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British Army to Retire SA80 Rifle by 2030 Under Project Grayburn

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The Ministry of Defence has announced plans to retire the **SA80**, the British Army's standard service rifle, by **2030**. Officially known as the L85, the SA80 has served as the primary infantry weapon for nearly four decades, seeing extensive use in conflicts ranging from the Gulf War to Afghanistan.

The decision marks the end of an era for one of Britain's most recognisable small arms. First introduced in the mid-1980s, the SA80 underwent several upgrades over its service life, including major modifications in the early 2000s aimed at improving reliability and performance in modern combat environments. Despite mixed reviews over the years, it has remained a cornerstone of the British Army's arsenal.

The Ministry of Defence has launched **Project Grayburn**, an initiative to select the next generation of small arms for the British military. This programme will involve a competitive evaluation process featuring weapons from leading international manufacturers. The final selection will determine the rifle that British forces will carry into the 2030s and beyond.

Project Grayburn is more than a simple replacement plan; it represents a strategic decision that could influence the United Kingdom's alignment with NATO standards on calibres, equipment compatibility, and operational doctrine. Sources within the defence sector have indicated that this decision will also have industrial implications, potentially affecting domestic defence manufacturing and international defence partnerships.

The retirement of the SA80 and the introduction of a new rifle aim to ensure that the British Army remains prepared for modern and future warfare requirements. The selected weapon

will need to meet strict standards of reliability, accuracy, and adaptability across diverse environments and mission types.

Defence officials have stated that the evaluation and testing process will continue over the next several years, with full implementation expected by 2030. During this period, British forces will continue to operate the upgraded SA80 until its phased withdrawal begins.

This transition reflects the Ministry of Defence's ongoing efforts to modernise the UK's armed forces, ensuring that frontline troops are equipped with state-of-the-art tools to meet evolving global security challenges.