

News story: Defence Secretary underlines UK commitment to European security

Speaking at a meeting of European Union Defence Ministers in Brussels, Sir Michael Fallon called on the EU to step up cooperation with NATO in order for the two organisations to more effectively tackle shared security challenges, including hybrid warfare and cyber.

Sir Michael also called for an improvement in Europe's performance in building national capabilities that can be made available to the EU and NATO. This requires more defence spending and better investment in key equipment.

Britain's commitments in 2017 underline the leading role in European Security the UK will continue to play. This year, Britain is leading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, a Brigade-size force which is ready and willing to respond to any threat. This spring, the UK will also deploy a battle group of around 800 personnel to lead in Estonia NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence.

The Defence Secretary also confirmed Britain's strong role in EU missions and operations. HMS Echo is currently helping to tackle people smugglers in the Mediterranean, as part of the EU's mission Operation Sophia. Royal Navy deployments to the operation have helped destroy over 120 smuggling boats, apprehending 20 suspected smugglers in the process, and have helped to rescue 10,000 people from the high seas.

Britain also has over 150 UK personnel committed to EU missions and operations, including in Bosnia, Mali and Somalia, demonstrating Britain's global reach.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We are leaving the EU but we will continue to cooperate with our European partners on defence and security. This includes playing our part in the mission in the Mediterranean, rescuing migrants and tackling people smuggling.

Today I have urged the EU to cooperate more closely with NATO, to avoid unnecessary duplication and to work together on new threats, including cyber.

Sir Michael called on the EU and NATO to redouble their efforts on cooperation, noting that while good progress has been made, more work needed to be done, particularly on cyber, hybrid, maritime and coordinated exercises.

Today's meeting also brought forward improvements to the EU's Common Security

and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, through the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), to help improve planning and conduct of the training missions (known as non-executive missions) and to enhance civilian and military working. Important improvements to the agreement, suggested by the UK, were agreed today, including limiting the authority of the Director of the MPCC, and avoiding duplication with NATO structures.

RR1099 – Review of consequence model evaluation protocols for major hazards under the EU SAPHEDRA platform

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SNP admits oil “bonus” claim was wrong

6 Mar 2017



The SNP's claim that oil revenues could be used as a “bonus” in an independent Scotland was wrong, a senior party figure has finally admitted.

In a comment to be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 this evening, Andrew Wilson – who chairs the party's Growth Commission – concedes that oil revenues “was indeed a basis” for the party's financial plans during the independence referendum campaign in 2014.

This is despite Alex Salmond's repeated claim during the campaign that “oil will be a bonus.”

The Scottish Conservatives are today calling on Mr Salmond to admit he got it wrong in the run up to the 2014 referendum and deliberately misled people by trying to claim oil would not be needed to plug massive holes in an independent Scotland's finances.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“The full scale of Alex Salmond’s bluster and evasion in the 2014 referendum campaign is finally being exposed.

“He tried to claim oil revenues would be a “bonus” to an independent Scotland.

“As his close ally Andrew Wilson has now conceded, oil revenues were ‘baked’ into their numbers and formed the ‘basis’ for an independent Scotland’s finances.

“Mr Salmond has never admitted he tried to mislead people on oil during the 2014 referendum.

“Now that even his own SNP colleagues are owning up, it is time he did so himself.

“If the SNP is now admitting oil is a bonus, it must set out which taxes would rise and what public services would be cut in order to fill an independent Scotland’s £15bn deficit.

“Better still, the Nationalists should stop trying to make their sums work, get on with the day job, and dump their unwanted plans for a divisive second referendum.”

Salmond

quote <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-23389830>

Andrew Wilson’s comments were broadcast on BBC Radio Scotland this morning: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08g7xjc>

Andrew Wilson: I think people – if one was critical of the 2014 campaign – you know, for example, they would argue that oil was a bonus and not the basis, but we did have oil baked into the numbers and it was indeed a basis.”

[Press release: Work begins on £3.8million flood scheme in Totnes](#)

The scheme involves improving existing flood defences along the River Dart from the mainline railway bridge to the Steam Packet Inn. Other measures include providing a new flood wall within Morrisons car park, raising Ashford slipway and providing flood resilience measures to individual properties and flood gates.

Work began on a section of the scheme which didn't need planning permission in January but now South Hams District Council has given the rest of the scheme the green light.

Dan Boswell, for the Environment Agency, said:

This is a fantastic milestone for us and the residents we have been working with to help us shape our designs.

Since the construction of the original defences flood risk has changed and in recent years there have been at least 2 occasions – 2008 and 2014 – where some properties in the town have come close to flooding from the River Dart.

We always ask people to stay flood aware. People can [check their flood risk online](#), by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or by following @EnvAgency and #floodaware on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

Once work is completed on Broadmarsh Industrial Estate, work will move to the areas of New Walk, Throgmorton and the Morrisons car park.



March 2008

Designs for the scheme were drawn up following discussions with landowners and property owners and a public drop-in session in the town in April 2016 and follow-up discussions have been taking place since that time.

The scheme is due to be completed by next winter.

Notes to editors

The project to improve flood defences in Totnes is separate from the planned work at Steamer Quay to repair the existing flood wall. It is hoped that this work will be completed in April 2017.