside, there would appear to be no obvious reason why an independent Scotland should not be part of NATO, and there is much sense for a new nation in belonging to what has been described as the most successful military alliance the world has known. The party's policy on NATO has long been considered one of the SNP's Achilles' heels, and senior figures have regularly acknowledged privately, and now publicly,<sup>5</sup> the need to confront and change this.

### **Role of the Scottish Defence Forces**

Before assessing how the SDF might be organised and configured, it is important that we have a clear vision of what the purpose of Scotland's armed forces would be: in other words, what would they be for. Against the background and context previously discussed, a suggested security and defence policy for an independent Scotland might be based on the following roles for the SDF: the internal security of Scotland, generally in support of the police, military assistance to the civilian community, and support in tasks given priority by the civilian authorities; defending Scottish territory, assets and possessions on land, at sea and in the air against intrusion, disruption and attack; maintaining Scotland's political, economic and cultural freedom of action, and generally protecting Scottish rights and interests; and the pursuit of Scotland's wider security interests and the fulfilment of regional and international defence obligations such as they exist. These four broad roles are hardly likely to raise eyebrows, and are roughly in line with those of various other nations. With these roles in mind, the possible structure, organisation and deployment of the SDF can be examined.

### **Possible Organisation of the Scottish Defence Forces**

Conventional practice suggests that the SDF should be organised into three distinct services: the Scottish Navy (SN),<sup>6</sup> the Scottish Air Force (SAF), and the Scottish Army (SA). It need not necessarily follow this model, though,

for the setting up of an SDF offers a rare opportunity to more or less design Scotland's defence forces from scratch in a way that few other countries could. It would be, for example, perfectly feasible to combine all three into one consolidated arm, as happened in Canada in the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> There would be opportunities also to look at the relationships between the armed forces and police, and the potential for some sort of gendarmerie straddling the boundaries. Furthermore, the advance of new technologies – such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) – might suggest more radical organisational innovation.

However, for the purposes of this report, it can be assumed that the SDF would follow the conventional model. Although it need not follow UK practice, the upper echelon command and management functions would most likely be organised on a joint basis, that is to say with all three service arms collocated. Independent Scotland would therefore need its own Department or Ministry of Defence, or equivalent, where the cabinet minister – or whatever title may be chosen: perhaps cabinet secretary for defence or minister for armed services – would have his domain. Advised possibly by the SDF's Joint Chiefs of Staff headed by the chief of the Scottish Defence Staff, this ministry would be staffed mainly by civil servants from the Scottish Civil Service and probably best located near the parliament and Scottish government offices somewhere in Edinburgh.

Then there would be a Joint Headquarters SDF, from where the three individual services which comprise the SDF would be commanded by their service chiefs. Ideally, this too would be located close to or in Edinburgh, although space or logistics might rule that out. It could, though, be located elsewhere, and the MoD's Kentigern House in Glasgow, currently home to the British Army's Army Personnel Centre, could be a contender. It is to those three individual services that attention is now turned.

## II. The Scottish Navy

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CLEARLY, although arguably not a traditional maritime nation in the sense that England has been historically, independent Scotland's geostrategic location and strategic economic assets dictate that it would require a navy. As previously mentioned, the security of the country's oil and gas resources, mainly in the North Sea, plus its fishing grounds and industry and maritime trading routes would be of prime importance. In the absence of any immediately recognisable threat to these assets, however, it is less easy to make the case for the size of navy that Scotland might require. The best that can be achieved in this 'threat vacuum' is an educated guess at what the SN might look like, using a general assessment of likely naval tasks plus comparisons with the navies of countries of similar size and disposition.

The Royal Navy (RN) presence in Scotland has declined significantly over the past few decades. Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde is one of the three remaining operating bases for the RN in the UK, the other two being at Devonport and Portsmouth. Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland has his headquarters there, and the base is home to a number of RN units and associated support services. It is effectively the only RN operating base in Scotland since the downgrading of Rosyth on the Firth of Forth in 1995. The major RN presence in Clyde is the UK's independent nuclear deterrent, comprising the four *Vanguard*-class SSBNs (ballistic-missile submarines) armed with the Trident missile and nuclear warheads, based at Faslane, and the Royal Naval Armaments Depot in Coulport. In addition, Faslane is also host to the UK's *Astute*-class submarines, nuclear-powered but conventionally armed, which began to arrive there in 2009. Seven boats in total will be built, with an in-service date for the final one, HMS *Ajax*, currently planned for 2024. Also based at Faslane are the eight *Sandown*-class minehunters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mine Counter Measures (MCM) Squadron, plus HMS *Pursuer* and HMS *Dasher* of the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron.

Not much of this presence would be of any use to an independent Scotland. For a start, the Scottish public has no appetite for any part of the independent nuclear deterrent, and there is widespread support for it to be withdrawn from Scottish territory. Clearly this makes sense. Moral and ethical issues aside, it would be a hopeless economic burden for such a small country and is of decreasing credibility in the twenty-first century; it is neither truly 'independent' nor is it necessarily a deterrent.<sup>8</sup> That said, nor is it clear where it might go if it is forced to leave Scotland; the boats might be housed elsewhere in the rUK, but the weaponry is another matter altogether. It may be that there is, in reality, nowhere else for it to go.<sup>9</sup> Likewise any possible 'share' of the *Astute* submarines: they are probably just too expensive for independent Scotland to maintain. Finally, for the same reason, and notwithstanding the fact that parts of them are being built on the Clyde

and final assembly and integration is taking place at Rosyth, there would be no place in the SN for either of the *Queen Elizabeth*-class aircraft carriers. Power projection on the scale that these ships could facilitate is unlikely to be a Scottish requirement, and the cost of their aircraft alone would be prohibitive.

However, in exchange for giving up its share of these strategic assets, Scotland might be able to secure from the rUK some of the vessels and other resources it requires for its national and regional defence needs. Policing sea routes and defending against foreign naval aggression would, ideally, call for a submarine capability. However, with the demise of the diesel electric fleet of SSK submarines in the 1990s, there are no conventional – non-nuclear-propelled – submarines in UK service any more. As previously stated, nuclear-powered submarines of the *Trafalgar* or *Astute* classes are probably far too costly for an independent Scotland to sustain, nor would they fit well with Scotland's strategic requirements. Submarines, therefore, are unlikely to form part of the inventory of the SN, in the short-to-medium term at least. In the longer term, Scotland might wish to consider off-the-shelf purchase of conventionally powered and armed submarines of the type built by Germany or Sweden.

The RN no longer has any of its destroyers or frigates based north of the border, but Scotland might well seek to negotiate with the rUK over allocation of a proportion of these. Possibly a couple of frigates of the anti-submarine or anti-aircraft type would fit the bill in terms of likely tasks in maritime diplomacy, control and escort of shipping, and providing a Scottish naval contribution to regional and international alliances and coalitions as appropriate. The Type 23-class frigates HMS *Argyll* and HMS *Montrose* are clearly already suitably named for the SN and might fit this requirement adequately. There would also be a need for a number of offshore patrol vessels to supplement the frigates and for fishery protection and patrolling of oil and gas installations.<sup>10</sup> The RN has only four 1,700-tonne vessels of the *River* class, so hard bargaining would be required for Scotland to get even one of these. Probably half a dozen or so would be needed, so sourcing from elsewhere or building them in Scottish yards would be the only solution.<sup>11</sup> Add to these the two offshore patrol vessels of the Faslane Patrol Boat Squadron, HMS *Pursuer* and HMS *Dasher*, which Scotland might hope to add to the SN.

