

British Army's Vehicle Upgrade Slowed by Cuts and Delays

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The British Army's plan to upgrade its combat vehicle fleet with advanced platforms such as Ajax, Boxer and Challenger 3 is faltering due to delayed deliveries, reduced numbers and concerns over declining combat strength, raising questions about its readiness.

The Army's effort to modernise its armoured vehicle fleet has slowed significantly. The Challenger 2 fleet, currently numbering 219, is set to be reduced to 148 upgraded Challenger 3 tanks by 2027, featuring a new 120mm smoothbore gun and improved protection, according to Ministry of Defence plans. UK Defence Journal readers have criticised the scrapping of 71 tanks, with some hulls reportedly beyond repair, leaving only three regular armoured regiments and the Royal Wessex Yeomanry to operate them, placing pressure on NATO commitments.

Ajax, intended to replace the Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) family, offers advanced reconnaissance capabilities with its 40mm case telescoped cannon. Only 128 of the planned 589 vehicles have been delivered, with full deployment not expected before 2029. The Household Cavalry Regiment's tests in Sweden's freezing winters showed Ajax's resilience, but the slow rollout frustrates. A commenter, "JOHN," decried the MoD's lack of urgency, pointing to Ukraine's rapid adaptation of civilian 4x4s for war.

Boxer, a wheeled armoured vehicle, is set to replace Warrior, Mastiff, Ridgeback and Wolfhound, with 623 units ordered and initial deliveries expected in 2025. Supporting infantry, artillery, and medical teams, Boxer's machine guns disappoint some, like "A British tom," who argue that replacing Warrior's 30mm cannon weakens firepower. Warrior, with 613 vehicles still in service, is being phased out, with some reassigned to reconnaissance roles following the retirement of the FV107 Scimitar.

Older vehicles such as Bulldog (744 units) and patrol vehicles including Mastiff, Ridgeback and Wolfhound remain in service, although their replacements are delayed. Jackal 2 (502 units) and Foxhound (395 units) are used by light forces, with a limited number of RWMIK Land Rovers still

operational. The Centre for Policy Studies has warned that shrinking fleets and delayed modernisation undermine the UK's deterrence capability, particularly as allies such as Poland invest heavily in armour. With Labour's defence review still underway, the Army's slow modernisation risks leaving Britain's forces understrength and overstretched.