

# will waive cap on its liability for Gulf oil spill

formed a US federal judge that the company is waiving a \$5 million US dollar cap on its liability for certain ecological claims spawned by the massive Gulf oil spill. court filing, BP lawyers said the company is waiving its liability limitation on liability under the 1990 Oil Pollution Act even though it denies engaging in any gross negligence in connection with the April 20 explosion on the Deepwater Horizon rig and resulting spill. Hayward, then BP's chief executive officer, said in a statement that the cap was largely irrelevant.

# Finance firm calls victim of fraudsters over loans

Finance company today said it had fallen victim to scamammers who are using it to con money out of people in Shropshire. MCO Capital said it was the victim of fraudsters who have been using stolen identities to obtain loans from it.

The company has subsequently sent out letters requesting repayment of the loans to those people whose identities have been stolen by the criminals and used. It was revealed last week that a string of cases had come to light in the Telford and Newport areas, causing alarm among innocent victims, who had not taken out loans and were worried about the demands for repayment.

MCO Capital spokesman Adrian Kibbler said: "MCO Capital has been the victim of a fraud and deeply regrets any inconvenience and distress caused to people who have had their identities stolen and had false loan applications made in their name. Criminals have been using stolen identities to make fraudulent loan applications from MCO Capital. The company is fully cooperating with police and trading standards to apprehend and convict those responsible for this crime," said Mr Kibbler.

"MCO Capital has also undertaken a review of its own processes. Identity theft is an issue for the whole of the financial services sector and people are urged to take all steps they can to prevent theft," he added. "Anyone who has not taken out a loan but receives a demand for money should not worry but must contact MCO Capital and report that they have been victims of fraud so that the matter can be dealt with."

Mr Kibbler advised anyone who had been a victim of the scam to also contact credit reference agencies to prevent further fraudulent use of their identities. Telford police spokesman Chris Ammonds said: "From further work which has been done, it appears that this scam goes much deeper than letters being sent out to try to scam people. The company itself, MCO Capital, appears to be the victim of fraud and a large scale investigation is being conducted by agencies, such as the City of London Police." Mr Ammonds urged anyone who received a letter to report directly to MCO Capital.

retailer Blacks Leisure today said it was in talks with parties interested in buying some or all of the company. The Millets owner has hired advisers to help it, which are thought to include proposals from private equity firms. It was possible one of the approaches has been made to AS Adventure Group, the parent company to the Cotswold Outdoor chain in Shropshire, which was also seen as a potential suitor for Blacks Leisure and Millets stores in Shrewsbury - in 2009.

# Coalition Cuts



Prime Minister David Cameron

# Pilot confronts PM on jets decision

David Cameron was confronted with the personal impact of deep spending cuts on military personnel today as he defended the need to take "difficult" decisions. A pilot told the Prime Minister he could end up jobless because of the decision to scrap Harrier jets, asking him: "How am I supposed to feel about that please, sir?" Lieutenant Commander Kris Ward, 37, who has flown dozens of combat missions in Afghanistan, tackled Mr Cameron as he

toured the UK's operations headquarters in Northwood, north London. The serviceman said later that he feared the armed forces cuts, being outlined in the Commons by Mr Cameron later today, were the wrong ones. Mr Cameron thanked the serviceman for "everything" he had done for his country but insisted he had to "make decisions for the future" and that military chiefs had backed the Harrier axe.

"I have listened to all the military advice, and the military advice is pretty clear that when we have to make difficult decisions, it is right to keep the Typhoon as our principal ground attack aircraft working in Afghanistan at the moment and it is right to retire the Harrier." Speaking after the question and answer session however, Lt Cdr Ward said: "I understand that cuts have to be made, but I am not sure that these are the right cuts."

# Navy's flagship sunk by heavy £6.8bn cut

Prime Minister David Cameron was today announcing £6.8 billion cuts to the defence budget that will leave Britain without the ability to launch fighter jets at sea for a decade.

The immediate axing of the Royal Navy's flagship aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal and Harrier jump jets, while two new vessels are built at a cost of £5.2 billion, means the service will be without fully operating aircraft carriers until 2020.