Equally important would be a number of MCM vessels, for the fledgling independent nation would need to trade and keeping open shipping routes would be vital. As previously mentioned, there are already the eight ships of the 1<sup>st</sup> MCM Squadron at Faslane. Again, it is hard to put a firm figure on an exact number required or what the mine threat might be in reality, but possibly the SN might be able to lay claim to six of these. Add odd



miscellaneous craft like auxiliaries and other smaller vessels and the newborn SN might consist of some twenty or so vessels and between 1,500 and 2,000 personnel, which appears to be more than Scotland's 'share' of the RN in terms of absolute numbers, but arguably might be acceptable in terms of 'value'. Its strength would lie somewhere between that of the Royal Danish Navy or Norwegian Navy, with just over seventy ships, vessels and boats and approximately 3,500 personnel each, and the Naval Service of Ireland, which has eight vessels and 1,444 personnel.

Since the demise of Rosyth as a naval base in the 1990s, the sole RN base in Scotland has been HMNB Clyde. However, Rosyth could be reinstated as a naval base once more with some investment, and there would be some strategic sense in so doing; having only one base at Faslane would be akin to putting all of Scotland's naval eggs in one basket. Historically, Scotland has had a number of other RN bases which have been used in times of conflict – Loch Ewe, Scapa Flow, and the Moray Firth to name but three. These would clearly require considerable investment if they were to be utilised by the SN in any formal way, but are usefully located should strategic attention turn increasingly to the Arctic and the High North. As for sailors to man the navy's ships, historically about 10 per cent of RN personnel have been Scottish,<sup>12</sup> but there is no guarantee that Scots serving with the RN would transfer to the SN en masse come independence, so recruitment – as well as the correct mix of crew skills matched to ships – might well be an issue. One also needs to acknowledge that, if the transition of Trident out of Scottish waters is prolonged, then many potential SN personnel might remain in the RN, or possibly some RN ships might be manned by SN crews, in the interim. At the same time, the training of its sailors may prove problematic for the SN, in the early years at least. It may be that, like many other small and emerging nations across the globe, the SN will have to send officers and rates abroad (including to the rUK) for training until the appropriate schools and training establishments are set up in Scotland.

### III. The Scottish Air Force

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RATHER like the case for the Scottish Navy (SN), in suggesting exactly how the Scottish Air Force (SAF) might be organised, equipped and deployed one has ultimately to resort to a combination of informed hypothesis and comparison with other similar nations and states. Control of airspace, the protection of population and strategic assets from attack or disruption from the air, and the ability to project power regionally and, if need be, internationally are some of the major reasons why an air force for independent Scotland might be necessary. In addition, one of the main lessons of modern warfare is that denying an enemy use of the air is a prerequisite for successful operations on land and sea. Scotland might well need to call on an air force capable of all these functions, although arguably an air-superiority capability allied to expeditionary military operations might be something best left to others. Part of this requirement might be found from existing RAF assets in Scotland, and an examination of those is a useful starting point when considering the SAF.

The RAF presence in Scotland has decreased significantly in recent years, with further cuts currently in hand. Whilst until recently there were three main RAF stations in Scotland – Leuchars, Kinloss and Lossiemouth – the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) will effectively reduce this to one, RAF Lossiemouth, by 2020. The SDSR deemed the maritime surveillance Nimrod MRA4 too expensive to bring into service and scrapped the programme, thereby making RAF Kinloss redundant for air-force purposes. The airfield closed in 2011 and it is due to close as an RAF station in 2013. It has now been renamed Kinloss Barracks and houses 39 Engineer Regiment (Air Support) Royal Engineers. Likewise RAF Leuchars, currently home to one of the RAF's Typhoon FGR4 squadrons,<sup>13</sup> will close in due course and become an army base at some point before 2020. Its fighter aircraft may well relocate to Lossiemouth, which under current plans is to remain the only operational RAF airfield in Scotland. Currently located there are three operational squadrons of Tornado GR4s, the Tornado GR4 Operational Conversion Unit, a Sea King Search and Rescue Flight, an RAF Regiment Field Squadron and an RAF Regiment Auxiliary Squadron, as well as an extensive range of operational, logistic and administrative support functions. Moreover, there are various minor units and facilities elsewhere, including radar stations at Benbecula and Saxa Vord and the RAF bombing range at Tain.

Effectively, Scotland would only have one operational SAF station upon gaining independence, although no doubt Leuchars could be revived and may need to retain a functioning air capability if one of the UK's multi-role brigades is based there in due course, as mooted. As with naval bases, there are dangers inherent in putting all of the SAF's eggs in one basket too, for it is relatively easy to deny use of one air base by disrupting the runways. So

reliance on one air base is to be avoided. That said, if Leuchars were to be too far gone for revival then Scotland could take a leaf from other nations' books and look to use civilian airports for military purposes. Again, with some investment one or two of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen or Inverness airports might be suitable SAF alternative bases.

The real problem is with aircraft. Virtually none of the aircraft the SAF might want are stationed in Scotland post-SDSR and yet there would be a requirement for airframes for all capability areas. For air defence and strike attack, the Typhoon and ageing Tornado are probably too sophisticated and too expensive for Scotland to maintain. Even smaller nations' aircraft of choice, the American F-16, might be beyond the SAF's realistic aspirations and, in any case, would have to be purchased from elsewhere. Scotland's relatively modest needs in both roles might be filled, however, by the BAE Hawk aircraft currently in the RAF inventory. These are essentially advanced training aircraft with an operational capability which could well suit SAF purposes in the early years of independence at least.<sup>14</sup> None are currently stationed in Scotland, but with 118 in the RAF inventory, Scotland should be able to negotiate its 'share', possibly as many as eighteen to form one, or possibly two, squadrons.<sup>15</sup>

Maritime reconnaissance is obviously high on the priority list, and with the demise of the Nimrod MRA4 programme and closure of RAF Kinloss, Scotland has been left naked with no capability. A suitable aircraft would have to be purchased from elsewhere, possibly the Lockheed P-3 Orion or a similar type, with perhaps three or four aircraft providing a limited but important capability. In addition, or alternatively perhaps, UAVs might be used in this role. There is a similar dearth of transport aircraft. These are a definite requirement, not only for the multifarious SAF tasks they might be required for, but also to allow limited deployment of army units without reliance on other states and nations. The C-130 Hercules series aircraft would be the obvious choice for the fixed wing requirement; the RAF has approximately fifty of these, and a negotiated share of between six and eight of these might fit the SAF bill. Strategic lift might be beyond the resources of the SDF and best left to allies. Transport helicopters are slightly more awkward. The obvious choice for heavy lift is the Chinook helicopter, of which the RAF has some forty. The SAF might claim six of these at a pinch, but likely fewer. Scotland might also want to claim some of the Sea King helicopter fleet, say half a dozen or so, possibly including the search and rescue aircraft at Lossiemouth.

These sorts of aircraft types in the numbers suggested might make up the bulk of the SAF, to which should be added the dozen or so aircraft operated by the University Air Squadrons and assorted other liaison and specialist aircraft which might be required. The SAF might therefore hold about sixty aircraft all told and some 1,750–2,250 personnel, organised perhaps into

six operational squadrons.<sup>16</sup> Assuming that an appropriate share of the RAF inventory could be negotiated, combined with some judicious purchasing of types needed from elsewhere, it would appear that the resources and infrastructure for the SAF could be organised successfully. Furthermore, with a historical 14 per cent of the RAF recruited from Scotland on average,<sup>17</sup> there would not appear to be any real problems with personnel either, provided, of course, that Scots serving with the RAF could be persuaded to join the SAF after independence. Rather like the SN, however, the SAF might have to train its personnel elsewhere, particularly with reference to officer and basic pilot training, until indigenous training facilities are established. This is unlikely to present major problems, for many nations are only too happy to assist as part of their diplomatic and foreign-policy procedures.

