

News story: Defence Secretary discusses threats with US counterpart

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

Both countries have recently unveiled new plans for improving security, following the UK's announcement of the Modernising Defence Programme and the US publication of its National Defense Strategy.

The two programmes are closely aligned in their thinking, 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.

In his first visit to Washington DC as Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson said:

Our two countries face the same threats in an increasingly dangerous world. We stand shoulder to shoulder on the battlefield, we share vital intelligence and technology, and our century-long relationship is the closest of any two allies across the globe. Together, we will always keep the streets of the UK and the US safe, protect our citizens, and defend our way of life.

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

Current threats to prosperity and safety, including Russia, North Korea and the ongoing fight against Daesh, were high on the agenda during a meeting at the Pentagon that reinforced the UK's position as the US's defence partner of choice.

NATO remains the cornerstone of UK and US defence and ahead of the NATO Summit in July, both countries have been calling for other nations to invest more in security. The US and UK are the two largest contributors to NATO, and among just six countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence.

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 pursues new relationships and trade deals outside of Europe, which the Secretary of State

emphasised when he visited the British-American Business Association during his visit.

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

News story: UK Space Agency backs Spire as ESA space mission provider

Artist's impression of an ARTES programme mission. Credit: ESA.

Today's announcement by UK Government ministers Lord Henley and Lord Duncan, gives the green light to missions designed to showcase the technology and put UK companies into orbit faster and at a lower cost. The UK is the largest funder of the European Space Agency's Advanced Research in Telecommunications Satellites (ARTES) programme, which transforms research into successful commercial projects.

The funding from the UK Space Agency was announced by Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on a visit to the satellite powered data company's UK base in Glasgow, where Spire intends to create new jobs to add to its existing workforce.

Business Minister, the Rt. Hon. Lord Henley, said:

"Thanks to this new funding, Spire will be able to cement its activities in the UK, develop new technologies and use space data to provide new services to consumers that will allow businesses to access space quicker and at a lower cost – offering an exciting opportunity for the UK to thrive in the commercial space age.

"Through the government's Industrial Strategy, we are encouraging other high-tech British businesses to pursue more commercial opportunities with the aim of growing the UK's share of the global space market to 10% by 2030."

UK Government Minister for Scotland Lord Duncan said:

"Spire Global is at the cutting edge of technology, using satellite data to track ships, planes and weather in some of the world's most remote regions. They're also an important employer in Glasgow, investing in the area and recognising the talent of Scotland's world class engineers and scientists. We know that the space industry is important to Scotland's economy and this UK Government funding will help companies like Spire stay at the forefront of

this field.”

The ARTES Pioneer programme is designed to support industry by funding the demonstration of advanced technologies, systems, services and applications in a representative space environment. Part of this is to support one or more Space Mission Providers, which could provide commercial services to private companies or public bodies.

“Spire’s infrastructure, capabilities, and competencies all support our submission to this program. For the launch of our 50+ satellite constellation, we quickly became our own best customer,” said Theresa Condor, Spire’s EVP of Corporate Development. “We’re looking forward to demonstrating our end-to-end service and infrastructure on this series of validation missions. ‘Space as a Service’ means going from mission technical architecture to customer data/service verification, along with the ongoing development of critical enabling technologies.”

One validation mission will develop parallel super-computing in space – a core component for future computationally intensive missions. A second, exploitation of Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) for weather applications, will leverage Galileo signals for GNSS Radio Occultation. Radio occultation is a key data input for the improvement of weather forecasts. Upon completion, the GNSS-RO technology can be immediately commercialized.

The UK Space Agency is also supporting a space incubation centre in Glasgow and has provided support over several years to the Scottish Centre of Excellence in Satellite Applications, based at the University of Strathclyde and working across the whole of Scotland. The Centre’s role is to raise awareness of the potential of satellite services and data to be used in new and improved products and services in other “space enabled” markets – including, for example, offshore renewable energy and aquaculture.

Examples of other ARTES funded projects include

Company	Project
Cobham Technical Services	£1.5 million funding for MIDAS. This is a demonstration project to provide a range of tools that support the clearance of Land Mine and Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). This includes the use of Earth Observation and Satnav services to support the training of operators, planning clearance campaigns, real time monitoring of clearance in progress, through to post operation analysis and reporting.
Rezatec	£720,000 funding for Map, Measure, Monitor Information (M3I). This is a demonstration project following on from Rezatec’s successful Peat Spotter feasibility study to deliver intelligence about areas of interest using Earth Observation, Satnav, and Satcom. The scope for M3I was increased from Peat Spotter to include additional land based assets including water, forestry, conservation and agribusiness sectors.

Company	Project
Beinn Bike	£130,000 funding for Mountain Bike Route Planning. This is a mobile app that uses Satnav to provide tailored mountain biking routes based on the users desired requirements. This project has just completed the feasibility study phase and is moving into the demonstration phase. Beinn Bike are based in Scotland.
Avanti	£439,000 funding for iFishSat. This is a feasibility study to investigate commercialisation of seafood while still at sea, directly from the fishing vessels using Earth Observation, Satnav, and Satcom services, as well as improving the traceability of fish.

