

# Headline English

2011, week 48 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

1 Nick Hopkins

2 **A familiar story?**

3 original at

4 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2011/08/web-turns-twenty>

5 The UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) has spent almost £600m from the  
6 military's equipment budget in the last two years to hire hundreds of  
7 outside specialists and consultants. Government guidelines on this type of  
8 expenditure have been routinely broken.

9 An internal audit of defence contracts has highlighted numerous flaws. It  
10 warned that control of the MoD purse appeared to be "poorly developed or  
11 non-existent".

12 The report also stated that defence officials made little or no effort to  
13 ensure that contracts provided value for money. Despite the numerous  
14 concerns raised in the report, a defence minister said nothing was wrong.

15 The scale of the spending, and the apparent lack of control, come at a  
16 time when the department has been making thousands of civilian and  
17 military personnel redundant.

## Questions

- 1) On what, according to the article, has the UK's Ministry of Defence spent £600 million?
- 2) Has this spending, according to the article, occurred in line with the relevant guidelines?
- 3) What are the findings of the internal audit report?
- 4) Explain the meaning of 'defence minister' in line 14 (caution, this is a trick question).
- 5) Was the minister referred to in the article of the same opinion as the audit report?
- 6) What makes the generous spending so controversial?
- 7) Do you think things like the ones referred to in the article are commonplace everywhere or do you think that they are particularly prominent in non-western countries?
- 8) Do you think there are any solutions to problems like this?

## Vocabulary

**guidelines** (line 7) – principles or rules put forward to set standards or determine a course of action

**routinely** (line 8) – customary or part of a regular course of procedure

**purse** (line 10) – a small bag, pouch, or case for carrying money

**concerns** (line 14) – problems, issues, important bearings or relations

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