## IV. The Scottish Army

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THE army is the most visible and instantly recognisable of the armed services in Scotland. Tradition and popular mythology has it that Scotland has always contributed more than its fair share of recruits to the British Army but, whilst this may well be true in recent times and in times of national crises like the two world wars, it has not always been the case. In 1830, for example, Scotland supplied some 13.6 per cent of the British Army, considerably more than its proportional share calculated by population, but by 1879 this had dropped to less than 8 per cent, where it stayed until at least 1912. Given that the population of Scotland was roughly 10.5 per cent of that of Great Britain during the same period, clearly Scotland was under-contributing, in quantity at least.<sup>18</sup>

Be that as it may, more recent calculations have suggested that Scotland contributes approximately 13 per cent of the British Army's strength, so Scots are now overrepresented in the army at least. Although these individuals are distributed across all of the arms and functions of the British Army, it is the infantry role with which they are most closely identified. Sadly, the six remaining historical regular regiments of the Scottish Division were disbanded and reformed into the five battalions of the Royal Regiment of Scotland in December 2004, a reorganisation fiercely resisted at the time.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that each battalion of the Royal Regiment carries with it some of the traditions of its predecessor regiment – the so-called 'golden thread' much trumpeted at the time – informed commentators warned that it would be easier in future to cut a battalion (or two) from the large multi-battalion Royal Regiment of Scotland than it would ever have been to cut one of the historic regiments. Such warnings were generally ignored.

Recent developments after the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) show that these warnings were prescient. Most recently, it was announced that one of the Royal Regiment's regular battalions – the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders – will be reduced to company strength and dedicated to public duties in Scotland, with possibly another – the 4<sup>th</sup>, the Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordons and Camerons) – also under threat at a later date. These changes, if implemented in full, would leave the Royal Regiment of Scotland with only three regular infantry battalions in the near future. Scotland's only remaining regular cavalry regiment, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, stationed at time of writing in Bad Fallingbommel, Germany, appears safe for the time being – but rumours of a future amalgamation with the Queen's Dragoon Guards persist. Add to this the disbandment of 40 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (the Lowland Gunners) in April 2012 and it becomes apparent that Scotland no longer possesses the army riches it once boasted. The SDSR's longer-term plan is for the British Army to be reorganised into

multi-role brigades, one of which is to be stationed in Scotland, and that is what Scotland will have within its territory come independence.

The Scots Guards pose a different question. Historically a two-battalion regiment, with a tradition stretching back to 1642 when it was first raised by Archibald, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Argyll, it has spent much of its recent history in and around London and the southeast of England. From here it has taken its fair share of ceremonial duties interspersed with operational tours alongside its sister regiments in the Brigade of Guards. The Scots Guards were last permanently stationed in Scotland at Redford Infantry Barracks in 1994. Before that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was stationed in Edinburgh in 1971–74 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion also in Edinburgh in the 1960s. Notwithstanding that the Scots Guards are clearly a Scottish unit, with home headquarters in Edinburgh Castle and recruitment throughout Scotland (and the Scottish diaspora further afield), their longstanding integration as part of the Brigade of Guards raises questions about whether they might ever form part of the Scottish Army (SA). The answer, of course, is the same with all other Scottish units within the British Army: they should be asked whether they want to join the new Scottish Army, although ultimately the decision would be a political one between governments. Furthermore, should the Scots Guards choose to stay as part of the British Army in part or in full, there would be no impediment to an independent Scotland raising its own guards unit from scratch if it so chose. However, for the purposes here the assumption is that they will remain part of the British Army, which appears to be the most likely outcome.

Against that background, it is important to consider what an independent Scotland would need in the SA to fulfil the roles allocated to it. Again, one must take an educated guess at the possible requirement, particularly as there is currently no statement of an independent Scotland's foreign policy in any sort of detail to help. However, it is possible to make some suggestions in its absence. Let us assume that the government of independent Scotland would wish to have at least the option of committing Scottish regular troops to overseas expeditions, generally as part of a coalition or alliance. At the same time, these regular troops would provide the backbone of land forces to carry out military duties at home. This suggests a brigade-sized force, three combat battalions plus supporting arms, allowing it to deploy and sustain itself in a combat zone.

Additional troops for internal duties, plus back-up for deployed regular troops, might be provided by a Territorial Army (TA) brigade, again comprising three battalions – but this time including part-time soldiers – plus supporting arms, which might also be part-time volunteer units. These two brigades,<sup>20</sup> plus supporting service and logistic units and headquarters and administrative resources, point to an SA which might have a strength of around 10,000

to 12,500 personnel all told, dependent on detailed organisation and equipment. What units and battalions might constitute these brigades remains a matter for conjecture, but there would appear to be no reason why the six battalions might not be formed by the restoration of at least some of the traditional Scottish regiments which were disbanded in 2004. This is an understandably emotive topic in some circles and the decision is likely to be as much political as military. As a matter of record, both the SNP and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party have pledged to restore these historical Scottish regiments.

### **Organisation**

The organisation of the British Army in Scotland is in the process of change at the time of writing. The senior army headquarters in Scotland, HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, was the successor formation to Army Headquarters Scotland at Craigiehall, since 2000. HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Division itself disbanded in April 2012, but retained the post of General Officer Commanding (GOC) Scotland and a small staff to maintain the level of senior representation in Scotland required to oversee the post-SDSR rebasing changes. Ultimately, HQ 1<sup>st</sup> (UK) Armoured Division, currently based in Germany, is planned to relocate to Scotland by 2020 and will take over the GOC Scotland role, if indeed such moves ever happen.

Again, pending post-SDSR changes, there are still two army brigades in Scotland: 51<sup>st</sup> (Scottish) Brigade, part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Division and based in Stirling, with responsibilities essentially covering all TA units and tasks throughout Scotland (plus individual and occasional small formed unit TA contributions to overseas operations); and 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade, based in Edinburgh and until recently taking command of regular army units in Scotland and the northwest of England for operational deployments, being transferred to 3<sup>rd</sup> (UK) Division on 1 April 2007. However, it was only used once operationally for a deployment to Afghanistan in 2007–08 and has since reverted to focusing on more regional tasks.

The picture is further complicated by plans to base one of the UK's multi-role brigades in Scotland after the SDSR changes are fully implemented. This suggests only one brigade, or at least one operational brigade, stationed north of the border by 2020 and formed primarily by returning regular troops from Germany. It has been suggested, as previously mentioned, that Scotland's multi-role brigade might be based at the former RAF Leuchars air base in Fife, which would close as an air station under UK plans. Other plans, such as the building of a new 'superbarracks' at Kirknewton outside Edinburgh, seem to have been abandoned.

Be that as it may, the proposed organisation of the SA described previously might dovetail neatly with what already exists. An embryonic army

headquarters already exists in the shell of the former HQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, although it would need considerable enhancement and restructuring to exercise proper operational command of its formations and units. Both the 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigades, their pasts firmly entrenched in Scottish military history and tradition over two world wars, would form a suitable basis for the two brigades of the SA. As suggested previously, it might be appropriate for one of these brigades to be primarily a deployable brigade, with the other dedicated to home duties and military assistance to the civilian authorities, but no preference as to which would do what is expressed here. Perhaps both could be rotated through the different roles over an agreed timescale.