Mr Cameron was also telling MPs the renewal of Britain's nuclear deterrent Trident will be delayed until at least 2015. It was among wide-ranging measures being unveiled by the PM as part of the military's share of the coalition's spending squeeze.

Mr Cameron was saying the Government had no option but to make the tough decisions because of the dire state of the nation's finances. The outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review was being announced on the eve of the comprehensive spending review tomorrow.

The axe is expected to fall on child benefit for high earners; transport budgets and road schemes cut; university funding slashed by £4.2 billion; the social housing budget by 50 per cent; some 157 magistrates and county courts scrapped; and police funding cut by 12 per cent.

Interventions by Mr Cameron, the heads of the three armed forces and Ministry of Defence forced the Treasury cuts in the UK's £37 billion annual defence budget to be scaled back from 10 to eight per cent. Troop numbers were expected to be cut by up to 5,000 in the Army, the Royal Navy was expected to lose about 7,000 sailors and the RAF about 8,000 personnel.

The Army was also expected to lose 100 tanks, the RAF several fighter jets and the Navy forced to cut its main surface fleet from 24 to 15 warships. Switching the £550 million-plus burden of licences from the Department for Work and Pensions onto the Corporation is believed to be under investigation. Prime Minister David Cameron has repeatedly said he hopes to meet a general election promise to protect pensioners' benefits.

**HMS Ark Royal**

Displacement: 22,000 tonnes  
Length: 210m / 686ft  
Beam: 36m / 118ft  
Speed: 30kts  
Crew: 726 Ship's company and 384 Air Group personnel  
Armament: 3 x close-in weapons systems (Phalanx/Goalkeeper CIWS), 2 x 20mm anti-aircraft guns  
Aircraft: 20 or more including Harrier GR7 and GR9s, Sea King AEW and Sea King and Chinook stores or troop-carrying helicopters and Merlin anti-submarine helicopters.  
Propulsion: 4 x Rolls Royce Olympus Gas Turbines producing 72MW COGAG (Combined Gas and Gas) providing 97,000 hp on 2 Shafts

The Royal Navy has three Invincible Class aircraft carriers: HMS Invincible, HMS Illustrious, and HMS Ark Royal

2009 refit

### Defence spending

Annual spend **£37 billion**

Estimated overall budget cut: 7-8% which equates to between £2.59 billion and £2.96 billion

Manpower of Army as of August 2010: 106,280

Possible cuts in Army troops 4,000-6,500

Manpower of Royal Navy: 38,550

Possible cuts in Royal Navy forces 7,000 to 8,000

Manpower of RAF: 43,650

Possible cuts in RAF personnel 4,000-7,000

Cost of building two new aircraft carriers **£5.2 billion**

Reported drop in number of Joint Strike Fighter 138 to 40

# How the cuts may fall - latest speculation

### Work & Pensions

Annual Budget: £195bn  
Minister in Charge: Iain Duncan Smith (Con)  
Cuts: Child benefit scrapped for higher rate taxpayers from 2013, limited to children under 16, saving £3bn; Child Trust Funds axed, saving £320m; More than £1bn cut from disability living allowance bill, forcing four million to work; caps on housing benefit saving £1.8bn; reductions in tax credit, saving £3.2bn, plus crackdown to cut £5bn fraud and error in benefit and tax credit system.

### Communities and Local Government

Annual Budget: £33.6bn  
Minister in Charge: Eric Pickles (Con)  
Cuts: Social housing budget slashed by up to 90 per cent; Local Authority co-ordination of region planning, cancelled to save £16m; Regional government offices and regional development agencies axed; council cash for transport, education and new homes schemes cut by £1.1bn.

### Defence

Annual Budget: £37bn  
Minister in Charge: Liam Fox (Con)  
Cuts: Between seven and eight per cent cut agreed with Treasury after David Cameron intervention - twice the level first put to the Treasury; the successor to Trident will continue to be funded from the MoD budget but with a saving of £750m; Navy fleet to be slashed; up to 25,000 MoD staff to go, up to 7,000 personnel in each of the three services; and all RAF Tornados scrapped.

