

Veterans for Britain report: Chequers sacrifices British control over Armed Forces

A new briefing paper by Veterans for Britain has exposed the extent to which the government's Chequers plan will sacrifice British control over our own armed forces.

The paper, authored by Professor Gwythian Prins, Lt-Gen Jonathon Riley CB DSO and Maj-Gen Julian Thompson CB, reveals how the UK government is planning to sign away our defence autonomy to the EU in exchange for proposed trade arrangements.

In effect, the Withdrawal Agreement and proposed Defence Treaty would keep the UK under EU power permanently – even after the end of the 'transition period'.

As well as the loss of autonomy involved, this will also risk fatally compromising our Five Eyes Intelligence alliance, and especially our bilateral US-UK intelligence relationship.

The Chequers plan keeps the UK signed up to EU defence and weapons development budgets. Veterans for Britain's briefing paper reveals how the UK has reached such a perilous position, where we are close to giving away political control over large parts of defence decision-making to new EU structures. **UK ministers have signed up to this position *after and in spite of the referendum decision to leave the EU.*** Commitments handed over by ministers go beyond defence-industrial and into wider defence policy and even central financing.

Many other ex-commanders of British forces, as well as politicians and the former head of MI6 have raised their concerns about the contents of the paper.

A crucial intervention in *The Times* by ex-MI6 chief Sir Richard Dearlove plus military and academic figures, pointed out how the Cabinet Office Europe Unit, headed by Oliver Robbins, had shared information about the defence negotiating position with EU diplomats before these details and their consequences had been explained to MPs.

The situation is now urgent and approaching a crunch moment. It is essential that the completely unnecessary defence giveaways that Olly Robbins' Europe Unit and others within government have managed to shoehorn into the negotiation proposals are erased entirely.

The EU has no business being in defence or security at all. These should be either NATO or nation-to-nation matters. In accordance with the referendum result, our future defence relationship with European partners must be via NATO and nation-to-nation arrangements, rather than shackled to EU structures.