### **Locations**

Where would the SA be located? The various headquarters locations, as previously described, would clearly not be right for an army with operational aspirations. The SA HQ could be reinstated at Craigiehall, but this lacks the prestige and image which the country might desire post independence. Perhaps Edinburgh Castle might be more appropriate, but accommodation and communications problems might dictate only a symbolic presence there, with the bulk of the headquarters functions carried out at a site or sites close to the seat of government. The negative impact of separated locations might well be mitigated by modern communications technology. However, it seems pretty clear that both brigade locations would have to move to take on a proper operational role. There are a number of options here, including use or joint use of former RAF sites such as Leuchars, and perhaps the practicality of having one of the brigades located in the west of Scotland should be explored further, thereby redressing the current east-west imbalance in army locations.

Regimental and battalion locations present a slightly different problem. Currently there are five main barracks in use in Scotland – Kinloss until July 2012, Fort George near Inverness, Dreghorn and Redford Infantry Barracks in Edinburgh, and Glencorse at Penicuik in Midlothian. These house an engineer regiment, three infantry battalions and the infantry training depot between them. The requirement for the SA model presented here, however, would be greater than this, and other locations would have to be identified and developed. Some redundant and underused barracks spring to mind – Redford Cavalry Barracks in Edinburgh, Cameron Barracks in Inverness, and Gordon Barracks in Bridge of Don near Aberdeen. All of these, and others like them, need varying amounts of money spent on them before occupation. Other existing sites offer possibilities: Benbecula is not everybody's ideal posting but could offer some accommodation, and there are other ex-RAF stations which might be adapted for army use in addition to Kinloss. Forthside near Stirling could host some logistic and support units, for example, and there are other possibilities elsewhere.



It therefore looks as if there are just enough barracks in Scotland to support the units suggested here for the SA. However, some expenditure would be required to make them fit for purpose in many cases. New-build barracks cannot be discounted, depending on the defence budget, with the range area at Dundrennan in Kirkcudbrightshire probably having room for a battalion-sized barracks, for example. In summary, although there are some problems with locations for all of the units of the SA, these would not appear to be insurmountable.

### **Equipment**

As with the Scottish Navy (SN) and Scottish Air Force (SAF), the SA is likely to be provided initially with equipment 'inherited' from the British Army on independence. It is unlikely, however, that the SA would need to equip itself at the heavy end of the war-fighting spectrum; there is no real case for main battle tanks or heavy artillery for an army with a regional focus and predicated on home defence, aid to the civilian authorities, and limited contribution to coalition military operations overseas. Thus Scotland's only remaining armoured regiment, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, would most likely find itself mounted on the Scimitar CVR(T) series of light tanks, initially at least, until replaced by something more modern. The Scimitar is now over forty years old and, whilst successive upgrades have prolonged its service life, it is now obsolescent. Whether its eventual replacement needs to be tracked or wheeled is a moot point and subject to further debate, but with so many vehicles now available on the international market there should be no shortage of options for an off-the-shelf purchase in due course.

Similar arguments apply to artillery and infantry fighting vehicles. As previously stated, the SA would probably not wish to take any of the heavy artillery currently in the British Army inventory, such as its 155mm guns or Multiple Launch Rocket System. Far better to take on something like the adaptable and proven 105mm light gun, a towed system with a flexibility more suited to the SA – it is air-portable, for example. Although relatively old – it was used in the Falklands War in 1982 – it has recently been upgraded and is still probably the most appropriate equipment for the gun batteries of the two SA brigades. The British Army has approximately 150 of them in its inventory so an appropriate 'share' could probably be negotiated for the SA.

One other important capability traditionally provided in the British Army by the Royal Artillery is low-level air-defence. Today this is provided by a combination of the Rapier surface-to-air missile system, which has been the UK's primary low-to-medium altitude anti-aircraft defence since 1977 and was recently, and famously, deployed as part of the anti-terrorism deterrent at the London Olympic Games. Rapier is due to be replaced in British Army service around 2020. It is complemented in British service by the shorter range Starstreak HVM surface-to-air missile system, which could also be

inherited by the SA on independence to complete its low-level air-defence inventory. Quite how these weapons systems might be organised in the SA is a matter for further discussion, but options include perhaps one battery in each artillery regiment equipped for this role, or alternatively a separate unit could be established and its assets allocated to formations as required.

The basic infantry equipment – rifles, mortars, anti-tank missiles – with which the infantry battalions of the SA might find themselves equipped at independence are likely to be perfectly adequate for probable operational tasks. Of all the arms and services of the British Army, the infantry is probably the best equipped, thanks in part at least to the long, infantry-dominated campaign in Afghanistan since 2001. It has a number of proven vehicles – the Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle, which has a utility across the conflict spectrum from peace support operations to general war; the wheeled Mastiff family; Warthog; Foxhound; and so on – which the SA might inherit and which are in general terms up-to-date equipment. Which vehicle might be appropriate for which formation or tasks would be subject to further analysis, but a fledgling SA would be pleased to have them.

There are many other aspects of the SA's possible equipment inventory which need further exploration and debate. Serious consideration needs to be given to such widely varying requirements as communications, helicopter support, engineering and logistics equipment, amongst others. These are all worthy of separate detailed discussions in their own right. Suffice to say, for the moment anyway, that it appears likely that the SA would be adequately equipped for most roles on initial establishment, providing the negotiations over its share of British Army equipment are fruitful. In the longer term, some of the inherited equipment might need upgrading and replacement. It is well known, though, that there are many defence manufacturers around the world competing in the market for defence equipment, and it would be surprising if the SA could not source its future equipment requirements adequately, assuming that the funds and political will are there.

### **Training**

The training facilities in Scotland for use by the SA present some problems. There is an abundance of training opportunities across the country for light forces to exercise in rugged and demanding terrain. Much use of this has been made in the past – by Commando units during the Second World War, for example – and many units of the British Army travel to Scotland to train. There are a number of suitable training areas and, traditionally, many sympathetic private landowners have allowed the military to use their land for this purpose. There are also ranges suitable for the firing of tanks, artillery and air defence weapons at places such as Kirkcudbright, Cape Wrath and Benbecula.

The main deficit lies in the total lack of a suitable training area for manoeuvring mechanised forces. Those who know Salisbury Plain or who have experienced the Soltau training area in northwest Germany in its heyday will be only too aware of the damage armoured, even lightly armoured, forces inevitably cause. There is no such training area in Scotland, although recently there has been some talk about setting one up in the Scottish Borders.<sup>21</sup> Any attempt to do such a thing would, unless done in times of national emergency or crisis, inevitably lead to a storm of protests from environmentalists and local inhabitants, and it appears that any planning is in abeyance at time of writing. Most suspect it will not be revived.

The obvious solution is, of course, to train the SA's mechanised forces outside Scotland. There is nothing revolutionary in such a proposal; the British Army still trains regularly in Alberta, Canada, at the British Army Training Unit Suffield, a semi-permanent arrangement which dates back to 1971 after Colonel Qadhafi closed down the British training areas in Libya. German tanks have trained and used the firing ranges at Castlemartin in Pembrokeshire since 1961. There is no reason, therefore, why the SA should not be able to make similar arrangements, perhaps reciprocating with other states which wish to avail themselves of training opportunities in Scotland. There would probably be a requirement for the SA to keep some sort of permanent presence wherever it carries out its mechanised training, rather like the Suffield arrangement, but this is manageable. The training of the SA's mechanised troops, therefore, is not a difficult problem.

