

Speech: Defence Secretary Michael Fallon at Faslane

It is a huge pleasure to welcome Permanent and Military Representatives of NATO to Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde.

Our nation's commitment to the Alliance – the bedrock of our defence – remains absolute.

In the past year alone we've increased our NATO efforts: policing Black Sea skies, leading half of its maritime missions and upping our efforts to mentor Afghan officers. And today, our Prime Minister is in Estonia visiting the 800 UK troops who, supported by our French and Danish allies, are leading NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence providing vital reassurance to our Eastern European allies.

But there's no greater illustration of our commitment to NATO which, after all, remains a nuclear alliance than our investment in the UK's independent nuclear deterrent submarine force. And today, we mark the milestone of its 350th patrol at its home base.

So, before I continue, I would like to thank our brave submariners and our submarine enterprise as a whole. For almost 50 years their efforts and those of their forebears have kept us safe every hour of every day. They remain the ultimate guarantors of our security.

And this event offers us a unique opportunity to remind ourselves why our nuclear programme remains so significant.

Protect Our People

First, it's about protecting our people. Our nuclear deterrent remains our only defence against the most extreme threats to our way of life.

Those threats are intensifying whether they come from North Korea's latest nuclear testing setting off a hydrogen bomb, launching ballistic missiles and reinforcing her reckless defiance of the international community. Or Russia, which not content with aggression in Ukraine and Crimea, has over the last few years repeatedly ramped up its nuclear rhetoric and in its latest exercise involving some 50,000 troops massed on the borders of Eastern Europe will also test nuclear capable ballistic missiles.

Now the UK remains firmly committed to the long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. As Secretary of State, I reduced the number of deployed warheads on each submarine from 48 to 40 and the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120. Just as we remain committed to reducing our overall stockpile of nuclear warheads to no more than 180 by the mid-2020s.

Yet, at the same time, we remain realistic. The total number of nuclear weapons in the world did not suddenly fall. Much as we would love to live in a world without nuclear weapons. We cannot uninvent them.

Our deterrent ensures our adversaries are left in no doubt that the benefits of any attack will be vastly outweighed by the consequences.

No credible alternative exists. And we see no reason to change our posture.

Protect Our Alliance But this brings me back to the point at which I started. Our nuclear deterrent isn't just essential for our security. it's essential for NATO's security as well. It forms one of the Alliance's key centres of decision making that complicates the calculations of our adversaries.

What is more, many nations, represented here today signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the late 1960s, safe in the knowledge they were covered by NATO's nuclear umbrella including the United Kingdom deterrent. Not only did that deal help halt the nuclear arms race at the time, it has helped to cut the world's nuclear stockpile by 85%.

It is no coincidence there hasn't been a major conflict involving nuclear powered states since the end of the Second World War.

Protect Our Future

Finally, our independent deterrent is a promise to protect our future. We don't know what threats lie around the corner.

Yet by giving the next generation every means necessary – from the conventional though to the nuclear – to deal with whatever comes round the corner.

We are strengthening their hand ensuring that they will have the means to deter potential threats into the 2040s, 2050s, 2060s and beyond.

That is why today we're building four Dreadnought class submarines which will enter service in the early 2030's.

That is why we're continuing to spend £1.3Bn over the next three years on facilities here at Faslane. And that is why we are building on the incredible advanced manufacturing skills found across Scotland to transform this base into a Royal Navy submarine centre of specialisation a base for all UK submarines providing 6,800 jobs now and 8,200 in the future.

Conclusion

So I hope you find your visit instructive and informative.

You can rely on the UK to remain not just 100 per cent committed to our NATO alliance but 100 per cent committed to our deterrent – a message Parliament confirmed overwhelmingly last year when it voted to maintain CASD. At the same time, we can never be complacent.

As we look towards next year's NATO summit and beyond we must not just ensure the Alliance's political and military leaders continue recognising the importance of nuclear capabilities as NATO adapts and modernise but continues to make the case about the importance of nuclear weapons to a new generation.

Our national safety the strength of our Alliance and the security of the world depends on it.

Press release: Primary Authority changes to benefit 250,000 more businesses

The changes simplify how businesses can comply with regulations by enabling them to choose to work with a single local authority who will offer assured, reliable and tailored regulatory advice.

Around 250,000 UK businesses are expected to benefit from the changes, which will also allow local authorities across the country to offer any business – and any person who wants to start a business – more reliable and tailored regulatory advice.

