

News story: UK boosts cyber links after tri-nation visit to Central America

As the cyber threats we face evolve and intensify, it is vital we deepen our international partnerships to stay one step ahead of those who would wish to do us harm, a Defence Minister has stated.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster signed a letter of intent between the UK and Chile on cyber co-operation ensuring closer links in that sphere, during a visit that also took in Mexico and Belize.

He also attended a British-led cyber defence workshop that was jointly supported by the Ministry of Defence, Department for International Trade, National Cyber Security Centre and Government Communication Headquarters. He also visited a Chilean Peacekeeping School.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Information technology provides a new and unconventional battlefield, with cyber-attacks increasing as modern warfare evolves and adapts. The UK will play a leading role in countering these threats, but I am delighted to see like-minded partners across the globe sharing this belief and taking steps to keep our people safe.

In Mexico, Mr Lancaster was a special guest at the country's independence celebrations, before meeting Mexico's Defence Minister and Navy Secretariat, Admiral Vidal Francisco Soberon Sanz, reinforcing our strong defence relations and discussing the role of Latin American nations working alongside NATO and the UN.

He also met Commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, General Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy, reaffirming the special relationship and exploring how the UK and US can collaborate further in these fields.

In Belize, Mr Lancaster spent the day visiting the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, to understand the benefits to the Army from training in a jungle environment as well as tour touring the British Army Training and Support Unit Belize.

Mr Lancaster also signed a treaty and memorandum of understanding concerning the status of UK forces in Belize, deepening the longstanding defence co-operation between the two nations.

Mr Lancaster met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wilfred Elrington; Minister

of National Security, John Saldivar, and Commander of the Belize Defence Force, Brigadier General Steven Ortega.

[News story: PM Brexit negotiations statement: 21 September 2018](#)

Yesterday, I was in Salzburg for talks with European leaders.

I have always said that these negotiations would be tough – and they were always bound to be toughest in the final straight.

While both sides want a deal, we have to face up to the fact that – despite the progress we have made – there are two big issues where we remain a long way apart.

The first is our economic relationship after we have left.

Here, the EU is still only offering us two options.

The first option would involve the UK staying in the European Economic Area and a customs union with the EU.

In plain English, this would mean we'd still have to abide by all the EU rules, uncontrolled immigration from the EU would continue and we couldn't do the trade deals we want with other countries.

That would make a mockery of the referendum we had two years ago.

The second option would be a basic free trade agreement for Great Britain that would introduce checks at the Great Britain/EU border. But even worse, Northern Ireland would effectively remain in the Customs Union and parts of the Single Market, permanently separated economically from the rest of the UK by a border down the Irish Sea.

Parliament has already – unanimously – rejected this idea.

Creating any form of customs border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK would not respect that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom, in line with the principle of consent, as set out clearly in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

It is something I will never agree to – indeed, in my judgement it is something no British Prime Minister would ever agree to. If the EU believe I will, they are making a fundamental mistake.

Anything which fails to respect the referendum or which effectively divides our country in two would be a bad deal and I have always said no deal is better than a bad deal.

But I have also been clear that the best outcome is for the UK to leave with a deal. That is why, following months of intensive work and detailed discussions, we proposed a third option for our future economic relationship, based on the frictionless trade in goods. That is the best way to protect jobs here and in the EU and to avoid a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, while respecting the referendum result and the integrity of the United Kingdom.

Yesterday Donald Tusk said our proposals would undermine the single market. He didn't explain how in any detail or make any counter-proposal. So we are at an impasse.

The second issue is connected to the first. We both agree that the Withdrawal Agreement needs to include a backstop to ensure that if there's a delay in implementing our new relationship, there still won't be a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

But the EU is proposing to achieve this by effectively keeping Northern Ireland in the Customs Union.

As I have already said, that is unacceptable. We will never agree to it. It would mean breaking up our country.

We will set out our alternative that preserves the integrity of the UK. And it will be in line with the commitments we made back in December – including the commitment that no new regulatory barriers should be created between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK unless the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly agree.

As I told EU leaders, neither side should demand the unacceptable of the other.

We cannot accept anything that threatens the integrity of our union, just as they cannot accept anything that threatens the integrity of theirs.

We cannot accept anything that does not respect the result of the referendum, just as they cannot accept anything that is not in the interest of their citizens.

Throughout this process, I have treated the EU with nothing but respect. The UK expects the same. A good relationship at the end of this process depends on it.

At this late stage in the negotiations, it is not acceptable to simply reject the other side's proposals without a detailed explanation and counter proposals.

So we now need to hear from the EU what the real issues are and what their alternative is so that we can discuss them. Until we do, we cannot make progress.

In the meantime, we must and will continue the work of preparing ourselves for no deal.

In particular, I want to clarify our approach to two issues.

First, there are over 3 million EU citizens living in the UK who will be understandably worried about what the outcome of yesterday's summit means for their future.

I want to be clear with you that even in the event of no deal your rights will be protected. You are our friends, our neighbours, our colleagues. We want you to stay.

Second, I want to reassure the people of Northern Ireland that in the event of no deal we will do everything in our power to prevent a return to a hard border.

Let me also say this.

The referendum was the largest democratic exercise this country has ever undergone. To deny its legitimacy or frustrate its result threatens public trust in our democracy.

That is why for over two years I have worked day and night to deliver a deal that sees the UK leave the EU.

I have worked to bring people with me even when that has not always seemed possible.