### **The Scottish Special Forces**

As previously stated, there will always be a threat of terrorism in an independent Scotland, much as there is in every other state. The risk is low, but it is there nonetheless. Historically, there has been little evidence of terrorist activity in Scotland. Even the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie in December 1988 was not meant to happen there – the sophisticated barometric trigger device designed by the equally sophisticated bomb-maker worked exactly as expected, but the aircraft's flight plan was delayed. Instead of exploding in mid-Atlantic, it detonated over southern Scotland. Similarly, the much more recent gas-cylinder attack on Glasgow Airport in 2007 only happened because earlier failures in London persuaded the relatively unsophisticated terrorists to target Scotland at short notice instead.

Nonetheless, with huge investment in oil and gas rigs off Scotland's shores, which might prove attractive to terrorists intent on a 'spectacular' attack, there seems to be little option but to make contingency plans for their protection. Possible scenarios range from hostage-taking, deaths, massive ecological and environmental damage, through to less serious or half-hearted demonstrations which might escalate. In addition, of course,

there are similar risks and threats across the security spectrum which might happen anywhere across the country. Independent Scotland would be well advised to prepare for the worst of threats.

So, there will be a need for a well-trained and professional special-forces capability, probably based on an airfield or at a port – or preferably at or near both – and ideally in the northeast within easier travelling distance of the rigs. It will have to be ready at a moment's notice to take on the worst-case scenarios, probably instigated by highly educated and determined terrorists who may be prepared to lose their lives for whatever their cause or grievance might be. One should expect potential attackers also to have done their homework.

To counter this uncertain threat the Scottish special forces (SSF), it is estimated, would need to recruit and train, and thereafter maintain, at least a squadron's worth (seventy-five-plus strong) of carefully selected individuals who will be, to all intents and purposes, at a constant state of operational readiness. Recruitment will be challenging, and may be a longer-term process than some might wish. It is likely that some Scots serving in the British Special Air Service and Special Boat Service might wish to transfer to the Scottish special forces, but it is thought that this number would be unlikely to be more than a handful. Accordingly, recruits would need to be sourced from across all three services and probably from elsewhere as well; for example, police firearms officers. All would need intensive training in joint operations with the SDF and civilian agencies, and to have in place operational plans for every conceivable threat scenario. It is estimated that the establishment of the SSF might take three years or possibly more after independence is achieved.<sup>22</sup>

## V. Cyber-Warfare and Intelligence-Gathering

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**N**O modern discussion on the role, functions and organisation of independent Scotland's armed services can be complete without consideration of cyber-warfare and cyber-defence. Various definitions exist of cyber-warfare, seen by some as an extension of information warfare, but they generally mean an attack on IT networks and infrastructure to either degrade, sabotage or otherwise damage their functioning. The threat spectrum ranges from illicit espionage and information-gathering through to outright destruction.

Perhaps the best-known example of cyber-attack is the Stuxnet worm, thought to specifically target the Iranian nuclear-enrichment facility at Natanz. The worm is said to have been the most advanced piece of malware ever discovered and significantly increased the profile of cyber-warfare.<sup>23</sup>

In the UK, the National Cyber Security Programme was announced as part of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in October 2010. It is planned that a number of government departments will work with industry and universities in order to reduce vulnerability to cyber-espionage, improve ability to detect and defend against cyber-attack, incorporate cyber into mainstream defence concepts and doctrine and ensure that the UK's critical infrastructure, vital government networks and services are resilient to attack. The programme will be delivered by a new 'joint cyber unit' based at Corsham and also at GCHQ near Cheltenham. Between these two sites Britain will develop new techniques, tactics and plans to deliver military effects through operations in cyberspace. In addition, of course, GCHQ's main function is to provide intelligence in the form of signals intelligence (sigint) and information assurance to both the Westminster government and the UK armed forces.

An independent Scotland would need to access such resources in some form or other or face being left out in the cold. GCHQ's buildings at Cheltenham, developed under a private finance initiative, will cost in excess of £1.5 billion at end of contract,<sup>24</sup> and this did not include the costs of transferring equipment, which have ballooned to nearly £500 million. On top of these come the annual running costs, estimated to be in excess of £200 million annually. Clearly, these are at a level where independent Scotland would find it financially crippling to attempt to replicate them in whole or, much more likely, even in part.

Accordingly, it would seem likely that, in the early years of independence at least, Scotland would need to come to some arrangement with the rUK to supply the appropriate level of access to GCHQ expertise. Quite how this might be arranged and for what return is more a political decision than a

military one, but without it the newly independent country would soon find itself at a distinct intelligence disadvantage. To be cut out of the 'Five Eyes' signal intelligence-sharing arrangement would seem to suit neither independent Scotland nor the rUK well, given the existing siting of resources north of the border.<sup>25</sup>

## VI. The Cost of Defending an Independent Scotland

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THERE is, for understandable reasons, limited information on the current defence costs incurred by Scotland. The most relevant set of figures available are those produced by the Scottish government as part of the wider Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) report.<sup>26</sup>

Challenges arising from a lack of data are compounded by a number of conceptual issues which have been outlined earlier in this report. How Scotland might defend itself cannot be examined in complete isolation from the other key areas of debate surrounding independence. For example, arrangements relating to the post-independence allocation of North Sea oil and gas assets will have important implications for both the resources available for defending Scotland and the resources needed to defend these offshore assets.

To date, the debate on the likely costs involved in defending an independent Scotland has focused on two approaches. The first approach is to assume the Scottish Defence Forces (SDF) would be similar in scale and scope to the defence capacity in other neighbouring countries such as Ireland, Denmark or Norway. The second approach has attempted to allocate a proportional share of the UK's current personnel and equipment.

Both of these approaches are limited. Whilst there may be similarities in geography and culture between Scotland, Ireland, Denmark and Norway, their defence policies and the outcomes being sought and supported by their defence forces are markedly different. An effective and efficient approach to securing outcomes in Norway may not be appropriate for an independent Scotland.

Similarly, focusing exclusively on what Scotland might inherit from the UK does not take into account the long-term defence needs of an independent Scotland. This approach often assumes an initial allocation of resources to Scotland, or that a share of Scotland's economy will be spent on defence. Without due regard to need, this approach risks the misallocation of assets, either squandering valuable resources better used elsewhere, or creating gaps in defence and undue risk to Scotland and its interests.

This report has taken the approach of first considering the defence needs of Scotland and then describing the likely armed forces required to meet those needs. The costs of operating and maintaining the personnel and equipment are therefore a product of the assessment of defence needs. This allows an estimate of how much it may cost to defend an independent Scotland, and the likely burden which would be placed on the state.

Given the focus on an assessment of defence needs, the most important assumptions are outlined in the earlier sections of this report, which provides, to the best knowledge of the authors, the only comprehensive attempt to describe the scale and scope of the armed forces needed to defend an independent Scotland. However, there are still significant areas of uncertainty; for example, at the time of writing, it is still unclear whether an independent Scotland would seek membership of NATO. There are also practical issues including how the SDF in general, and the Scottish Army in particular, might be organised, equipped and trained.

