

News story: Sweden and Finland join UK-led response force

Sweden and Finland have joined a UK-led high-readiness force tasked with tackling threats and responding to crises around the world.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon welcomed the two Scandinavian nations to the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) during an official signing event at Karlberg Castle, in Stockholm, alongside Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist and Finnish Defence Minister Jussi Niinisto.

Launched in 2015, the joint force has continued to develop and will become fully operational next year, which could mean the mobilisation of 10,000 troops to respond quickly to a range of issues, using combat power, deterrence or humanitarian support.

Spearheaded by the UK, Sweden and Finland make the JEF a nine-nation-strong pool of forces, alongside Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Norway. The JEF builds on many years of experience between the UK and these countries.

During the Ebola outbreak a Dutch ship worked alongside the Royal Navy, and the Norwegians provided twice weekly C130 flights to support the UK response to the crisis. This example of joint work is a clear example of the kind of humanitarian support the JEF will be able to provide.

The JEF concept is distinct from existing international organisations, and can operate alone, but has the ability to integrate with other multinational high-readiness forces, and can support NATO, EU, and UN forces.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

In an uncertain world, the UK is spearheading this high-readiness joint force, which will help us tackle growing threats. Together, we pack a more powerful punch.

This is a Force of Friends, and alongside Sweden, Finland, and our other partners in this force, we remain committed to security, in Europe and around the world.

The UK's contribution to the JEF will include lead commando, airborne, armoured, aviation, and air and maritime task groups.

The first exercise took place last year at RAF St Mawgan, in Cornwall. Joint Venture 16 involved 1,600 UK personnel in the JEF force headquarters, known as the Standing Joint Force Headquarters and commanded by a British 2* general, which was put to the test in a dynamic fictional scenario.

Joint Venture 17 is already underway, with a similar number of personnel taking part from the Royal Navy, Army, and RAF, and is testing the UK's operational level command and control, using force elements from JEF partner nations.

These exercises, and future JEF training and operations, enable the nine partner nations to train, integrate, share knowledge, skills and resources.

Sir Michael added:

We are stronger together, and, this joint force clearly shows Britain is standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our international allies.

During the signing event, the Defence Secretary's Swedish and Finnish counterparts underlined their commitment to working with the other JEF members on cooperative European security and managing crises.

Minister for Defence of Sweden Peter Hultqvist said:

The JEF will complement our bilateral and multilateral cooperation focusing both on our close vicinity and a broader global agenda.

Minister of Defence of Finland Jussi Niinisto said:

Both Sweden and the UK are important partners for Finland and joining JEF gives our cooperation yet another dimension. We believe that the cooperation will enhance our national defence capability and deepen cooperation with our partners.

[News story: Potential Army Officers meet Defence Secretary](#)

The latest intake of the Army's School of Education's Potential Officer Development Programme (PODP) visited MOD Main Building in London this Tuesday as part of their intensive 12-week development programme.

As part of their visit, the potential officers had the opportunity to meet and put questions to Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon during a question and answer session.

In welcoming the students to the Ministry of Defence, Sir Michael said:

Our Armed Forces are held in high esteem, and recent events have shown that in difficult times people look to us for support.

And in such challenging times, it will be vitally important that our future leaders are thinking soldiers, capable and able to adjust to and overcome those threats which come against us.

We need the best people of each successive generation. You've got what it takes to be our future leaders, and I look forward to you not just making it to Sandhurst but spearheading our nation's charge towards a brighter future.

Potential Officer Annabelle Mash, 21 from the Isle of Wight said:

I am passionate about working in an organisation with a disciplined environment where there is the opportunity for me to develop as a person and with the ability to lead men and women confidently.

The Potential Officer Development Programme has been essential to my development, enabling me to develop my weaknesses and acting as a stepping stone towards my future career.

Potential Officer Reece Munnery, 22 from Tavistock, currently serves as a Private in the Parachute Regiment. Before joining the programme he served as a Section Second in Command. He said:

The Potential Officer Development Programme course has been very helpful in reassuring me that commissioning is the route I would like to go down, in building my confidence, and has been one of the most enjoyable courses I have attended in my Army career.

Potential Officer Moiz Abusin, 23 from Chertsey, completed his secondary education abroad in Dubai, before completing a degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the University of Nottingham.