No one wants a good deal more than me.

But the EU should be clear: I will not overturn the result of the referendum. Nor will I break up my country.

We need serious engagement on resolving the two big problems in the negotiations. We stand ready.

News story: New strategic direction for the Emergency Services Network (ESN)

The emergency services will begin benefiting from their new mobile-based communications network in the New Year following the Home Office's decision to roll the project out in phases.

The department today announces it has set a new strategic direction for the Emergency Services Network (ESN) following an in-depth review.

The decision secures the future of ESN, which will save the public purse £200

million a year once it has fully replaced the original radio-based network, Airwave.

The new incremental approach means police, fire and rescue services, ambulance services and other users will be able to use data services over the network from early next year, with voice capabilities following soon after.

It will also leave the emergency services free to test and choose which ESN products they want as and when they become available, rather than having to wait for the network to be fully implemented.

The dedicated 4G network will transform emergency services' mobile working, especially in remote areas and at times of network congestion, with sim cards giving them priority over commercial users.

Products will include a 'push-to-talk' capability for mobile phones, effectively turning them into emergency service radios with data capability, a package of telephone, messaging and data services, and an air to ground communications app.

ESN also has the potential to enable emergency services to communicate on the London Underground.

The Home Office is engaging with its commercial partners, EE and Motorola, regarding future changes to their contracts.

Further details will be provided to Parliament in due course.

[News story: Essential maintenance to our online services](#)

Updated: Essential maintenance planned for Tuesday 25 September.

You may experience some issues with our online services between 5pm and 9pm on Tuesday 25 September.

We're sorry for any inconvenience.

News story: Fife named the most enterprising place in Britain for 2018

- Regions, universities and businesses including Teesside University, Darwen Aldridge Community Academy, Hounslow Chamber of Commerce and Fife Council honoured for excellence
- Awards form part of the UK Government's drive to create prosperous communities across the UK through modern Industrial Strategy

Small Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst today (Friday September 21) named the winners of this year's Enterprising Britain Awards.

Fife in Scotland has been named the UK's most enterprising region and other top accolades have gone to Darwen Aldridge Community Academy in Lancashire, Teesside University, Hounslow Chamber of Commerce and Fife Council.

Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

I'm proud to see a wealth of talent, creativity and innovation across the UK being recognised at the Enterprising Britain Awards. Entrepreneurialism is thriving in the UK, with more than 1,000 businesses starting up every day.

Through our modern Industrial Strategy, we are boosting productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in the skills, industries and infrastructure of the future.

UK Government Minister Lord Duncan said:

Businesses in Fife have proved they can compete with – and beat – the best in Britain. I'm delighted that Fife has been named the Most Enterprising Place in Britain.

The UK Government is supporting their enterprising spirit. Our modern Industrial Strategy helps to ensure that businesses across Scotland and the UK are supported and continue to thrive. The UK Government is also working with the Scottish Government to ensure that all regions of Scotland, including Fife, are covered by a city deal such as Tay Cities.

The Awards celebrate the work of public sector and UK Government-backed organisations that support and encourage entrepreneurial spirit, with

entrants competing in four categories – Promoting Entrepreneurial Spirit, Building Enterprise Skills, Improving the Business Environment and Support for Exporting with the overall winner receiving the title of the Most Enterprising Place in Britain.

Regions across the UK competed for the coveted title of Most Enterprising Place in Britain at the fifteenth Enterprising Britain Awards, with Fife awarded the top honour this year. In addition to the Most Enterprising Place in Britain award, Fife Council won the Promoting Entrepreneurial Spirit category for its achievements which included supporting young people to develop entrepreneurial skills, get into education, training or employment and creating an environment and programmes that are helping businesses grow.

Darwen Aldridge Community Academy in Lancashire won the Building Enterprise Skills category and Teesside University won the Improving the Business Environment category. Hounslow Chamber of Commerce's West London Export Club won the Support for Exporting category. Lambeth Council and Hull City Council's MC4C (Making Changes for Careers) project were highly commended by judges.

Fife Council's co-leaders, Cllr David Alexander and Cllr David Ross, said:

These awards show what can be achieved by applying an innovative approach to supporting businesses. We are fully committed to continually improving the prospects for our young workforce and in supporting the growth of enterprise across Fife.

We are delighted that Fife is rightfully getting recognition for creating an excellent environment to support our business community to develop and grow, which, in turn, are creating quality opportunities for our local communities.

Fife Council and its business partners continue to work tirelessly to create fairer economic growth, where everyone benefits, provide good employment opportunities and secure investment in the region.

Fife is playing a key part in developing two city deals in Scotland: Edinburgh and South East Scotland; and the Tay Cities. The UK Government, working with the Scottish Government and local partners, remains on track to agree a city deal with all 7 of Scotland's great cities.

The award winners will be formally recognised at the Enterprising Britain Awards ceremony which will be held at a House of Commons reception on October 30.

Notes to editors:

The winners are:

Promoting Entrepreneurial Spirit

Winner – Supporting Fife’s Entrepreneurial Journey – Fife Council

Building Enterprise Skills

Winner – Darwen Aldridge Community Academy, Lancashire.

Highly commended – MC4C (Making Changes for Careers) – Hull City Council

Improving the Business Environment

Winner – Teesside University

Highly commended – London Borough of Lambeth

Support for Exporting

Winner – Hounslow Chamber of Commerce West London Export Club

Most Enterprising Place in Britain – Fife Council