In the light of these significant areas of uncertainty, single point estimates are less useful. A more useful measure is the likely share of the economy accounted for by the defence needs of an independent Scotland. This measure will allow the following questions to be answered: what is the likely burden of defence on the economy of an independent Scotland? Is this burden likely to be higher or lower compared to the current share? What factors are likely to be more important in influencing costs?

#### **Current Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland**

The GERS report is based on resources that benefit Scotland, but are not necessarily based in Scotland. There are drawbacks in measuring spending in this way, but it allows an initial reference point for defence costs. The GERS report makes specific mention of the treatment of defence costs as follows:<sup>27</sup>

For example, with respect to defence expenditure, as the service provided is a national 'public good', the methodology operates on the premise that the entire UK population benefits from the provision of a national defence service. Accordingly, under the methodology, national defence expenditure is apportioned across the UK on a per capita basis.

The headline figures from GERS are the sole source for measuring the deficit or surplus in public-sector finances compared with the UK. Referencing the GERS report is therefore useful in linking defence costs to the overall fiscal position of an independent Scotland. The defence costs shown in the GERS report for both Scotland and the UK do not reflect the significant investment associated with the UK's nuclear deterrent. This does not pose significant difficulties as this report assumes that there would be no place for nuclear weapons in an independent Scotland.

Table 1 shows current Scottish defence expenditure to be nearly £3.3 billion during the financial year 2010–11. Defence spending has averaged around 2.2 per cent of Scotland's economy and 5.1 per cent of overall government spending over the last five years for which data is available.



**Table 1:** Scottish Defence Expenditure (£ millions), 2006/07–2010/11.

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Defence	£2,721	£2,838	£3,094	£3,169	£3,277
Total spend	£52,810	£55,969	£58,866	£62,025	£63,807
Share	5.2%	5.1%	5.3%	5.1%	5.1%
GDP	£127,141	£140,239	£141,824	£132,244	£144,820
Share	2.1%	2.0%	2.2%	2.4%	2.3%

Source: *Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland 2010–2011*.

Table 2 shows the amount of defence expenditure that has been identified and measured within Scotland. The identifiable expenditure relates mainly to defence planning by civic organisations, including local government, in case of emergencies. Less than 1 per cent of the defence spending is identifiable and the vast majority is allocated on a per capita basis with Scotland accounting for 8.4 per cent of the UK population.

**Table 2:** Identifiable and Non-Identifiable Scottish Defence Expenditure (£ millions), 2006/07–2010/11.

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
<b>Identifiable</b>	<b>£7</b>	<b>£7</b>	<b>£5</b>	<b>£9</b>	<b>£9</b>
Non-identifiable	£2,713	£2,831	£3,089	£3,160	£3,268
Total	£2,721	£2,838	£3,094	£3,169	£3,277
Total identifiable as proportion of expenditure					0.3%

Source: *Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland 2010–2011*.

The heavy reliance on per-capita estimates means there is limited information on the costs associated with operations based in Scotland. The GERS report contains separate data for operating expenditure and capital investment associated with defence: as these more detailed figures are based on per-capita assumptions, it is unclear whether they are of use to inform more detailed assessments of defence costs.

The likely costs of each of the three components of the SDF (navy, air force and army) are considered individually. Where possible, a number of measures are given to provide upper and lower estimates and consider the consistency of different measures.

All figures shown in this section are rounded to the nearest £10 million. The personnel figures relate to service personnel only as these figures were

developed as part of the assessment of defence needs. The costs of the civilian workforce needed to support service personnel are included within the overall costs outlined in this report (while civilian employment is not explored, it could involve several thousand posts).

This report does consider operating costs and capital costs (equipment, land and buildings), although it has discussed some of the short-term challenges in securing the vehicles, vessels, aircraft, bases and personnel needed to defend Scotland. It is likely that additional costs would be incurred over the short term as Scotland develops or acquires the assets needed to consolidate the SDF. Some of these short-term costs will be in addition to the long-term costs outlined in this section but, equally, capital investment in new equipment and assets may support ongoing operations for a number of decades.

An independent Scotland is unlikely to be able to purchase (and maintain) defence equipment on the same scale as the UK. Scotland may face increased supplier costs in purchasing and maintaining the equipment of its forces. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the penalty (if any) which Scotland may face in placing smaller equipment orders from defence suppliers and this has not been considered in this assessment.

### **Cost of the Scottish Navy**

The earlier assessment for the SN suggests its strength would lie somewhere between that of the Royal Danish Navy or Royal Norwegian Navy, with just over seventy ships, vessels and boats and approximately 3,500 personnel each, and the Naval Service of Ireland, which has eight vessels and 1,444 personnel. The SN would perhaps comprise between twenty and twenty-five vessels and approximately 1,500–2,000 personnel.

The latest UK Defence Statistics provide operating and capital costs for a number of different vessels.<sup>28</sup> The scope of the SN would be limited compared to the Royal Navy (RN) and therefore this report has assumed an average cost of £26 million per vessel per annum. The estimated cost per vessel is slightly lower than estimates for the RN and overall costs, based on an upper estimate of twenty-five vessels, are likely to be around £650 million.

Estimates based on probable personnel figures are more conservative. Based on the upper estimate of 2,000 personnel, the SN costs are likely to be around £440 million per annum. The costs per personnel were calculated from overall operating and capital costs (based on GERS data) per full-time equivalent personnel numbers (based on UK Defence Statistics data). It is likely that most SN personnel would be in full-time posts and all personnel are assumed to be full-time for the upper estimate.

If the number of SN personnel fell between the Danish and Norwegian navies and that of Ireland, then the SN would consist of around 2,500 personnel (the mid-point between 3,500 and 1,444 personnel). Following the same approach used above, the SN with 2,500 personnel would cost around £550 million per annum. These personnel-based estimates are likely to understate the costs as the SN (as described in this report) would probably be the most capital-intensive component of the SDF. The upper estimate of £650 million, based on vessels, was therefore chosen as the most accurate measure of costs.

#### **Cost of the Scottish Air Force**

The assessment of defence needs suggests that the SAF might consist of around sixty aircraft and comprise some 1,750–2,250 personnel. The aircraft described in the earlier assessment are modest in comparison to the aircraft that currently comprise the RAF.

The latest UK Defence Statistics provide operating and capital costs for a number of different aircraft. Given the more limited scope of the SAF, an average cost of £5 million per aircraft per annum has been assumed. This suggests overall costs of around £300 million per annum based on a sixty-aircraft air force.

Estimates based on likely personnel figures are similar. Based on the upper estimate of 2,250 personnel, the SAF costs are projected to be around £370 million per annum. The costs per personnel were calculated from overall operating and capital costs (based on GERS data) per full-time equivalent personnel numbers (based on UK Defence Statistics data). It is likely that some personnel will be in part-time posts and it assumed that the full-time equivalent personnel will be around 75 per cent of the 2,250 personnel cited earlier in this report.

#### **Cost of the Scottish Army**

The assessment of needs suggests the SA would comprise 10,000–12,500 personnel dependent on detailed organisation and equipment. This component of the SDF will rely more heavily on personnel in part-time posts and it is assumed that the full-time equivalent personnel will be around 75 per cent of this cited level. This is a generous assumption, producing higher costs, as personnel in Territorial Army (TA) posts may account for around 20 per cent of a full-time post.

The latest UK Defence Statistics suggest the cost for a full-time equivalent serviceperson is around £50,000 per annum. Based on the upper estimate, the personnel costs associated with the SA would be around £420 million per annum. There is a wide range of options as to how the SA might be equipped and trained, and it is difficult to provide even a broad estimate of costs.

