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until
DEFENCE UK Government justifies defence review
" TH E [BRITISH] GOVERNMENT is
I firmly of the view that the
defence programme should continue
to be planned ahead over a ten-year
period in order to allow, among other
things, for the long timescale required to develop major weapon systems." The Government admits that, particu-larly in the short term, conditions may make it impossible to maintain an economic rate of growth similar to the potential increase in the gross national product (GNP) and may affect the re-sources available for defence. Uncer-tainties of this sort were behind the further £110 million expenditure cut for 1976-77 announced in the Budget.

This is part of the response of the UK Government to an Expenditure Committee report on the defence re-view proposals, now embodied in the 1975 Defence White Paper (Flight, March 27, page 526). The committee had suggested that the Labour Govern-ment's defence review was based on projections of economic growth which might prove optimistic and that un-qualified comparison of Britain's defence expenditure with that of Nato allies by referring to proportion of gross national product could be mis-leading.

Long-term planning requires the making of assumptions about the future growth of GNP at a constant pressure of demand, says the Govern-ment, and while such assumptions are inevitably tentative they are based on the best possible evidence available at the time. Defending its use of per-centage of GNP as a yardstick, the Government says that it is designed to indicate the burden of defence ex-penditure and is the best single readily available measure for this purpose. It has the advantage of relating defence expenditure with the totality of re-sources in national currency and there-fore avoids exchange-rate distortions. It is not, says the Government, de-signed to measure the military value of national defence efforts and was not used for this purpose.

The Expenditure Committee criti-cised in its report the philosophy of equipment procurement in UK and the high standards demanded by operational requirements. The Govern-ment believes that the only way to keep pace with the rate of techno-logical advance in the potential "threat" countries is to produce sys-tems capable of meeting foreseen re-quirements and with stretch potential which can be exploited later on. It cites the Buccaneer as an example (in spite of the fact that the RAF only ordered the aircraft a number of years after the RN had been operating it and then because it had no alterna-tive). The Jaguar, says the Govern-ment, has considerable potential for further development but it is mis-leading to think of it as a relatively

simple aircraft, or to compare it—as the committee appeared to have done —with the MRCA, which had to fulfil a combination of much more exacting roles. The Government regards the MRCA as an encouraging example of the way in which the cost of an ambitious project can be kept within reasonable bounds by judicious trade-offs during development.

The Expenditure Committee also urged that every effort should be made to avoid undue delay in taking deci-sions on new equipment projects, citing the case of Hawkswing. The Government in its response says it expects a decision on the weapon will be taken in the near future. Consulta-tion with allies in pursuit of collabora-tion, says the Government, takes time and does not always match the tempo it would like to achieve in the national programme.

Noting that the committee wanted sDecial efforts to be made to sell the MRCA outside the three partner coun-tries, the Government says that the three have always recognised the im-portance exports would have in strengthening the project and provid-ing an additional return on invest-ment. P ana via is responsible for the promotion of overseas sales and works in close contact with a tri-national Export Sales Policy Group composed of representatives of the three Govern-

ments. Every assistance is afforded by the British Ministry of Defence Sales organisation, says the Government, at the same time recognising that the air-craft is a sophisticated one and its greatest appeal will therefore be to the more advanced countries. The Government notes that no competitor will have a comparable aircraft avail-able at the same time.

According to the Government, the possibility of sales of any surplus Nim-rods, also urged by the Expenditure Committee, will largely depend on decisions yet to be taken on a suc-cessor airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft for the Shackleton and the choice of aircraft for new offshore surveillance responsibilities. The Nimrods currently based in Malta are not due to be withdrawn before 1977 and some of them will then be re-quired to back up the UK-based force during its major refit.

The Government says that it is aware of the need to take decisions as quickly as it sensibly can but the AEW decision in particular involves detailed consideration of a number of solutions (clearly including a version of Nimrod, see Flight for April 10, page 594). The Government says that the AEW situa-tion is unlikely to be resolved finally before this time next year. This is the timescale in which Nato countries are examining the E-3A Awacs.

Excessive sink rate in Sea King accident

A

N ACCIDENT to a Westland Sea King
was caused by the pilot's failure
to maintain adequate height and speed
during a downwind turn made in very
severe wind conditions, and then by his overpitching when attempting to correct the high sink rate which de-veloped. This was the cause of the accident as found by the Department of Trade*, and the report is unusually interesting in that it concerned a military aircraft.

The Sea King, destined for the West German Navy, was making a pre-delivery test flight at Westland's Yeovil airfield to establish the con-sistency of the torque matching of the two engines. The auto-stabilisation equipment was engaged throughout. The flight pattern on each test con-sisted of a take-off, pausing at 30ft, and a vertical climb to 200ft-300ft. A transition to forward flight was then made followed by a descending cir-cuit to return for a landing. Three such circuits were made without mishap.

The pilot stated that the fourth circuit was flown at a bank angle of 15°-20° and an airspeed of 60kt. The flight proceeded normally until the helicopter was turning downwind,

when the pilot thought that it was still banked at 15°-20°, 150ft-200ft above ground with an airspeed of 60kt. He was not sure of the preciseness of any of the figures, however, as they repre-sented a general impression rather than noted instrument readings.
At this point the pilot considered he became aware that he was instinc-tively applying an increasing amount of power to maintain his intended descent path, and that immediately afterwards he realised that despite the application of the maximum attainable power of 120 per cent torque he was unable to arrest the rate of descent. At about that time he exclaimed over the intercom that he had over-pitched and he remembered observing a rotor speed of 90 per cent.

The pilot immediately levelled the aircraft laterally and lowered the collective to regain the loss in rotor speed and the aircraft made a down-wind touch-down in a field adjoining the airfield. It ran for about 170ft be-fore colliding with the steel frame of a building under construction, the main rotor was severely damaged and the tail section broke off. The rest of the fuselage travelled a further 100ft before coming to rest on its left side.