

# News story: UK-US military links strengthened after ministerial visit to Washington DC

Increased co-operation between the nations was agreed in key meetings with the American Secretary of the Army, Mark Esper, and Secretary of the Navy, Richard Spencer.

Russia, cyber warfare and the ongoing fight against Daesh were also on the agenda during discussions in Washington this week.

Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

British and American personnel are standing side by side, defending our shared values around the world. We are countering Russian aggression, defeating Daesh and strengthening NATO; and our special relationship will continue to strengthen as we face these evolving threats together.

Both nations are undergoing significant upgrades in defence policy, with the UK currently consulting on its Modernising Defence Programme and the US publishing its National Defense Strategy in January. The two programmes are already closely aligned, with a strong emphasis on modernising forces to tackle the increasing shared threats faced on several fronts, while strengthening international alliances and forging new ones.

The US and UK are the two largest contributors to NATO, and among just five countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence. Both countries have been calling on other nations to match this contribution, ahead of the NATO summit in July.

The UK's defence trade partnership with the US is worth £3billion, including collaboration on several key projects such as the F-35 programme, Unmanned Air Systems and a Common Missile Compartment for UK-US Ballistic Missile Submarines.

An even closer bond is expected after Brexit, as the UK establishes new relationships and trade deals outside of Europe.

The Minister will head to the Arctic Circle this weekend to observe the annual Ice Exercise (ICEX) between the British and US navies, highlighting the capability of both nations' submarines to operate in the most extreme conditions.

Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, added:

From partnering on the F-35 programme, to training together in Norway, our Navies and Marines continuously build capability together, and ICEX is another important opportunity for our two nations to show what we can do.