He said:

I aspire to lead a life of adventure, achievement and service. Whether leading a platoon of soldiers on operations or helping to build critical infrastructure and rebuild lives after a natural disaster, I relish the prospect leading a life far from routine.

The programme supports serving soldiers and direct entry civilian candidates by equipping participants with the skills necessary to pass the Army Officer

Selection Board (AOSB).

On completion of the PODP, students will attend the AOSB to determine whether they are suitable for commissioning. If successful at this stage, they will then go on to begin Officer Cadet training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS).

News story: Defence Secretary steps up UK commitments to NATO

At a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers today, the Defence Secretary confirmed:

- The Royal Navy will take the lead of half of NATO's maritime forces for a year.
- Offensive cyber support to NATO operations.
- Increased UK support for advising the Afghan Government, and its defence and security forces.
- Strengthened cooperation on Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

The meeting also confirmed that Britain continues to meet its commitment of spending 2% of GDP on defence, as well as meeting the target of 20% defence spend on equipment and capabilities.

Leading NATO's maritime forces

HMS Duncan, a state of the art Type 45 Destroyer, will lead NATO's Standing Maritime Naval Group 2 (SNMG2), providing reassurance and deterrence in the Black Sea, as well as commanding NATO's counter migration activity in the Mediterranean. The naval force will also exercise together to improve the Alliance's readiness and ability to work together on operations, as well as conducting port visits in the region, including to Ukraine.

HMS Enterprise will also lead Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (SNMCMG2) from July this year. The Mine Countermeasures Group is a multinational, integrated maritime force, made up of vessels from a number of NATO countries. The group is mainly based in the Mediterranean and is capable of searching for and disposing of explosive ordnance. HMS Enterprise will be the flagship for the force, and will be joined by HMS Pembroke in the second half of 2017.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

As part of our leadership within the Alliance, we're stepping up our NATO commitments. Whether it's in the cyber domain, where I'm

committing UK support to NATO operations, or on the high seas with HMS Duncan and HMS Enterprise leading half of the Alliance's maritime forces in the Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Black Sea, Britain is playing its full part.

Strengthening cooperation on Maritime Patrol Aircraft

On the margins of today's meeting, Sir Michael signed a Statement of Intent on North Atlantic Maritime Patrol with his US and Norwegian counterparts. The agreement enhances collaboration on each nation's P-8A Maritime Patrol Aircraft programmes and will provide NATO Allies with multiple benefits in the maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine areas.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The P-8A aircraft will play a vital role in protecting the UK's nuclear deterrent, the two new Queen Elizabeth Class carriers and supporting our NATO Allies.

By investing in these aircraft, as part of our £178 billion defence equipment programme, we're showing that we're serious in tackling the threats on NATO's North Atlantic flank.

And in stepping up our cooperation with the US and Norway on maritime patrol around our shores, we will help keep Britain safer and more secure.

Stepping up to counter terror around the world

The Defence Secretary also confirmed today that Britain is stepping up its support to Afghanistan, with around 85 extra service personnel to support NATO's mission in the country.

Britain has an enduring commitment to Afghanistan, and supporting the Government and the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANDSF) helps to prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terror.

The increase of UK personnel comes in response to a NATO request, which was made to all partner nations, for additional troops to support the Alliance's train, advise and assist mission in the country.

The additional troops will continue to work in non-combat roles mentoring the Afghan Army and Police, the Afghan Air Force, and will provide further support to the ANDSF in training and leadership development.

Underlining Britain's leadership within NATO, the uplift will add to the already significant contribution of 500 troops the UK already makes to NATO's

Resolute Support Mission.

Endgame for Daesh in Mosul

Three years on since the start of the so-called caliphate was proclaimed in Mosul, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon underlined that Daesh faces its endgame in the city where it originally launched its ideological campaign of terror and violence.

Sir Michael said that the terrorist group faces irreversible momentum and progress from local forces on the ground, and UK and Coalition aircraft in the skies. UK aircrew have now hit over 700 targets in support of operations to liberate Mosul since last year. In addition to operations over Mosul, the RAF has so far struck 69 targets in and around Raqqa in support of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) advancing on the city from the north, east and west.

With Daesh losing ground on two fronts in Mosul and Raqqa, around 70% of territory once controlled by the terror group in Iraq and 51% in Syria, has now been liberated. This amounts to over 4 million Iraqis and Syrians who have been freed from Daesh tyranny.