However, it is unlikely that the cost of supporting and equipping the SA would exceed direct personnel costs. This is a reasonable assumption given the more modest foreign-policy ambitions which an independent Scotland might pursue. As a broad estimate, the likely operational support and capital costs are assumed to be equal to direct personnel costs of £420 million per annum.

### Summary of Costs of the Scottish Defence Forces

Table 3 provides a summary of the likely costs associated with the SDF required to defend an independent Scotland. The upper estimate of costs is around £1.8 billion and the lower estimate £1.6 billion. Given the capital-intensive nature of the SN, the upper estimate seems a more plausible figure than the lower estimate.

**Table 3:** Scottish Defence Forces, Summary of Likely Costs (£ millions).

Component	Upper Estimate	Lower Estimate
Navy	£650	£440
Air force	£370	£300
Army	£820	£820
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,840</b>	<b>£1,560</b>

Overall defence spending of around £1,840 million per annum would account for approximately 1.3 per cent of Scotland's GDP, with the lower estimate being around 1.1 per cent. Table 4 (on the next page) shows defence spending as a share of Scotland's economy compared with selected other European countries, as per figures given by Eurostat for the year 2010.

The costs will be significantly influenced by how the SA is supported and equipped. If a more ambitious foreign policy is developed beyond the scope of that outlined in this study, the costs associated with the SDF would rise accordingly.

Based on these figures, the projected burden of defence on the economy of an independent Scotland would probably be lower in comparison with other European countries. The burden is also likely to be markedly lower than the current costs assigned to the notional Scottish exchequer, with the costs of defending an independent Scotland around £1.5 billion less than the costs currently allocated to Scotland as part of the UK.

### Comparisons with Other Scottish Defence Models

There is surprisingly little published elsewhere that looks at the idea of an independent Scottish defence structure, although there may be much more in private sources that is not generally available. Less surprising, perhaps, is

**Table 4:** Defence Spending, Percentage of GDP, 2010.

UK	2.7
Greece	2.2
France	2.1
Finland	1.6
Europe	1.6
Norway	1.5
Denmark	1.4
Scotland	1.3
Germany	1.1
Ireland	0.5

*Source: Eurostat, General Government Expenditure by Function.*

that one of the other models has been produced by the SNP. The previous iteration of this analysis in 1997 made the comparison with the SNP's 1996 defence consultative paper, 'The Defence of an Independent Scotland', which set out in some detail how that party might organise its defence forces if it were to form the government of an independent Scotland. This document, which seems to have been updated again in 2002, has now been superseded by the 'SNP Defence Policy Update', which was announced by SNP Defence Spokesman Angus Robertson MP on 16 July 2012.<sup>29</sup>

This policy update is to be debated by delegates attending the SNP Annual Conference in October 2012 so, technically, it is not yet party policy; however, it does clearly indicate where the party hierarchy is heading in terms of its defence policy. Compared to the 1996 paper it is light on detail, and much of the debate centres around NATO and the proposed shift in party policy to henceforth accept that independent Scotland can be part of that organisation whilst negotiating for the removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland. Whether the party will accept that remains, at time of writing, to be seen.

The policy update acknowledges that conventional military threats to Scotland are low, but that it remains important to 'maintain appropriate security and defence arrangements and capabilities', including cyber-security and an intelligence infrastructure. It also talks about national responsibilities complementing those of Scotland's northern European neighbours in terms of current and future defence and security responsibilities. It states that an independent Scottish government led by the SNP – which cannot be assumed, of course – will 'commit to an annual defence and security budget

of £2.5 billion.... Nearly £1 billion less than Scottish taxpayers currently contribute to UK defence spending.<sup>30</sup>

It postulates that the Scottish armed forces will comprise 15,000 regular and 5,000 reserve personnel and be commanded from a Joint Forces Headquarters located at Faslane naval base. They will be 'focused on territorial defence, aid to the civil power, and also support for the international community'. Whilst the paper does not, as yet, go into numbers, it states that Faslane will be Scotland's main naval facility, the army will occupy all current British Army bases in Scotland, and the air force will operate from Lossiemouth and Leuchars. Units of all three services will 'initially be equipped with Scotland's share of current assets including ocean going vessels, fast jets for domestic air patrol duties, transport aircraft and helicopters as well as army vehicles, artillery and air defence systems'. Furthermore, it proposes an industrial strategy and procurement policy to fill capability gaps and satisfy future requirements.

The other model of independent Scottish defence to be considered is that provided by Malcolm Chalmers.<sup>31</sup> His *Scotsman* article of April 2012 covers much of the ground previously discussed here, with special reference to an independent Scotland's relationship with NATO and the likely security threats it might face, noting that 'many military capabilities currently possessed by the UK are ones that an independent Scotland would have no desire, or need, to possess'. He also notes that the most serious future threats an independent Scotland is likely to face are 'probably those connected with cyber-crime and cyber-espionage', but that there would also be other threats, 'including terrorism and organised crime'.

Chalmers also points out, rightly, that an independent Scotland would be likely to incur significant one-off set-up costs as it formed its armed forces, although presumably there would be an offset as some items would be traded for 'value' rather than the physical assets being transferred. He suggests that a Scottish defence budget of around £1.7–£2.1 billion (at 2010 prices) might be realistic, approximately 1.45 per cent of GDP and comparable with other small European states like Denmark and Norway, although its actual budget in monetary terms would fall well below theirs, at £2.8 billion and £4.2 billion respectively.

What would Scotland get for its budget? Chalmers does not go into great detail, but states that 'an independent Scotland would be capable of maintaining small, but capable, armed forces. And, in time, these forces could make a useful contribution to international efforts to support peace and security.' The suggestion is that a Scottish Navy would carry out all of the maritime tasks defined previously in this report and contribute to collective security in the region. The army, he states, would not be a priority, and in

any case might well be, initially at least, very dependent on other nations for transport, resupply and logistic support. However, the Scottish Air Force might have an important part to play because of the 'inherent flexibility' of airpower, although Chalmers says there are likely to be severe limits on Scotland's ability to buy or maintain high-end aircraft.

What is most interesting about the three models compared here – the one outlined in this Whitehall Report, the updated SNP policy, and that of Chalmers – is that they have all been produced independently and yet there is more in common than in difference. Despite differences in the detail, where it exists, a broad consensus emerges: that an independent Scottish defence budget would be in the ballpark of £1.8–£2.5 billion per annum; that Scottish defence forces would be relatively modest and probably have a regional, rather than global, focus; that they would not be equipped with expensive and state-of-the-art hardware across the board; and that they would be predominantly used for domestic defence duties with the capability to contribute to coalition and alliance operations under the aegis of whatever organisations Scotland became a member of. Above all else, this gives a certain assurance that what is suggested here is reasonable and not far from the mark in current circumstances.

## VII. Conclusions

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WHEN all is said and done, there are three basic questions which have to be asked about the armed forces of an independent Scotland: whether they are necessary, whether they are feasible and, finally, whether they are affordable. Taking these one at a time, the question of *necessity* seems fairly straightforward; only the foolhardy would adopt a position of unarmed neutrality and trust in a lack of aggression and political ambition in others towards a defenceless state. To reiterate, armed forces are required to ensure the survival of the state against internal and external enemies and to promote and safeguard its national interests abroad. Armed forces are also a badge of statehood and a statement of sovereignty and political independence that can be recognised worldwide. In essence, the Scottish Defence Forces (SDF) would be independent Scotland's final resort when debate and diplomacy had failed. Not to have armed forces at all could be seen as a sign of weakness and lack of resolve and would mean Scotland could contribute nothing militarily to any coalitions and alliances to which it may choose to belong.

