

James Cartlidge MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Defence
Member of Parliament for South Suffolk
House of Commons
(via email)

5 August 2026

Dear Mr Cartlidge,

Thank you for your letter of 3 June, which raised concerns about a post published on the official Wales Office account on X, which stated that the government has delivered a £270 billion increase in defence spending over the course of this Parliament.

You highlight that the outgoing Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer previously made a similar claim at a House of Commons Liaison Committee in March this year saying,

“We have already committed to 2.5% in 2027, and we will hit that. That means that, in this Parliament, we will spend £270 billion more on defence than we would otherwise have done.”¹

In investigating your concerns, the Office for Statistics Regulation also noted several media articles in June from The Independent², The Guardian³ and Sky News⁴, which reported:

“An MoD spokesman said the Government is providing a “generational increase” in defence spending, with an extra £270 billion across this Parliament.”

We agree that it is incorrect and misleading to describe the £270 billion as an increase in defence spending over the course of this Parliament, or to describe it as an extra £270 billion. The £270 billion represents the proposed overall spending on defence over the lifetime of the current Parliament, from 2025-26 to 2028-29.

As part of our investigation we spoke with the Wales Office, who acknowledged the original X post to which you refer. Wales Office has told us that the figure used was a mistake, and was amended as soon as it was noticed. On 5 June it posted⁵ instead “The UK government is investing £270 billion in defence over this Parliament to secure our national security”, which is a more accurate description of the proposed

¹ [Liaison Committee, Oral Evidence: Work of the Prime Minister, HC 1770](#), Hansard, 23 March 2026

² [Vow to increase defence spending to 3% ‘absolutely sacrosanct’ – Lammy](#), The Independent, 7 June 2026

³ [Delays to defence investment plan have damaged UK’s credibility, say MPs](#), The Guardian, 7 June 2026

⁴ [Defence spending plan delay has left the UK less safe and undermined its credibility](#), MPs say, Sky News, 7 June 2026

⁵ <https://x.com/WalesOffice/status/2062912380149944464>, 5 June 2026

spend. In addition, Wales Office has told us it has reviewed its press office lines in relation to this topic, and its quality assurance process for press lines, to ensure that this mistake is not replicated elsewhere.

We also raised this issue with the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Following our intervention, the MOD has taken steps to ensure that future communications use precise and consistent language when presenting defence spending figures. Statisticians at the MOD have told us that analysts have spoken about the misleading wording with their Communications colleagues, to ensure accurate communications on defence spending are used going forward. The MOD Communications team has in turn communicated this message to wider colleagues who have been working on the release of the Defence Investment Plan, to ensure that misleading lines are not used again.

We consider that the actions taken by Wales Office and MOD should reduce the risk of these misleading statements being used in future public debate. Please do contact us again if you see continued instances of misuse, or if you have other concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Young', with a stylized, cursive script.

Penny Young
Interim Chair