

News story: UK and Iceland sign agreement on defence and security cooperation

UK Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, and his Icelandic counterpart, Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, today signed an MoU between the UK and the Republic of Iceland to enhance defence and security cooperation between two founding members of NATO.

The signing of the MoU represents a significant step forward in the process of formalising the already positive bilateral relationship the UK and Iceland have, recognising the two countries' shared interests, values and responsibilities. Through NATO, the UK participates in military exercises in Iceland, including during Trident Juncture in 2018 and Dynamic Mongoose in 2017, and Iceland also contributes to the UK-led NATO enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia, seeking to protect our allies from external security threats.

The MoU will provide both the UK and Iceland with a means for developing and furthering their defence relations, and will help to enhance security cooperation in new areas such as policing, counter-terrorism, search and rescue, risk and crisis management, and cyber security. This builds on recent cooperation, including a visit in January by members of the Icelandic National Security Council (NSC) to meet UK NSC counterparts, and ongoing cyber cooperation between the Oxford Cyber Centre and the relevant Icelandic authorities.

RAF Typhoons will conduct NATO Air Policing from Iceland later this year for the first time, patrolling Iceland's airspace and helping to guard NATO's northern flank. This demonstrates the benefits of our bilateral defence and security relationship to wider European and North Atlantic security.

Speech: Latest rocket attacks in Israel, humanitarian situation in Gaza and the status of the Golan Heights

Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council Briefing on the Middle East Peace Process

Speech: Latest rocket attacks in Israel, humanitarian situation in Gaza and the status of the Golan Heights

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President, and like our German colleague, I'll try to be brief because I think there has been a lot of common themes across the Council today. And while I share people's dismay that so many of these issues come back to us repeatedly, I think that if there is any unity in the Council it has been the condemnation of violence from both sides and the need for both sides to make progress.

I think, Special Co-ordinator, you asked us to be very clear about the condemnation of the recent rocket attacks. Dual British-Israeli citizens were [injured] in the latest rocket attacks so we have no hesitation in joining you and others in condemning unreservedly what has happened and in condemning such acts of terrorism and violence wherever they occur. And I'll note that there was another attack near the Ariel settlement on 17 March. We along with others support the Egyptian and UN efforts to broker a ceasefire and restore the situation to calm.

Violence not only creates fear and a cycle of violence among the Israeli and Palestinian populations, it also undermines the humanitarian situation in Gaza. And we have been concerned by the number of Palestinian deaths in the West Bank over the last few weeks.

A number of colleagues mentioned the heightened tensions at Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. We urge all parties to work together to restore calm and to support the status quo under the custodianship of the King of Jordan.

The protests at the Gaza perimeter fence continue and we remain concerned about the volume of live fire that's been used. And this is resulting in horrific injuries and it is also resulting in fatalities. This is not to take away one iota from Israel's right to self-defense. And it's not to undermine or gainsay the fact that Hamas operatives cynically exploit these protests but it is worth repeating that this perpetual cycle of violence serves no one's interests. And as the German ambassador said: the emphasis ought to be on what can be done to implement 2334 and reduce the the violence that we see every day in the territories and in Israel.

And I just want to join others who referred to the March of Return – that anniversary will be with us shortly. We urge all parties to demonstrate restraint and avoid future violence. We continue to support the need for an independent and transparent investigation into last year's events in Gaza. And we welcome the recent decision by the Israeli Military Advocate General to order five criminal investigations relating to 11 separate instances of Palestinian fatalities during the Gaza protests.

It is customary, Mr President, to turn to the issue of settlements. Our views on settlements remain well-known. Suffice it to say that we share the Secretary-General's views on the expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem. We also remain gravely concerned by the threatened evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank. And my Foreign Secretary wrote to the Israeli Government to condemn the planned demolition of the Palestinian village of Khan al-Ahmar and we continue to press Israel to abandon these plans entirely.

Mr President, a number of Council members have referred to the issue of the Golan Heights. For the United Kingdom, we view the Golan Heights as territory occupied by Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law and that includes the UN Charter. The United Kingdom does not recognise Israel's annexation in 1981 and we have no plans to change that position.

Before I conclude, Mr President, could I just correct something I said earlier? Dual British-Israeli citizens were injured in the rocket attack and not killed. I apologise for the error.

Thank you.

[News story: Lord Duncan visits Stirling innovators leading the way in responding to an ageing society](#)

Last week [Friday 22 March] Lord Duncan had the opportunity to hear about the world-leading innovations being developed by Stirling institutions in response to one of society's most pressing issues, an ageing population. By 2050, worldwide there are likely to be two billion people over the age of 60.

UK Government Minister Lord Duncan said:

A key priority for the UK Government is to support innovation for our ageing society. As people are living longer, we want to make sure they are also living independently and happily. This is why the UK Government is investing over £300 million from our Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to tackle issues like this.

Scotland has a reputation as a world leader in innovation and research and it is great to see the vital contribution by the

University of Stirling to one of society's most pressing problems.

At the University of Stirling, Lord Duncan learned of the University's ageing and dementia research as well as proposals for an intergenerational village and innovation hub.

Visiting Symbiosis, who recently received UK Government funding, Lord Duncan saw first-hand their developments into supply chain models and commercial gene therapy.

Lord Duncan also met with senior staff at CodeBase Stirling and learnt how they benefit local economies and how technology can be harnessed to help the needs of an ageing society.

The Ageing Society 'Grand Challenge' forms a key part of the UK Government's modern Industrial Strategy. Its mission for the Ageing Society Grand Challenge is to ensure that people can enjoy at least five extra years of healthy independent living by 2035 whilst also narrowing inequalities.

Press release: Joint statement on 4th anniversary of Saudi intervention in Yemen

The Foreign Secretary and the International Development Secretary have released a joint statement on the fourth anniversary of the intervention by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition into the Yemen conflict.