Establishing the SDF would also be feasible, given the resources available to an independent Scotland. In recent history, Scotland has provided more than its share of manpower (and womanpower) to all three British armed forces – roughly 13 per cent of the regular army, possibly 14 per cent of the RAF, and 10 per cent of the Royal Navy – suggesting that there should not be any problems with numbers of personnel. Whether those Scots currently serving in the British armed services would wish to transfer to the SDF is another question altogether but if, for example, pay and conditions in the SDF were significantly more attractive, or if a bounty or one-off inducement was payable, then it seems likely that many would. In terms of military equipment, Scotland can argue that it has paid its share towards the British armed services' inventory and therefore should be able to negotiate most of what it needs, initially at least, from there.

The SDF would also seem to be well provided for in terms of bases and locations. There is a choice for headquarters' locations, plus possible air bases at Lossiemouth and Leuchars, with the option of using civilian airports, too, as per the continental model. There would also appear to be ample existing or potential naval bases, with Faslane and Rosyth being obvious locations for the Scottish Navy (SN). Perhaps the Scottish Army (SA) faces rather more of a problem than the other two services, for clearly some considerable capital expenditure is required to upgrade, modernise, and in some cases rebuild Scotland's existing army bases. The training requirements of many aspects of the SDF as a whole – officer training being the obvious example – pose some problems, too. Training abroad would seem to be the immediate solution,



but Scotland may find it best to develop indigenous training facilities for those it lacks, and those will come at a price.

As for whether an independent Scotland can afford its own armed forces, the answer seems to be an unequivocal yes – provided, of course, that a comparatively modest defence policy is chosen. The model presented here indicates an annual defence budget of £1.6–£1.8 billion, which represents some 1.3 per cent of an independent Scotland's estimated GDP. This compares to the £2.5 billion of the current SNP model and the £1.7–£2.1 billion estimate by Malcolm Chalmers, so there is a broad agreement on the ballpark figures amongst those who have, so far, dared to make an estimate. Whichever of these three figures may be the closest, they are all considerably less than current Scottish defence expenditure of nearly £3.3 billion during the financial year 2010–11. The potential saving offers up a number of options for enhancing the SDF or, indeed, spending the funds elsewhere. This will be, obviously, a political decision for the government of the day.

In the final analysis, of course, the circumstances in which the SDF of an independent Scotland would be established depend on a number of external factors. Obviously, the most important of these is bound to be the result of the referendum on Scottish independence which is expected in the autumn of 2014, followed by the Scottish parliamentary election in May 2016. Even if Scotland were to return a solid yes vote to independence (which at time of writing seems increasingly unlikely), there is no guarantee that the SNP, the champions of Scottish independence, would be returned as the Scottish government in May 2016. If Scotland votes for independence in 2014, then all parties contesting the 2016 election will have to, for the first time, include defence in their election manifestos, and it may be that something very different from the model discussed here will result.

However, there seems to be little doubt that should the government of an independent Scotland, of any political hue, have the political will to establish an SDF along the lines described herein, then it can certainly be done. An SDF would be necessary, feasible and affordable. Scotland can have its SDF if it chooses to do so, although the embryonic Scottish military establishment would no doubt have to fight its corner energetically for a proper share of government funding against all the other demands of national administration. Nevertheless, it can be done, of that there is no doubt. Fittingly, it is now up to the Scottish electorate to decide.

## Notes and References

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1. HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)*, Cm 7948 (London: The Stationery Office, 2010).
2. David Chuter, 'What Are Armies For?', in *Brassey's Defence Yearbook 1996* (London: Brassey's, 1996), pp. 415–24.
3. Northern Ireland (Ulster) and the Falkland Islands being two obvious examples.
4. SNP policy has long been to negotiate its way out of NATO because it is 'nuclear led', although this looks likely to change at their autumn party conference in October 2012.
5. *BBC News*, 'Independent Scotland could join Nato, says SNP's Angus Robertson', 17 July 2012.
6. Or possibly the Royal Scottish Navy and the like, if the UK monarch remains head of state.
7. Unification of the Canadian Forces took place in 1968, when the Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Air Force were merged to form the Canadian Armed Forces. The change was effectively reversed in 2011 and the armed services reverted to their original titles.
8. Although much of the information remains classified, it is inconceivable that the UK could use its nuclear weaponry without US approval, plus it is unclear, post Cold War, who or what it is meant to deter.
9. See Malcolm Chalmers, 'Scottish Independence: From Darien to Faslane', *The Scotsman*, 8 April 2012.
10. Scotland already has the three fishery-protection vessels operated by Marine Scotland.
11. The Norwegian Navy is currently re-equipping with the *Skjold*-class fast patrol boats, which might be an attractive option for Scotland. These are designed specifically for maritime security and safety missions in littoral waters and are armed with eight anti-ship missiles and a 76mm gun.
12. Edward M Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815–1914* (London: Longman, 1980).
13. 6 Sqn RAF as at April 2012.
14. It has been noted that the RAF Hawk aircraft carry no target acquisition radar and are accordingly of limited use as interceptors. They could, of course, be upgraded with radar, or in time replaced by a more capable aircraft like the F-16. However, if an independent Scotland remains within NATO, then air defence may become a multi-nation responsibility with the appropriate capabilities provided by other nations.
15. HM Government, *The National Asset Registry*, Cm 7022 (London: The Stationery Office, 2007).
16. For comparison purposes, the Royal Danish Air Force has an inventory of approximately 120 aircraft, including thirty F-16 Fighting Falcons but only four C-130J Hercules. Ireland's Air Corps operates twenty-four of various types.
17. Spiers, *The Army and Society*.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.
19. In order of precedence, the Royal Scots, the Royal Highland Fusiliers, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the Black Watch, the Highlanders, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.
20. These have been portrayed here as one regular and one TA brigade, but could equally be organised as two mixed regular/TA brigades.
21. Stuart Crawford, 'Could MoD Reorganisation Lead to a Caledonian Salisbury Plain?', *Caledonian Mercury*, 29 June 2011.
22. The authors are grateful to Clive Fairweather for access to his notes on which this section is largely based.
23. See, for instance, David Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Crown, 2012).
24. *Guardian data blog*, 'PFI contracts: The full list', <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/jul/05/pfi-contracts-list>>, accessed 9 October 2012.
25. The agreement established an alliance of five English-speaking countries – the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – for the purpose of sharing intelligence, especially sigint.
26. The Scottish Government, *Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland 2010–2011* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, 2012).
27. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
28. Defence Analytical Services and Advice, 'UK Defence Statistics 2011', Ministry of Defence, September 2011.
29. The announcement and further information are available on the website of the Moray SNP, <<http://www.moraysnp.org/2012/07/snp-defence-policy-update.html>>, accessed 11 October 2012.
30. Representing, according to the SNP, 1.7 per cent of total Scottish GDP, which is the average level of defence spending amongst European NATO member states.
31. Chalmers, 'Scottish Independence'.

## About the Authors

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Stuart Crawford was a regular officer in the Royal Tank Regiment for 20 years, retiring in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1999. During his military career he attended both the British and US staff colleges and undertook a Defence Fellowship at Glasgow University. He now works as a political, media, and defence and security consultant in Edinburgh and is a regular commentator on military and defence topics in the print and broadcast media.

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