ANDREW MARR:
Philip Hammond, the Defence Secretary is here.

PHILIP HAMMOND:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
Philip, you’ve been the guy who put in the troops. Three thousand I think so far. Is that right?

PHILIP HAMMOND:
Over three thousand troops currently employed.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Over three thousand. Many more to come?

PHILIP HAMMOND:
Thousands more in reserve if needed. This is demand led. The local authorities and the emergency responders who are leading can call on troops wherever they need
them and we’ve got plenty more troops in reserve.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Do you think this was caused by climate change?

**PHILIP HAMMOND:**
Well climate change is clearly happening. It’s clearly a factor in the weather patterns that we’re seeing, and that’s why we’re investing significant amounts of money in increasing our flood resilience in the UK. And although of course these floods are a terrible tragedy for people who are affected, we shouldn’t forget that many hundreds of thousands of properties have been protected from flooding by the investment that’s been made over the last few years.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Certainly have. On the other hand, the Government was told by the Pitt Report and again and again by people in Somerset that they needed to dredge in Somerset, they needed to spend a lot more money on flood defences, and the Government ignored all of this for quite a long time. Putting on Wellington boots now is not impressing the public very much.

**PHILIP HAMMOND:**
Well I think we’ve said very clearly that the issue on the Somerset levels is something that we are going to have to look at in slower time when this crisis is over. The policies that have been applied - a lot of question marks have been raised about them, particularly around the EA’s policy on dredging, and definitely that needs to be looked at. This won’t apply everywhere. The Somerset levels is a manmade environment and arguably it needs to be maintained by human intervention, by dredging. On the Thames, we’ve got different factors at play.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Including the fact that we’re carrying on building on flood plains despite the Government being warned again and again not to do this. I mean again it seems to a lot of people that the Government has been rather slow, and if you look at the opinion polls the Government’s not popular in terms of its response.
PHILIP HAMMOND:
Well I think you know the response that we’re delivering is a proper response. We’ve been engaged since the very beginning of this crisis - COBRAs have been held, the Prime Minister’s been in control of events - but we are dealing with an extraordinary set of weather events and you know it’s taken some time to mobilise the resources that are necessary to respond.

ANDREW MARR:
I suppose the point I’m getting to is that for a lot of people scientists have been saying again and again, for years now, that we’re going into wilder weather, there’s going to be more extreme weather events. Ed Miliband talked about rolling the dice and getting sixes all the time, which suggests the dice are loaded. And yet for a very long time the Government has kind of looked away from this and hoped it wasn’t going to happen. Now it has happened.

PHILIP HAMMOND:
I don’t think that’s true at all. I mean the guidance on building on flood plains is very clear, but there is …

ANDREW MARR:
But we’re still doing it.

PHILIP HAMMOND:
But well … but, look, the whole of the Thames Valley is a flood plain. I mean there has to be a proper balance. We need to avoid the highest flood risk areas. When we do build in lower flood risk areas, we need to make sure that properties are built in a way that minimises the risk of flooding both at the level of the individual property and at the way development is designed. Like everything in the real world, there’s a balance to be struck. And it’s very easy to say today, because we’re in the middle of this crisis, you know flood resilience is the only issue.

ANDREW MARR:
Sure.
PHILIP HAMMOND:
It’s a very important issue, but it isn’t the only issue and we have to balance economic growth, maintaining people’s standards of living, flood resilience in the long-term. All of these things need to be balanced together.

ANDREW MARR:
Getting the troops in has clearly helped a lot. A lot of people think you were too slow. With the benefit of hindsight, do you think you should have put the troops in a bit earlier?

PHILIP HAMMOND:
Well let me be clear. We offered troops quite a long while ago to civil authorities who wanted them. What we’ve done over the last ten days is pushed them a bit more aggressively at those civil authorities. And I think putting military liaison officers into the gold commands, so that they’re embedded in the system, has been a major step forward and I think probably we’ll want to make sure in future that we do that at a very early stage in any emerging problem.

ANDREW MARR:
Roughly speaking, how many more troops are available if needed?

PHILIP HAMMOND:
We’ve got about five thousand more troops on varying levels of notice to move that could be deployed if necessary.

ANDREW MARR:
And going further ahead, there’s a lot of clearing up and reconstruction to do.

PHILIP HAMMOND:
Yeah.

ANDREW MARR:
Are we going to see the Royal Engineers and people help rebuilding bridges and
transport links and so forth?

**PHILIP HAMMOND:**
Well I mean the engineers are going to be involved. For example, we’ve agreed with the Environment Agency that we’ll use Royal Engineers to do a very rapid inspection of all the nation’s flood defences, so we’re going to try and do in five weeks what would be about a two year programme of inspection just to assess the level of damage. Because I think that’s the important thing for people to remember. This series of weather events over the last two months has caused some quite serious damage to our infrastructure - flood defences, rail infrastructure, road infrastructure. We’ve got to assess that.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And your own climate change adviser says you ought to be spending more on flood defences, we ought to be spending much more on flood defences. Is that right? Is that true? Are we going to?

**PHILIP HAMMOND:**
Well we’re spending more in this four year period than we did in the previous four year period. We’ll spend more again in the next four year period. But of course we have to … there has to be a proper balance of costs and benefits drawn. There clearly needs to be continued investment in flood defences. And we’ve achieved a great deal. In 2007, 55,000 properties flooded. This event, which is arguably more extreme, we’ve seen somewhere probably in the region of 2,500, 3,000 properties in total flooded. And I think further targeted investment will mean that we become more and more resilient as events like this unfortunately probably will become more and more common.

**ANDREW MARR:**
The 40 billion we’re spending on HS2 would give us some cracking flood defences, wouldn’t it?

**PHILIP HAMMOND:**
Well we don’t have to make these either/or choices.
ANDREW MARR:
Do we not?

PHILIP HAMMOND:
No we don’t. The investment in HS2 is a planned investment over a 25 year time period. This is an important infrastructure investment for the future of Britain and, by the way, makes an important contribution to dealing with carbon emissions - one of the drivers of climate change. So we have to look at all of these things …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) All things together, alright.

PHILIP HAMMOND:
(over) - how we invest in transport infrastructure as well as how we invest in responding to the consequences of climate change.

ANDREW MARR:
Philip Hammond, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning.

INTERVIEW ENDS