

# Press release: UK and France commit to new defence cooperation

The Defence Secretary has joined the Prime Minister, Chancellor, Foreign Secretary and other members of the Cabinet at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for the 2018 UK-France Summit.

The two countries are the only European powers with the ability and political will to deploy and sustain significant military force. A number of initiatives have been announced at the Summit to strengthen UK-France cooperation, building on the [2010 Lancaster House Treaties](#).

The measures agreed between the UK and France today will include:

- President Macron has agreed to further French support to the UK-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia in 2019, which will help to deter Russian aggression towards NATO Allies and bolster the security of NATO's Eastern flank.
- The UK will deploy RAF Chinook helicopters to Mali to provide logistical support the French counter-terrorism mission there. This will increase British logistical support to France's Operation BARKHANE, which up to now has been limited to RAF strategic air transport flights. The UK already supports the UN mission in Mali, along with military support to UN missions in South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. British military personnel are also training the Nigerian armed forces in countering the threat from Boko Haram.
- The creation of a UK-France Defence Ministerial Council, creating a permanent and regular forum in which UK and French Defence cooperation can be discussed by the two Defence Ministers
- Agreement between the UK and France on the importance of the ability of the UK's defence industry to continue to be able to engage in European defence research and capability development programmes
- The UK will work with France and other European partners to support the development of the proposed European Intervention Initiative (EII). The EII will be a defence cooperation framework that aims to improve operational planning and coordination of military deployments among European partners with meaningful capabilities. The EII will be separate from the EU, and will be complementary to existing NATO, EU and JEF military structures and initiatives.

- Confirmation that the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, CJEF, will be fully operational by 2020 and able to carry out a full range of complex and demanding expeditionary military combat operations on land, in the air and at sea; or to provide peace-keeping, disaster relief or humanitarian assistance.

The countries' strong defence ties were symbolised at the summit by a flypast from a Typhoon and a Rafale jet and French and British cadets joining attendees to witness the Guard of Honour.

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## [News story: UK to step up French operations in Africa as PM and President Macron meet for UK-France Summit](#)

The Prime Minister is expected to make the announcement as part of the UK-France Summit at The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where she will discuss the UK's strong and wide-ranging bilateral relationship with President Macron.

The helicopters, which will provide logistic support to French troops, are part of a wider effort to increase stability in the Sahel region of Africa in order to tackle Islamist terrorism.

UK and French efforts in the region aim to provide greater stability, reducing the global terrorist threat and stemming the flow of illegal migration to Europe.

The UK has been a long-standing supporter of UN, EU and African Union military operations in Mali and has worked with international partners to prevent extremists from using the ungoverned space in the Sahel to plan and launch attacks on Europe, as well as counter the illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and wildlife.

This is in addition to existing wider support to Africa including doubling our UN peacekeeping contribution with additional deployments to South Sudan and Somalia. Today the UK and France also agreed to work together to ensure EU African Peace Facility funding for AMISOM in Somalia.

The deployment of Chinooks to Mali will increase British support to France's Operation BARKHANE, in addition to strategic air transport flights already being carried out by the RAF.

British military personnel will not be involved in combat operations, but the deployment of Chinooks will provide a niche capability providing logistical support but also saving lives by avoiding the need to move troops by ground where they are more vulnerable to attack.

Alongside the military contribution, DfID will allocate £50m of additional aid including lifesaving humanitarian support for hundreds of thousands of people affected by epidemics, natural disasters and conflict across Mali, Niger, Chad, North Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

This will provide 320,000 people with emergency food and nutrition support and provide protection for 255,000 internally displaced people, returnees, refugees and their host communities. It will also supply clean water and better sanitation for 150,000 people.

The FCO is also exploring ways to better support the UK national interest in the region by enhancing the UK diplomatic presence.

In addition, the Home Office will work with key African partners to build their capability to tackle human trafficking in support of the UK's migration and modern slavery agenda. Discussions on taking this work forward will take place with the French after the Summit.

France has also agreed to commit troops to the UK-led NATO battlegroup in Estonia in 2019, building on the successful joint deployment which the Prime Minister and President Macron visited together last year. These personnel will make up part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Eastern Europe, providing deterrence in the face of increasing Russian assertiveness.

This further deployment of UK and French forces alongside our Estonian allies represents both the UK and France's shared commitment to upholding the deterrence and defence posture of NATO, and more widely our firm resolve and commitment to European security.

Today's Summit, which will be attended by UK Cabinet Ministers and their counterparts, will mark President Macron's first visit to the UK as President.

While Summits in previous years have focussed on defence and security, foreign policy and nuclear energy, the 2018 Summit will be broadened to cover the full spectrum of the UK-France bilateral relationship including prosperity, innovation, science and education.

Hundreds of thousands of British citizens live in France while hundreds of thousands of French nationals have chosen to make the UK their home. And the two countries share £71 billion in trade, making France the UK's third largest trading partner.

The Summit today will reflect the broadness of the UK-France relationship, with wide-ranging discussions also expected to focus on how the two countries can work together to address the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by new technologies.

