

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.

[News story: Bristol seminar: We need to talk about Women](#)



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[News story: Penny Mordaunt statement on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis](#)

Reacting to the release of the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

I urge the international community to continue to support the Government of Bangladesh to find the best solutions to protect Rohingya victims of ethnic cleansing who are in dire need. The UK has led the way to help alleviate suffering and meet humanitarian needs in Cox's Bazar, and will continue to be a leading donor.

The sprawling camps have provided safety for those who have fled cruel violence, but this place of refuge is becoming unsustainable with overcrowding compounding the risks of the coming monsoon and cyclone season. Rohingya families and host communities urgently require smaller and more manageable facilities for the future, and planning for the medium term.

At the same time we must remember that the origins of and solution to this crisis lie in Burma. The UK will continue to maintain international pressure on Burma to create the conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified returns overseen by the UN.

This crisis has not left the minds of the British public and I would like to thank them for their remarkable generosity in raising millions of pounds for lifesaving food, water and shelter which is making a real difference.

[Press release: Homes England invests in Otterpool Park](#)

The land that Homes England has bought from Somerston Capital lies near junction 11 of the M20, between Lympne and the Lympne Industrial Estate. It was always included in the area within which the plans for Otterpool Park are being drawn up.

Otterpool Park is a proposed garden town of up to 12,000 homes near Folkestone. It is being put forward by Shepway District Council and Cozumel Estates Ltd the owners of the former racecourse at Westenhanger. This investment is further evidence of government support for a new generation of garden towns to help deliver the high quality homes the country needs.

When the government announced the formation of Homes England it said it would

play a major role in securing land in areas where people want to live to help deliver an average of 300,000 homes a year by the mid 2020s.

Paul Kitson, General Manager for the South East for Homes England, said:

Buying this land shows how Homes England is determined to use our finance and expertise to expand the delivery of affordable new homes and connect ambitious partners.

We have been very impressed by the ambition shown by the Council and landowners to deliver Otterpool Park – a garden town for the 21st century. Owning this land will give us a voice in delivering a community that will meet the local need for homes in a place that is truly environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

David Monk, Leader of Shepway District Council welcomed the news:

I am delighted that Homes England has co-invested with the Council to deliver Otterpool Park. It shows the government has faith in our plans for this garden town.

This investment will help us deliver an even better place so that our children and grandchildren can have the homes they need in a community that will also meet their needs for jobs, access to the countryside, transport links, schools, health centres and a great quality of life.

Notes to editors

Homes England is the new housing delivery organisation that has been created to adopt a more commercial approach to respond to the long term housing challenges facing this country. The new, expanded agency will play a far bigger role in investing in supply and intervening in the market to help deliver 300,000 homes a year by the middle of the next decade.

Homes England will act differently from its predecessor, bringing together money, land, expertise and planning and compulsory purchase powers to accelerate the supply of new homes and address affordability issues in areas of highest demand.

Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Gentiloni: 16 March 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

This afternoon the Prime Minister discussed the Salisbury attack with Prime Minister Gentiloni of Italy.

The Prime Minister reiterated that this was not just an act against the UK but a clear breach of chemical weapons convention.

Prime Minister Gentiloni affirmed Italy's full support and solidarity with the UK and the leaders agreed on the need for continued international co-operation to maintain pressure on Russia.

They looked forward to meeting and holding further discussions at next week's European Council.