News story: Grave of brave Sussex born WW1 sailor finally rededicated almost a century later

Cross referencing research was key in identifying the final resting place of Able Seaman (AB) Reginald Cecil Evenden. The 23 year old died along with 53 comrades as their warship, HMS Recruit, was sunk during World War 1 on 9 August 1917. Almost a century after AB Evenden's body was washed up on a beach in Blokhust, Denmark, a rededication service was held on 28 June 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Hune Churchyard, northern Jutland, Denmark.

The service, which was a fitting tribute to the sacrifice made by AB Evenden, was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, and was conducted by the Reverend Richard Rowe, Royal Navy.

For almost 100 years AB Evenden has had no known grave as he was buried in a local cemetery to where his body was found as an "Unknown British Seaman of the Royal Navy". Due to research conducted by a member of the Danish public, which was investigated and verified by JCCC, it is now known that his body was washed up on Blokhust Strand beach on 5 September 1917. He was not identified at the time due to being in the sea for nearly a month. However, with cross referencing local church records, it was possible to link the body

to HMS Recruit.

The church records indicated that he was buried in Hune Parish churchyard by the parish priest on 9 September 1917. The records state that he was an English sailor and that on his wedding ring finger he was wearing a gold ring with the letters "R.C.E" engraved on the outside. Inside the ring was another inscription – "Dear Mother died 10 June 1915".

It has now been confirmed that no other ships sank in that area of the North Sea in August or September 1917. The positioning of HMS Recruit when it sank is consistent with where AB Evenden's body was found and of the casualties from HMS Recruit; no one else had the initials "R.C.E". It has also been confirmed that his mother did pass away on 10 June 1915.



(left to right) Henrik Kleis, Hon Consul representing the British Ambassador to Denmark; and Flight Lieutenant Ben Wallis, representing HM Armed Forces and Chief of Defence Staff, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

It is thanks to 2 members of the Danish public who drew our attention to the church records in Hune that we have been able to identify this grave as that of Reginald Evenden.

It's a great honour to have his family with us today as we pay tribute to him for his sacrifice and rededicate the headstone that

now bears his name with honour.



Members of Reginald Evenden's family, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Reverend Richard Rowe, said:

It has been my duty and privilege to have been involved in the rededication and naming of a headstone as the mortal remains of an "unknown sailor" were identified and named. As a Royal Navy Chaplain it was fitting to reclaim 1 of our own, to support his family and thank the local community for the dignity and care they have taken, and continue to take, over many years.

Almost 100 years after he died, AB Evenden's grave has been rededicated and a new headstone bearing his name has been provided by the CWGC.

Speech: RUSI Landwarfare Conference

INTRODUCTION

CONSTANT COMPETITION

It's a great pleasure to be here and to return as the Defence Secretary.

I have a slightly strange record in that this is the fourth time in three years I've been appointed for this job.

Truly, as our conference theme reminds us, we are living in an age of constant competition!

Yet, if we really want to understand what the phrase means, we need to take a step back.

100 years ago our main dangers came from rival nations threatening us with conventional war.

The Army was expected to play a pivotal role fighting at close range.

It did so with unprecedented courage amidst the mud and blood of monumental battles such as Passchendaele which we will commemorate shortly.

But the Cold War introduced another level of threat – the shocking prospect of nuclear war.

Our deterrent relied not just on nuclear submarines, or NATO partnerships, but also we shouldn't forget the physical presence of our troops, ranging ever ready along the frontiers of the iron curtain.

Yet globalisation and the relentless advance of technology are today posing our nations a very different set of problems.

We have state aggressors like Russia testing our allies along Europe's eastern border using proxies to destabilise Ukraine and annex Crimea and deploying hybrid means to undermine democracy in countries far and wide.

And then we have non-state actors.

Those lacking the power to threaten our nation as a whole, but intent on causing us as much carnage as possible as we've seen so recently – in Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park.

And we have anonymous cyber foes – often sponsored by state or non-state entities, lurking behind a veil of encryption targeting our national infrastructure as we saw with the recent cyber strike on Parliament.

That is not a Cold War.

It is a grey war. Permanently teetering on the edge of outright hostility. Persistently hovering around the threshold of what we wouldn't normally consider acts of war.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LAND POWER

What does that mean for land power?

