

Former Army Chief Warns Britain Must Prepare for Russian Threat by 2030

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Britain must be ready for the possibility of war with Russia by the end of the decade, former Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Patrick Sanders, has warned. In a sobering assessment, he called for urgent investment in defence and civil resilience, stressing the United Kingdom (UK) is dangerously unprepared for a serious conflict.

In an interview with The Telegraph, General Sanders cautioned that if Russia scales back its war in Ukraine, it could regain sufficient military strength to threaten a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally by 2030. He argued that the UK must urgently rebuild its defence capabilities and civil preparedness, citing a “dangerous complacency” among policymakers. He pointed to countries like Finland, which has underground shelters for 4.5 million people, and Poland, which has drastically increased its military spending, as examples of the kind of planning Britain should adopt.

Sir Patrick expressed concern over the shrinking size of the British Army, stating that current troop levels are inadequate to withstand a conventional land war. He also noted the country’s air defences are “nowhere near” what would be needed to protect cities from drone or missile attacks. “We’ve hollowed out our capabilities for too long,” he said. “We have to make serious decisions now, by 2030 it may be too late.”

He also criticised the political reluctance to invest in civil defence infrastructure, such as bunkers and emergency communication systems. These projects have reportedly been sidelined due to cost concerns and low public interest, despite mounting evidence that the threat landscape is shifting rapidly. Sir Patrick said that failing to prepare for such contingencies would be “a dereliction of duty”.

The Labour government’s recent Strategic Defence Review (SDR), released earlier this summer, promised to increase defence spending to 2.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2027. However, General Sanders was sceptical, suggesting the plan lacks urgency and credible delivery timelines. He warned that without immediate and concrete

action; the UK risks strategic vulnerability during a period of heightened global instability.

From a centre-right viewpoint, this is a wake-up call. National security is not a secondary issue; it is the foundation of a sovereign, functioning state. In a volatile world, defence should not be treated as optional spending. It is time the government put strategy ahead of slogans and treated security as a national imperative.