Ministers will also discuss ways in which the existing deep linguistic and cultural ties between the UK and France can be strengthened through pupil exchanges and shared education and cultural initiatives.

As well as attending the Summit the Prime Minister and President are expected to have a private lunch and attend a reception at the Victoria and Albert Museum in the evening.

The Prime Minister said:

Today's Summit will underline that we remain committed to defending our people and upholding our values as liberal democracies in the face of any threat, whether at home or abroad.

But our friendship has always gone far beyond defence and security and the scope of today's discussions represents its broad and unique nature.

And while this Summit takes place as the UK prepares to leave the EU, this does not mean that the UK is leaving Europe.

What is clear from the discussions we will have today is that a strong relationship between our two countries is in the UK, France and Europe's interests, both now and into the future.

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## News story: New stealth fighter jet 'takes off'

At an event held at the Institute for Engineering and Technology, the Defence Secretary was joined by MPs and journalists to see what it is like to fly and land the pioneering fighter jet which will protect British lives around the world.

The global F-35 programme will support 20,000 UK jobs over the 30 year production period and already the programme has generated over £9 billion for UK industry. The cockpit demonstrator gave the Defence Secretary a feel for flying the new state-of-the-art stealth aircraft, allowing him to practice landing and taking off from the new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

After flying the jet demonstrator, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today demonstrates that we are investing in our brave Armed Forces by making sure they have the very best equipment, securing tens of thousands of British manufacturing and engineering jobs, and

ensuring Britain will always play a leading role in making the world a safer place.

These pioneering stealth jets will protect British lives as we face intensifying and evolving threats at home and abroad.

The F-35 is the most advanced and dynamic fighter aircraft in our history, and will defend this country from terrorists, collect crucial intelligence, and safeguard our national interests from those who seek to do us harm.

The Defence Secretary was guided through the flight by Squadron Leader Andy Edgell and Lieutenant Commander Adam Hogg, two of the UK's F-35 pilots putting the aircraft through its paces over in the United States. Alongside its short take-off and vertical landing capability, the F-35B's unique combination of stealth, cutting-edge radar, sensor technology, and electronic warfare systems provide world-beating capability of a fifth-generation fighter.

The UK currently has 14 F-35s based in the US, operated by around 150 UK personnel. These aircraft will arrive in the UK later this year at RAF Marham and initial flight trials will take place from the UK's new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, in autumn off the coast of the US.

During his visit to the cockpit demonstrator, the Defence Secretary also met with representatives from some of the 500 UK companies who are in the F-35 supply chain. UK industry will provide approximately 15% of each F-35 to be built and, with more than 3,000 aircraft projected, the programme will support 20,000 UK jobs over the 30 year production phase.

Lockheed Martin UK Chief Executive Peter Ruddock said:

To date, the F-35 programme has generated \$12.9 billion (pounds figure) in contracts for British suppliers and that investment will grow as we ramp up towards full rate production. The F-35 will provide the UK Armed Forces with a game-changing capability that will allow the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to project power around the world for decades to come.

Operated jointly by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, the F-35 Lightning jets will fly from both land bases and the UK's new aircraft carriers. The programme is on target to achieve Initial Operating Capability (IOC) by December 2018, meaning that UK F-35s will be able to operate from land bases from this point.

Following successful trials on the land based ski-ramp design, which is featured on the UK flagship carrier, and with RAF Marham runway infrastructure now complete as part of a £250m major investment programme, the UK has made significant progress over the last year in preparation for the F-35 arrival later this year.

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## [News story: Defence Secretary hosts Qatari counterpart at historic Horse Guards](#)

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his Qatari counterpart, His Excellency Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, have reaffirmed the important long-term relationship between the UK and Qatar during a meeting in London.

The visit follows the Defence Secretary's trip to Qatar last December, where he signed a [£6bn deal](#) for Typhoon jets and missiles, supporting thousands of British jobs at BAE Systems.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Qatar is a vital partner in the fight against Daesh, hosting the headquarters of the coalition air campaign which is still coordinating strikes on targets in Syria every day.

Our two countries face the same threats from violent extremism and a mutual interest in supporting stability in the region, which will deliver security at home.

The visit to London focussed on defence and security cooperation between the UK and Qatar ahead of the 2022 World Cup, which is being hosted by Qatar, and lessons learned from the military support to the London 2012 Olympics. In addition to the Defence Secretary, Al-Attiyah also met with Security Minister Ben Wallace and the Deputy National Security Advisor Paddy McGuinness. His Excellency also inspected the men and horses of the Blues and Royals at the Army's historic London Headquarters at Horse Guards Parade.

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## [News story: War disablement pension rates 2018](#)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood) has announced the new rates of war pensions and allowances proposed from April 2018 are set out in the [War disablement pension 2018 rates document](#). The annual uprating of war pensions and allowances for 2018 will take place from the week beginning 9 April. Rates for 2018 are increasing by 3.0% in

line with the September 2017 consumer prices index.