### Health

Annual Budget: £106.4bn  
Minister in Charge: Andrew Lansley (Con)  
Cuts: Overall budget protected from cuts to maintain frontline services, but £20bn in efficiency savings expected by 2014; two tiers of NHS management to be axed and get GPs to manage budgets; an end to bonuses for most NHS managers; savings of £700m have been announced in the National IT programme for the NHS in England; some projects cancelled; NHS Direct in England is also scrapped.

### Education

Annual Budget: £57.5bn  
Minister in Charge: Michael Gove (Con)  
Cuts: Building Schools for the Future programme axed - scrapping about 700 rebuilding or improvement projects; grants to 132 councils for building and running up to 1,300 playground schemes frozen; but schools to receive small overall increase in funding, plus Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has announced £7bn "fairness premium" to help the poorest pupils.

### Transport

Annual Budget: £13.6bn  
Minister in Charge: Philip Hammond (Con)  
Cuts: Rail fares could increase at five per cent a year above inflation; cutting grants to local authorities saving £309 million. Network Rail will have to find savings of £100m, road schemes axed, cuts to transport budgets could also mean more potholes and fewer buses; delays in renewing railway rolling stock and postponing or cancelling road improvements and projects.

### Justice

Annual Budget: £9.7bn  
Minister in Charge: Ken Clarke (Con)  
Cuts: Some 15,000 of 80,000 employees could be laid off. This includes probation staff who monitor criminals in the community; 157 magistrates' and county courts scrapped, saving around £35 million; £4 billion prison rebuilding programme reined in; some prisons may be sold after slashing the number of inmates; deep cuts to £2 billion-a-year legal aid bill.

# Coalition Cuts

## Witch's broom planned for y

Youngsters in Shrewsbury are witch's broom for Halloween. On October 29 from noon until Shropshire Council Parks and C have a go at making a traditional Harry Potter. Children should meet at Rea Br in the field behind Cineworld off Parking is available in the Nan Entry to the workshop is £2.50. C

## NHS tu deaf ec comple - watch

The NHS needs to "listen complaints, according to a r When people criticise the handled, health trusts too incomplete explanation, it said.

The study, from the health service ombudsman Ann Abraham, examined 15,579 complaints made about the NHS in England in 2009/10.

Overall, more complaints were received about hospitals, specialists and teaching trusts than any other group (6,304 complaints, or 44 per cent of the total).

Some 17 per cent of complaints received (2,419) were about GPs - the second most complained about group.

Overall, 63 per cent of all complaints investigated by the ombudsman were upheld or partly upheld.

Of complaints about GPs, 56 per cent were upheld or partly upheld, while 80 per cent of 659 complaints about dentists were upheld or partly upheld.

### Lessons

Ms Abraham said: "Many of the lessons that can be learnt from complaints are straightforward and cost little or nothing to implement at local level: a commitment to apologising when things go wrong; clear and prompt explanations of what has happened; improved record keeping and better information for patients about how to complain."

She said poor quality or inconsistent information about complaints "diminishes learning within the NHS and impedes access to choice for patients".

Health minister Simon Burns said: "I welcome this report which highlights that the NHS needs to take patient complaints more seriously and manage them more efficiently locally, rather than simply relying on the health service ombudsman."

"Through our information revolution, which we are consulting on right now, we want to make sure patients have the information they need to help them make meaningful decisions about their care."

"Patient feedback and complaints are an important source of information - and the experience of other sectors clearly shows that strong user feedback can have a positive impact on services."

## RAF Cosford has suffered highs and lows in its history since it opened in 1938



**July 1938:** As war clouds gather, base opens as a major aircraft maintenance, storage, and technical training unit.

**1940:** Opening of RAF Cosford Hospital.

**1941:** Attacked by the Luftwaffe. Minor damage.

**1945:** After an eventful war in which base has done everything from training over 70,000 engineers, to assembling Spitfires, Cosford is a key reception centre for returning prisoners of war.