Launched in 2009, Primary Authority makes regulation easier and simpler for businesses to understand, meaning they can make the right investment decisions first time. 16,000 UK businesses are currently benefiting from Primary Authority partnerships, and today's extension will make this available to many more. An estimated 250,000 more will have signed up by 2020, over 95% of which will be small or medium-sized enterprises.

Margot James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility said:

Creating the conditions where every business can thrive is at the heart of this government's Industrial Strategy. Today's changes help bring down the barriers which hold back businesses by streamlining and clarifying regulation, giving businesses the confidence to invest, grow and hire.

We are committed to building an economy that works for all, in which consumers are properly protected, and these changes will ensure Britain remains among the best places in the world to start and grow a business.

For the first time start-ups and pre-start-ups will be able to access Primary

Authority, allowing Growth Hubs, Better Business for All and Local Enterprise Partnerships in all corners of the country to provide tailored, local advice on matters of regulation.

Andrew Butler, Community Protection Manager – Trading Standards, Hertfordshire County Council said:

Good regulation and good business go hand in hand. Working with the British Association of Removers enables us to create consistency for their members across the UK.

Tim Jones, Specialist Cheesemakers Association (SCA) Chairman said:

SCA has developed a successful and mutually beneficial relationship with our Primary Authority in Cornwall and would happily recommend this as a model to others seeking to encourage a consistent approach to enforcement and thereby improving product quality and safety to meet consumer needs.

[News story: Autonomous vehicles for farming: world first achieved](#)

[Harper Adams University](#) and York-based [Precision Decisions](#) have announced the successful completion of '[Hands Free Hectare](#)' – its project to plant, tend and harvest a crop using only autonomous vehicles and drones.

Using this method returned a yield of 4.5 tonnes of spring barley, against a predicted yield of 5 tonnes. It demonstrates that an entire crop can be grown from start to finish without people ever needing to go into the field to directly work the land.

The team believes it's the first in the world to farm a crop in this way. They now plan to replicate the trial with a winter crop.

Open to all

A number of machines were used in the trial. A lightweight Iseki tractor did the spraying, drilling and rolling. The harvest was then completed with a Sampo combine harvester.

Field work to support decision-making was also done autonomously. Drones with multispectral and RGB colour sensors were used to take aerial images of the

field, while a smaller Scout vehicle was used to video at crop level and physically take samples. These were sent back to the agronomist to analyse and assess what chemicals to apply and where, and when the crop was ready for harvest.

All of the machinery is readily available to farmers. The Iseki and Sampo are common models, while the navigation system came from a drone. The technology is open source.

Smaller machines were specifically chosen to limit the impact on the soil, improve precision and plant health. This supports the thinking that in future, farmers will manage fleets of smaller, autonomous vehicles. These will go out and work in the fields, allowing the farmer to use their time more effectively.

De-risking innovation

The whole project cost less than £200,000, funded by Precision Decisions and Innovate UK.

Innovate UK awarded just under £160,000 to support a feasibility study of the modified agriculture machinery. This helped to test the idea, prove its viability and take the project forward.

Clive Blacker, Director, Precision Decisions, said:

“Innovate UK is unique in allowing industry and academia to work on innovative ideas by de-risking projects for the benefit of UK agriculture.”

[Press release: PM meeting with Chancellor Merkel: 29 September 2017](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

“Prime Minister Theresa May and Chancellor Angela Merkel this morning held a bilateral meeting at the Tallinn Digital Summit in Estonia.

The Prime Minister began by congratulating Chancellor Merkel on her recent re-election and said she looked forward to continuing to work closely together.

The two leaders agreed on the importance of the Iran nuclear deal in maintaining regional and global security.

On the issue of Brexit, the Prime Minister reiterated her commitment to the UK being the strongest friend and partner to the EU after we leave.

She said her Florence speech had been intended to create momentum in the ongoing talks and that the response from the EU 27 had been constructive.

Chancellor Merkel welcomed the speech, and noted the good progress that had been made in negotiations this week. She looked forward to the next round of talks in early October.

The Prime Minister and the Chancellor both agreed on the importance of settling the issue of citizens' rights at the earliest opportunity.

The PM pointed to the commitment made in her Florence speech to incorporate the agreement reached on citizens' rights fully into UK law and make sure the UK courts can refer directly to it.

