

News story: UK and Japan strengthen defence ties

The Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary met their Japanese counterparts at Greenwich Naval College, a building that symbolises the historic maritime links between the two countries, to strengthen security and defence cooperation.

During the meeting, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson confirmed that HMS Sutherland will visit Japan next year. HMS Argyll will also be sent to the country to take part in exercises next year, as announced by the Prime Minister Theresa May in August 2017.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Japan is one of our closest partners in the Asia Pacific region and as tension grows on the Korean peninsula, our relationship is vitally important.

2018 will mark the year UK and Japanese forces work even more closely together, with two of our Royal Navy frigates visiting the country and UK troops training on Japanese soil for the very first time.

Both countries agreed a 3-year defence cooperation plan, which will deliver on the commitment made by Prime Minister Theresa May and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in August 2017 to work closer together on defence issues. It demonstrates the UK's dedication to working with Japan as a long term security partner, including activity across air, land and sea in the Asia Pacific region. Alongside the Naval deployments the UK will:

- Send around 45 British Army personnel to train with Japanese soldiers next year, marking the first time ever that UK personnel have exercised on Japanese soil and the first occasion that non-US troops have exercised in the country.
- Continue to work closely with the Japanese Self-Defense Air Force, with plans for future joint-working after the successful deployment of RAF Typhoons to Japan last year.

Mr Williamson also confirmed that the UK will send a Royal Navy captain and five medics to the US-led Pacific Partnership deployment which will provide humanitarian and disaster relief training to military and civilian organisations.

Following the meeting, Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin will also take Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera to Portsmouth Naval Base for the first time on Friday, to embark on a tour of the world-class aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, which was formally commissioned into the Royal Navy just last week.