

News story: Defence Secretary meets UK troops on NATO deployment

Sir Michael witnessed the launch of the UK-led Enhanced Forward Presence deployment in Estonia, where an 800-strong British-led battle group will work with Estonian, French and Danish partners.

Working under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mark Wilson, the UK troops from 5 Rifles battle group, based in Bulford, Wiltshire, and The Queen's Royal Hussars, based in Paderborn, Germany, will work with our Eastern European allies and ensure that we stand with them shoulder to shoulder in the face of any potential aggression.

The UK has committed more than 300 vehicles to support Estonia during this deployment, including Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, Challenger 2 tanks, AS90 self-propelled artillery guns and Terrier, Titan and Trojan armoured battlefield engineer vehicles.

Attending the flag-raising ceremony at an Estonian military base in Tapa, the Defence Secretary was joined by his allied colleagues, marking the contributions from France and Denmark to the UK battlegroup.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The troops I have met today are part of one of the UK's largest ever deployments to Eastern Europe. This marks our commitment to European security and standing with our allies in the face of an increasingly assertive Russia.

Earlier on Thursday Sir Michael met with the Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid, where they welcomed the launch of the EFP deployment. The Defence Secretary emphasised the continued UK commitment to Euro-Atlantic defence and security.

This deployment to Estonia takes the total British deployment in Eastern Europe to nearly 1,000, with 150 UK personnel based in Poland as part of the UK's support of the US-led EFP battalion there. NATO is also establishing battlegroups in Latvia and Lithuania.

UK commitments in the region will be boosted further by the deployment of RAF Typhoon aircraft to Romania, set to arrive over the next few weeks, to carry out a NATO Air Policing mission in the Black Sea.