We will still look to you to seize and hold territory to fight in close proximity with...and among the population since our willingness to employ land power is critical to our deterrent.

Yet the question is neither about how or when we respond with appropriate force since we will do so at a time and in the manner of our choosing.

Instead the real question is how we retain enough room for manoeuvre, as equipment costs escalate and the demands, from a multitude of diverse, complex and concurrent dangers, grow.

And my thesis today is that the only way our armies can prepare for the battlefields of tomorrow is by placing innovation and adaptability at their core.

INVESTMENT

That will require investment.

We've chosen in UK to spend on bigger, bolder defence, increasing our budget year on year...at 0.5 per cent ahead of inflation.

In 2016 our forces received some £35bn.

This year it will be £36bn.

And next year it will be £37bn.

But having more money doesn't mean we can do everything we want

It has always been, it always will be a question of prioritisation.

Thanks to the delegated model Service Chiefs have responsibility, accountability and authority for their own budgets.

And I know that the Army feels incentivised to review its processes and structures to find more efficient, smarter and more productive, ways of doing things so they can reinvest in new projects to keep us on the cutting edge.

At the same time, the Service Chiefs know that delivering some programmes will be contingent on making efficiency savings.

This helps us focus so, by the time, we reach our Annual Budget Cycle we are concentrating not on the nice-to-haves but having more money for the things we need the most.

And thanks to those decisions we now have a much clearer sense of the things that really matter:

1. PLATFORMS

First, platforms.

The history of landwarfare is punctuated by moments of brilliance, instances where innovation and imagination changed the course of operations.

So the longbow, became the musket, became the machine gun.

The chariot gave way to the cavalryman.

And then a century ago at Cambrai the tank reached the Hindenburg line, triggering another revolution in warfare.

So today we're using our £178bn equipment programme as the catalyst for a further step-change in capability as we introduce Ajax.

Ajax is more than just a piece of armour.

Ajax is an Information Age sensor. Able to Hoover up data from the ground and air for miles around. Capable of detecting the invisible signs of cyber disturbance. Able to offer a more complete picture of an increasingly dispersed battle space, while co-ordinating our response with the wider force.

And AJAX isn't the only bit of capability we're bringing on line.

We are using our rising budget to invest in a whole raft of high-tech capability, unmanned aerial systems, autonomous vehicles and Apache attack helicopters.

Today I'm delighted to announce we have awarded a £48m six-year contract extension with Aviation Training International, to enable our ground crews to master all there is to know about this mighty flying machine. From avionics and armaments, to refuelling and rearming.

In a couple of months' time we will be showcasing some of this next generation kit at DSEI.

These investments are not just about replacing old kit.

We now are buying equipment that gives us far more bang for our buck.

In a data driven era investment in vehicles of course must go hand in hand with an investment in networks

That's why we're enormously augmenting our processing power to handle the massive upload of new information

We've already taken the first step.

We are investing in MORPHEUS, a next-generation tactical communication and information system that will give us faster and easier connectivity.

In the longer-term, our Land environment tactical command and information system will eventually connect all of our sensors and systems.

2. PEOPLE

Of course, great kit alone doesn't guarantee an agile and adaptable Army.

So the second major investment has to be in people.

Before I continue I want to say that our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of Corporals Matthew Hatfield and Darren Neilson of the Royal Tank Regiment who died after a live firing exercise in Castlemartin on 14th June, and the other two soldiers who were injured in the same deeply sad incident.

The investigation is on-going but we are determined to get to the bottom of this tragic accident because our people are our greatest asset.

That's why we remain committed to maintaining the overall size of the Armed Forces and an Army capable of fielding a warfighting division.

Mass will always be a vital part of our deterrence.

So we will maintain an Army that remains one of the very few nations in the world capable of fielding that warfighting Division.

And when it comes to Reserves our confidence in our Reserves plans is reflected by the fact that the Infrastructure and Projects Authority has recently taken the Army Reserves Programme off its books – the only programme to be so assured in the last 5 years.

But, in a more competitive labour marketplace, it becomes even harder to retain, retrain and recruit the right people with the right mix of skills.

So let me say a word on each of these.

On retention – our flexible engagement reforms championed by Sir Nicholas Carter...are key. Our new legislation will be published tomorrow.

