

# 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.

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## [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.

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## **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.

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## **Press release: £7.5 million fund for councils' digital innovation opens**

Councils seeking to transform their public services through digital innovation can apply to a new [£7.5 million fund](#) from 24 September, Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP has announced.

Speaking at the LocalGovCamp event in Birmingham, Minister Sunak invited applications from local authorities to change the way they invest in technology, share expertise and ensure members of the public receive the best quality digital services from their local council.

Grants of up to £100,000 will be available for projects which demonstrate they benefit local public services and have the potential to be rolled out more widely across the country.

Local Government Minister, Rishi Sunak MP, said:

Digital innovation is re-shaping our lives, and many local authorities are at the forefront of embracing technology in ingenious ways to improve services for the public.

Whether it's an app to report fly-tipping, or a slick web solution to pay your council tax, we want to know the best ideas so we can help to make them happen.

I would also like to encourage councils to sign up to our Local Digital Declaration, so we can all support each other and build on each other's work to revolutionise public services.

The fund will also be used to provide digital skills training for at least 1,000 staff working on digital solutions at councils.

The fund's opening comes after the government made a "digital pledge" backed by the £7.5 million of government funding with the launch of a Local Digital Declaration in July. The declaration aims to connect the work of local government digital teams to deliver better local public services.

Alongside this, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government established a new team to work with councils to help them deliver on their declaration commitments.

Local authorities can apply and find out more information at [localdigital.gov.uk/fund](http://localdigital.gov.uk/fund)

Local authorities and central government departments in England are eligible to submit an expression of interest, whether individually or in partnership with other local authorities. All bids will need to demonstrate input from at least two local authorities.

The bidding is not open to non-public sector organisations. However, there are no restrictions on winning bids to commission a private company to help deliver the project.

The deadline to submit an expression of interest is 5 October 2018. A decision on which projects have been chosen is expected to be announced by 3 December.

A blog about the fund's opening is at: [mhclgdigital.blog.gov.uk](http://mhclgdigital.blog.gov.uk)

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**[News story: Defence Secretary announces extension of support to](#)**

# Ukraine's Armed Forces

In his first visit as Defence Secretary to Ukraine, Gavin Williamson announced that the UK will be extending its military training operation there for a further two years until 2020.

Mr Williamson met with Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak and General of the Army, Victor Muzhenko, to discuss the threats faced by Ukrainian Armed Forces. He also announced the expansion of the UK Defence Section in Kyiv and introduction of a permanent Naval Attaché to help build Ukrainian naval capability.

The Defence Secretary also met President Poroshenko reaffirming the UK's commitment to their country. He also discussed the Russian security forces continuing to disrupt merchant vessels trying to access Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov, posing negative effects on Ukraine's economy.

He also travelled to Marinka in the east of Ukraine to see the effects of the four-year conflict in the Donbas region, and received an operational update from the Joint Force Operation Commander Lt Gen Serhiy Nayev. The visit to Marinka highlighted the severity of the ongoing conflict, including its humanitarian and environmental impacts, driven by Russian aggression.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I witnessed first-hand the suffering caused by the brutal conflict in eastern Ukraine – a conflict that is being prolonged by the Russian-backed separatists.

By extending and expanding our training programmes, we are sending a clear message – we support the people of Ukraine and are firmly committed to its sovereignty as it faces down blatant Russian aggression.

In his first visit as Defence Secretary to Ukraine, Gavin Williamson announced the UK will extend its military training operation for a further two years. Crown copyright.

The training, delivered through Operation Orbital, has been expanded in 2018 to include anti-armour, infantry skills, counter-sniping and mortar planning. This is in addition to the defensive skills programmes such as the identification of mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), medical care and logistics that UK personnel have been delivering since early 2015.

British personnel have trained over 9,500 of the Ukrainian Armed Forces since the start of Operation Orbital in 2015. The coming year will see a continuing growth in joint training activity with our Canadian allies as well as

initiatives between UK personnel and other nations who have also committed themselves to supporting Ukraine.