

News story: UK and Oman sign historic Joint Defence Agreement

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has travelled to Oman to sign the agreement, alongside their Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, Badr Bin Saud Bin Harib Al Busaidi.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

It is a pleasure to sign this agreement, bringing us even closer to one of our most important partners. This is an historic landmark moment between our two nations and is a significant reinforcement of our mutual security.

Gulf security is our security, and it is crucial that we expand our horizons and become a truly global Britain after we leave the European Union.

The JDA follows the culmination of Exercise Saif Sareea 3, which was held in Oman during October and November 2018. It was the largest exercise by the UK's military since Saif Sareea 2, 17 years previously, with 5,500 troops travelling to Oman to display their land, air and sea capabilities. The JDA provides a launch pad to deepen defence co-operation, with both nations working together to develop capabilities and promote regional stability.

The UK and Oman have a long-standing and historic relationship, dating back more than 200 years. More recently, the British Joint Logistics Support Base in Duqm opened last year and the Defence Secretary announced during his visit to Saif Sareea 3 that a new joint military training area will be established in the country this year. The UK is committed to the development of Duqm Port and this is part of the UK's defence commitment to the region to ensure that our operations are agile. Additionally the new Omani-British Joint Training Area will ensure the UK is building a world-class military force alongside Omani counterparts, building on our joint learning from Saif Sareea 3.

The Agreement will ensure that these facilities are available for use long into the future, allowing the UK to maintain a presence in the Region. This includes a new Naval Support Facility in Bahrain and our ongoing cooperation at Al Udeid in Qatar.

It also builds on the Prime Minister's commitment to the Freedom of Navigation, economic stability and security in the Gulf.

The Ministry of Defence is committed to spending £3 billion across the Gulf over the next 10 years.

His Excellency Sayyid Bader bin Saud bin Harib Al-Busaidi, the Omani Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs said:

This agreement culminates the efforts of both countries' leaderships to enhance the existing bilateral cooperation and the strategic partnership between them. It is a milestone in the history of both nations.

The signing of this agreement today reaffirms the importance of optimizing the joint military efforts to ensure the security and stability of both friendly countries and pave the way for more cooperation in the field of defence and joint exercises in pursuance of the agreement objectives.