We are going to make it easier for personnel to temporarily change the nature of their service, to give them a chance to work part-time or be temporarily protected from deployment to support an individual's personal circumstances where operational need allows. That's retention.

On to training.

The battle for information and influence will increasingly matter, so our soldiers will need to have a raft of new skills.

Becoming more adept at crunching the data churned out by their equipment.

More aware of what that information means.

More able to make swifter, better informed decisions

And we will need to increase our training in counter reconnaissance, because the information environment is far from being a passive space is now a hotly contested battleground, where we are constantly competing to correct the false narrative of our adversaries with a faster truth.

For that to happen, the Army will need to keep adapting its structures.

We're starting today.

I can announce that we are now bringing the Royal Signals and Intelligence Corps together under a shared command.

The Intelligence Corps off course packages, collates and analyses vital information on the battlefield.

The Royal Corps of Signals provides the state-of-the-art technology to disseminate information quickly, in an agile way.

Working together those two Corps will bring a laser-like focus and co-ordination to our cyber efforts.

That's retention and retraining, finally to recruitment.

There is a challenge here that I want to set before this conference.

We know we will need to reach out to the brilliant brains of tomorrow

Those who put apps above artillery, who pride brains above bayonets.

We know we have to maintain the Army as an attractive proposition for those who might not have normally considered a military career – the cyber geeks and tech wizards.

The question is how do we attract that element in the new generation?

Let me put forward a few initial thoughts to frame your discussions.

We'll need to do more with our Reservists, more with our Whole Force of civilians and industrialists because they bring a fresh injection of new ideas, new approaches and outside expertise.

Second, we must also be more open to challenge from the younger generation

The Army is an institution. rightly reveres its great traditions but when they tell us, for example, that there are savvier ways for us communicate – let's listen.

I'm glad that in the earlier session we laid down a marker here by inviting our juniors delegates to come up and show us a thing or two.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

My final point is that an agile Army of the future requires strong partnerships sharing the burden of complex global challenges.

Our 2015 SDSR set us the challenge of becoming more international-by-design.

So, even as we step back from the political framework of EU, you will find us sticking by that plan and stepping up to confront those global challenges.

That's why we will strengthen our commitment to NATO, the cornerstone of defence.

By increasing our budget year on year, we're not just about fielding a division but to put our troops at the service of the Alliance.

Currently, the Army is heading up NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Taskforce.

A couple of weeks ago I saw it in action in Romania, partnering with 14 other nations in Exercise Noble Jump.

At the same time, our troops are leading our Enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia and Poland.

By the end of this month we'll have 10,000 soldiers supporting the NATO Alliance in one way or another.

Yet our efforts here show how we're getting smarter as we adapt to the new era of competition.

We are not just using training and exercises to get our people in shape, but to deliver strategic effects

Messages of reassurance to our allies.

Messages of deterrence to our adversaries.

But if we want to be really smart we have to be able to spot a crisis before it turns into a catastrophe.

Or better still before it even arises.

That's why we're creating those Specialised Infantry teams.

Invested with specialist skills relevant to different parts of the globe.

There to sense danger, to provide early warning, to build the partnerships that head off trouble down the track.

And for proof of our commitment to keep reaching out you only need to look around the room.

This might be a UK land warfare conference, but we have here a huge number of guests drawn from our allies around the world.

You're very welcome.

PUBLIC

So platforms, people and partnerships are the key to us, the agile edge we

need in this era of constant competition.

But we need to take the public with us on this journey.

Since the end of our Afghanistan and Iraq fighting campaigns, the public no longer has the same level of awareness about what our Armies are up to.

As the threats become ever greyer and murkier, as our responses necessarily become sometimes more opaque, as our adversaries become ever more effective at using misinformation to play upon public fears, it's all the more incumbent on us to shine the light of transparency.

On this new greyer dawn, reassuring people that we're on the case, showing them we do have the means to respond, that there is not simply a cost but a real value to what we do.

That's why the public discourse, why open debate and why conferences such as this are so vital.

CONCLUSION

A century ago, after years of stalemate, that Mark IV tank burst through the Hindenberg Line.

An event that wouldn't just lead to the Allied Armies winning the war but to war itself being transformed.

Today we are living in an age of instability, an age of constant competition.

But the answer is for our Armies keep adapting, to keep becoming truly agile.

ENDS