

Brit official wants more defense spending

by UPI

LONDON - The British military is being shortchanged by the government, a senior defense official said. The unidentified official said the British military is headed for a "train crash" because the government is failing to appropriate money for new equipment, The Sunday Times of London reported. He reportedly told Defense Ministry officials that the government's defense spending has sunk to a level where buying even crucial equipment is out of reach. He said the government was running the risk of "mortgaging the future" of England's national defense, the British newspaper reported. The official's comments come on the heels of a coroner's investigation that determined British troop deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan were partly brought on by a lack of proper equipment. The military budget is set to increase 1.5 percent this year, the newspaper reported. Gerald Howarth, Conservative defense spokesman, said Saturday that cuts in military spending was "an absolute scandal of catastrophic proportions". Defense Ministry officials are scheduled to meet Thursday to discuss future cuts. Sources told the newspaper that British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Defense Secretary Des Browne have insisted that cuts be secret and unnoticeable so to avoid political embarrassment.

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