

Government must scrap its compromises over EU military schemes

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Since the Brexit vote, the UK has given a green light to the juggernaut of EU military schemes on the understanding we would be outside of them.

However, government position papers incredibly propose STAYING IN joint EU schemes on military finance, research and assets.

The schemes, which have never been voted on by MPs, would mean the UK staying in EU Common Defence Policy, the European Defence Agency and even EU defence procurement directives. Norway is the only non-EU country in the schemes and was obliged to accept these rules.

The PM has rightly declared the UK's unconditional commitment to Europe's defence via NATO.

However, we fear that MPs and ministers are not aware of the full implications of a Norway-style military union agreement. Many civil servants are aware of these implications and are pushing for UK entry relentlessly.

At the same time as these new EU military finance and structure schemes are being agreed, the EU is growing the remit of its Common Security and Defence Policy in a way that consolidates its control over EU Council-agreed military responses. The EU's new military HQ, the MPCC, which UK diplomats tried in vain to change, is just a small part of this.

The EU is also tightening defence asset production rules to make an EU defence market in which member state governments will find it impossible to protect domestic defence jobs and industry eg Scottish shipyards in the UK's case.

Sadly, the Government's National Shipbuilding Strategy of September 2017 fully adheres to the latest EU rules in cross-border defence tendering – clearly anticipating a future where the UK would need to comply.

It is essential that at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester delegates are made aware of the risk to Scottish shipyards, particularly Ruth Davidson and her Scottish Conservatives team. The UK is heading towards a scenario where it is dictated by these EU procurement rules which will only become more assertive when the UK is fully committed to them.