The PM also stressed it was in everybody's interests to agree to a time-limited implementation period once Britain leaves the EU, to provide certainty to businesses and others in both Britain and the EU."

Press release: Government confirms Birmingham bid for the Commonwealth Games 2022

- Culture Secretary Karen Bradley says Birmingham would put on a "brilliant Games that will showcase the best of Britain to the world and make the entire country proud"
- Birmingham bid team, government and Commonwealth Games England working together to finalise formal bid submission to be delivered to Commonwealth Games Federation tomorrow

Birmingham is to be the UK's official candidate city for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Culture Secretary Karen Bradley has announced.

The city's bid plans have impressed the government which believes that, should Birmingham's bid be successful, hosting the Games would provide value for the public money that would be invested and have benefits for Birmingham, the West Midlands and the UK as a whole.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Karen Bradley said:

The Commonwealth Games in Birmingham would be brilliant. It would showcase the best of Britain to the world and make the entire

country proud. Not only would it help grow the economy in the West Midlands and beyond, it would also leave a strong sports legacy, by upgrading facilities to benefit both elite athletes and the local community.

Birmingham's bid has the backing of the government and our focus now is to work alongside Birmingham's excellent bid team and [Commonwealth Games England](#) to put forward the strongest possible bid to the Commonwealth Games Federation, while ensuring that we get maximum value for money for the taxpayer.

The UK has fantastic expertise in staging major sporting events and it would be a privilege to welcome athletes and supporters from across the Commonwealth to Birmingham and the West Midlands in 2022.

[Birmingham's bid](#) uses competition venues in Solihull, Coventry, Sandwell and Leamington Spa as well as training venues across the region, bringing benefits not just to the city, but to the wider West Midlands.

Sitting at the heart of the UK, and representing the diversity of the Commonwealth, Birmingham is well positioned to attract people to the Games and to ensure that the benefits of hosting extend from the city and region, to across the UK.

Birmingham's bid showcases its youth and diversity alongside a world class reputation for sport and culture. With 95% of Birmingham's proposed competitive venues already in existence this is a low risk, high quality proposition that's well placed to meet the challenge of delivering the Games within five years.

Councillor Ian Ward, Interim Leader of Birmingham City Council and Chair of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bid Committee, said:

We have worked closely with the DCMS and the Treasury to create a compelling, compliant and value for money bid for Birmingham to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The support of the UK Government is a great endorsement of our bid and we are excited about finalising our submission and edging closer to the opportunity to bring the Games to Birmingham.

The support we have received from a range of public and private sector partners and from across the wider West Midlands region and beyond has been incredible and we thank everyone for backing Brum's bid to get us this far.

Ian Metcalfe, Chair of Commonwealth Games England said:

Anyone who experienced Manchester in 2002, London in 2012 or

Glasgow in 2014 will know just how special major sporting events in the UK can be. I am sure that Birmingham can stage an unforgettable Commonwealth Games in 2022. Birmingham's exciting bid shows that the Games will not only deliver a sport programme of the highest calibre but also provide an amazing platform for the country as a whole.

On behalf of Commonwealth Games England I would like to thank both the Government and Birmingham 2022 for their hard work and support to date.

Alongside the Birmingham 2022 team, we look forward to presenting the strongest possible bid to the Commonwealth Games Federation in the hope that we can welcome the whole Commonwealth movement to England for the Games in 2022.

The government's decision follows an extensive three phase assessment process that has tested Birmingham's hosting credentials. This included being subjected to scrutiny from an independent assessment panel and officials from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the submission of two formal applications and two site inspection visits.

Previous major sporting events hosted in the UK, such as the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and the 2015 Rugby World Cup, have all shown how major sporting events can generate a positive return on investment.

Work on the expected cost of hosting the Commonwealth Games 2022, if Birmingham was selected, is ongoing. Should Birmingham win the right to host the Games, the government will present to Parliament a full budget, once it has been finalised. This budget will include staging, the cost of constructing and upgrading facilities, security and a prudent contingency. If the bid is successful, the government will be the major funder with Birmingham City Council contributing 25 per cent to the cost of the Games. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport would manage the financing of the Games and will bear down heavily on costs to ensure value for public expenditure.

The government, Birmingham 2022 bid team and Commonwealth Games England are finalising the formal bid submission. Commonwealth Games England will submit the bid to the Commonwealth Games Federation tomorrow.

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