UK MILITARY SPENDING : Making sense of the numbers

The Ministry of Defence publishes figures annually for UK audiences in 'Defence in numbers': £36.6 billion in 2017-18.

However, the UK reports markedly higher military spending figures to NATO – £45.2bn for 2018. These include a number of other elements such as military pensions and funds provided for UN peacekeeping – in compliance with NATO reporting standards.

Sources:

* MOD (2018). UK defence in numbers 2018.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-defence-in-numbers-2018

* NATO (2019). Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019).

<https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191129_pr-2019-123-en.pdf>

A recent from Campaign Against the Arms Trade has a good explanation of the different ways that the UK reports its military spending figures:

* CAAT (2020). Fighting the wrong battles.

https:// www.caat.org.uk/resources/publications/government/fighting-the-wrong-battles-feb2020.pd

The MOD budget for 2019/20 is now £40.2 billion, which would be a 4.5% increase in real terms.

Other items that have been added more recently include:

• payments for pensions of retired MOD civilian personnel

• war pensions

• the UK’s contribution to the cost of UN peacekeeping operations

• military spending funded by MOD income (as opposed to allocations from the Treasury)

• some intelligence spending

Full explanation: pp. 36-38 in the CAAT report.

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Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reports these numbers for UK Military expenditure:

2017: £36.210 bn = $46.883

2018: £37.478.25 bn = $ 49.997

2019: ‘about the same’

Explained here: <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex/sources-and-methods#definition-of-military-expenditure>

SIPRI includes: all current and capital expenditure on:

(a) the armed forces, including peacekeeping forces;

(b) defence ministries and other government agencies engaged in defence projects;

(c) paramilitary forces, when judged to be trained and equipped for military operations; and

(d) military space activities...etc

And excludes: Civil defence and current expenditures on previous military activities, such as veterans' benefits [ie pensions ], demobilization, conversion and weapon destruction.

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Further references:

Institute for Strategic Studies: Top 15 Defence Budgets 2019[4] NB Budget not actual

https://www.iiss.org/-/media/images/comment/military-balance-blog/2020/02/new-defence-budgets-and-expenditure-2019.jpg?h=586&la=en&mw=865&w=865&hash=FFC0A4DBDC2F9F9DF53D890823D6F0073CA75ABF

Here the United Kingdom military expenditure, including military pensions is listed as

$54.8 billion (Equivalent to approx. £45 billion) per year.

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**Overall**, Europe’s defence spending in 2019 rose by 4.2% compared with 2018.

These increases in Europe are part of an international trend. Global defence spending rose by 4.0% in real terms compared to 2018

In 2019, defence spending by both China and the US rose by 6.6%

The US increase alone – at US$53.4bn – almost equalled the UK’s entire 2019 defence budget of US$54.8bn.