**1977:** The hospital closed.

**1994:** "Peace dividend" starts to

kick in with Cosford being a major beneficiary of the rationalisation and consolidation of various roles, starting with the arrival of aircraft engineering training from RAF Halton.

**April 1, 2004:** Cosford redesignated the Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering, or DCAE.

**December 2004:** Campaign launched to make RAF Cosford the UK's national base for military defence training.

**February 2005:** Cosford launches its big "charm offensive" to win the contract.

**December 2005:** The "Let's Fly"

campaign officially launched at the RAF Cosford Museum and more than 1,000 people logged their support within the first three days.

**March 2006:** The bid decision was pushed back to October. Officials at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) had planned to make a decision the previous summer.

**December 2006:** The Government puts off the decision between Cosford and St Athan in South Wales until the New Year.

**January 17, 2007:** The Government reveals that the £14 billion contract for a defence training

super-centre will be going to St Athan, leaving the future of the Cosford site uncertain. Calls are made for the blow to be cushioned by making Cosford a "super garrison" for troops returning from Germany.

**March 2010:** Proposals to move over 2,500 troops from Germany to RAF Cosford are shelved for two years, leading to fears that up to 400 civilians could lose their jobs.

**October 19, 2010:** Moves to set up the defence training super-centre at St Athan are scrapped, sparking new hopes of a secure future for the Shropshire base.

# Smiles at airbase as plans are scrapped

By Wayne Beese

Union bosses have welcomed the lifting of a "cloud of uncertainty" at Shropshire's RAF Cosford air base with today's announcement on cuts.

Robert "H" O'Harney, Public & Commercial Services (PCS) branch secretary at Cosford, said staff were walking round with big smiles on their faces following the announcement by Defence Secretary Liam Fox plans for a £14 billion super-training centre in St Athan had been

scrapped.

The news means the training department at Cosford, which would have moved to St Athan if the plans had gone ahead, has been secured for the immediate future.

Mr O'Harney said today: "We welcome the ability to have an input into securing the future of Cosford as a training base for the future.

### Pleased

"There are still uncertainties because of other announcements due out later today. But people in Shropshire can be pleased that the future of Cosford has been secured for a number of years. More than £80 million has already been thrown at this scheme, £20 million of on consultants.

"If that money had been invested in the training infrastructure we would be in a far better position now.

"Every member of staff I have spoken to is walking around with a big smile on their face today.

"A cloud of uncertainty has been lifted," he continued. This has been in the offing since 2002 and for the last four years there has been delay after delay."

The news has been welcomed by Wrekin MP Mark Pritchard.

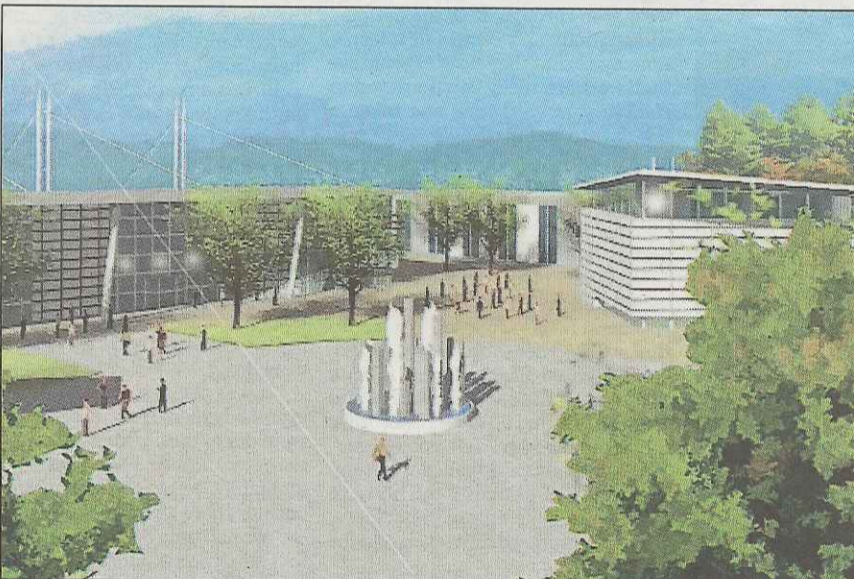
Telford MP David Wright also welcomed the news, but urged caution.

He said: "This looks like good news in the short to medium-term but we will have to watch any future review very closely."

Squadron Leader Graham Lee, of RAF Cosford, said: "We are just getting on with our jobs of delivering the best military aeronautical engineers to the RAF."



The decision on RAF Cosford has been welcomed by unions



An artist's impression of the St Athan base in South Wales



Liam Fox



Mark Pritchard

## Full statement by minister

This is the full written statement by Dr Liam Fox to Parliament today: "The Metrix Consortium was appointed as preferred bidder in January 2007 subject to it developing an affordable and value for money contract proposal.

"Given the significance of this project and the opportunity to provide a world-class training facility, the Ministry of Defence has worked tirelessly to deliver this project.

"However, it is now clear that Metrix cannot deliver an affordable, commercially-robust proposal within the prescribed period and it has therefore been necessary to terminate the DTR procurement and Metrix's appointment as preferred bidder.

"Technical training, collocated on as few sites as possible, remains in our view

## on the comprehensive spending review

### Business, Innovation and Skills

Annual Budget: £21.2bn

Minister in Charge: Vince Cable (Lib Dem)

Cuts: English universities face cuts of £4.2bn - £3.2bn from teaching and £1bn from research; Universities minister David Willetts has said UK's 24 nanotech centres could be centralised to save cash; Mr Cable has asked research scientists to do "more for less", signalling cuts.

### Culture, Media and Sport

Annual Budget: £1.5bn

Minister in Charge: Jeremy Hunt (Con)

Cuts: Reports suggest up to 50 per cent of staff could go; Arts Council funding to fall from £445m to £290m and at least 100 organisations to lose all government grants; dozens of schemes likely to be abandoned, including a new visitor centre at Stonehenge and UK Film Council.

### Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Annual Budget: £2.9bn

Minister in Charge: Caroline Spelman (Con)

Cuts: Insiders suggest that farmers have less to fear from the cuts than they might have feared. Significant savings could be achieved by limiting recruitment and reducing back-room staff, cutting red tape, making IT efficiencies and cuts to rural development agencies.

### Home Office

Annual Budget: £10.2bn

Minister in Charge: Theresa May (Con)

Cuts: Policing to lose 12 per cent of its funding through a "total redesign" of working practices; as many as 40,000 front-line posts could go in England and Wales over four years; forces could have to cut spending by £480 million this year; Mrs May has also said nothing will be off limits in a review of police pay and conditions - due to report in June 2011.

### Energy and Climate Change

Annual Budget: £3.1bn

Minister in Charge: Chris Huhne (Lib Dem)

Cuts: Warm Front grant for homes insulation and Carbon Trust grant for low-carbon technology lose out; green schemes axed or scaled back - £4.7m saved axing final funding of Bio-Energy Capital Grants and Bio-Energy Infrastructure, £1m from geothermal energy development.

### International Development

Annual Budget: £7.7bn

Minister in Charge: Andrew Mitchell (Con)

Cuts: Funding ring-fenced, but cash to emerging super-powers such as China and India cut, while aid to Afghanistan is increased; all projects are "under review"; including Commonwealth Development Corporation, which funds businesses in some of the poorest parts of the world.

### Cabinet Office

Annual Budget: £2.6bn

Minister in Charge: Francis Maude (Con)

Cuts: Ministers have agreed to a five per cent pay cut; end to bonuses for most civil servants; Government Car Service streamlined; budget of Central Office of Information which manages government advertising and marketing halved, with warnings staff will be cut by two-fifths; "golden goodbye" payments for senior civil servants could be phased out.

## Messages of su make their way

Messages will be sent to Afghani woman held a 007 theme night for

Becky Theodore-Jones, from Nes the charity event held on Saturday Club. On the night the guests who write messages in a book of support was handed over to a representative racks who will now forward it to Irish Regiment currently serving in

Soldiers and people from the charity Miss Theodore-Jones said: "The and a there was a good atmosphere. fantastic and we have got some low