[Speech: Ending the ivory trade:](#) [Foreign Secretary's speech](#)

Good afternoon everybody, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

It's one of my themes at the moment that we don't do enough to celebrate good news and today particularly is a moment for celebration. Because China has struck a blow against elephant poachers by closing down its domestic ivory market, which is currently the largest in the world.

And provided that ban is fully enforced, and provided the ivory trade isn't allowed simply to relocate to Vietnam or Laos or Burma or indeed anywhere else – and I'm afraid there are warning signs that that is already happening – then China's enlightened and far-sighted decision will give humanity a better chance of halting and eventually reversing the tragic decline of the African elephant.

And this has really come in the nick of time. I first went to Africa 40 years ago as a child, and I remember seeing great herds in the Serengeti and the Maasai Mara and I was even trapped in a latrine I seem to remember for about an hour.

[Closing ivory markets](#)

Anyway, more than 2 thirds of those animals are now gone. Africa is down to 415,000, even at the most generous count, and in the last 12 years the pace of slaughter has accelerated. We have lost 110,000 since 2006, including half of all the elephants in East Africa; 2 thirds in Tanzania.

It would be absolutely unconscionable to sit back and watch, as though we were powerless or indifferent to the disappearance of charismatic megafauna in Africa.

If we do nothing, there really is a risk that our grandchildren will grow up in a world without wild elephants and if that calamity were to come about,

they will look at these photographs of giant herds, and they will point accusing fingers at all of us and ask you and me – why we were so careless and neglectful as to let this happen. And why we failed to save the African elephant from extirpation?

And it is a terrible fact that our planet is now enduring what may be the sixth mass extinction of species. Unlike previous extinctions – homo sapiens were not around for the previous 5, so we can't take the blame for those – but this particular one.

In the last century, 500 species have vanished from the earth, and if nature was allowed to take its course – then the normal rate of extinctions over a hundred years would be only 2 species.

So there is nothing inevitable, nothing biologically preprogrammed, about the tragedy taking place around us. On the contrary, we can protect our planet from being despoiled, and we can rescue wildlife from destruction. The only question is whether we have the collective will?

And I believe that today is a manifestation of that will.

I think it is great that the UK and China are united in our perspective on this policy – and by the way, I think we're more forward looking and ambitious in our ban than the European Union itself, about which I make no complaint except they have a President called Tusk so you would have thought they would be sympathetic on this ban – the UK and China together are taking this forward.

And we in London, in October, we will be co-hosting with Defra, with other departments, an international conference on combating illegal wildlife trade which threatens the survival of many, many endangered species; pangolins, rhinos, tigers, and many more.

And whilst I'm on the subject of ivory, don't forget, as we work to save the elephant, the threat then moves across to the hippo, and the narwhal, and other bearers of ivory in their jaws.

And so I am very glad to say that earlier today also that the Hong Kong Legislative Council voted to end the Territory's ivory trade by 2021, with no compensation for dealers.

I think we should all be very encouraged from China's decision not only because of the practical impact we hope it will have, but because it demonstrates the birth of a new global consensus – based on the collective will of the United Nations – that buying or selling ivory is no longer acceptable anywhere and human beings, wherever we may live, share the same obligation to do what we must to protect the magnificent animals that are humanity's joint inheritance.

Thank you.

[News story: Charity automatic disqualification rules: you can now apply for a waiver](#)

If the [new automatic disqualification rules](#) affect you, from today (1 February 2018) you can [apply for a waiver](#) from the Charity Commission

The law changes on 1 August 2018. But you can apply for a waiver before then to take up or remain in a trustee or restricted senior manager position.

The new rules add to current regulations that cover automatic disqualification for trustees.

After the 1 August 2018 the rules will also apply to some charity senior manager positions (chief executives and finance directors – and those in equivalent roles).

New reasons for disqualification include being in contempt of court, being named under particular anti-terrorism legislation or being on the sex offenders register.

Our guidance provides all the information about the changes, and whether they affect you or your charity:

If you need to apply for a waiver, you should look at the [criteria we will use to make a decision](#).

We encourage you to apply as soon as possible, ideally by 1 June 2018, to get a decision in good time.

[Press release: Jail term increased for robbers who targeted elderly](#)

A gang of robbers who targeted elderly people will spend longer behind bars after Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP referred their original sentences to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient.

Between the 1st and 4th May 2017, the gang of 5, led by Gerald McCann, 23, committed a series of robberies against elderly victims, specifically targeting them because of their vulnerability. The men used force against the

victims upon entering the houses. In one case, an 80 year old man was struck on the head with a metal coffee pot. Valuable items of jewellery and money were taken from the properties.

McCann, who was 22 at the time, was convicted of robbery and possession of a prohibited article at Leeds Crown Court last November. He was jailed for 8 years and 4 months. The Court of Appeal agreed the sentence was too low and increased it to 10 years and 4 months.

The rest of the gang were sentenced to time in a young offenders' institute. The second offender, who was 18 at the time, received 6 years and 9 months. His sentence has been increased to 7 years 8 months. The third offender, who was 17 at the time, received 5 years and 4 months, his sentence has been increased to 6 years 6 months.

The fourth offender, who was 15 at the time, received 4 years, his sentence has been increased to 5 years. The fifth offender who was also 15, received 4 years and 4 months, his sentence has been increased to 5 years 3 months.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

"This group of young men purposely set out to target vulnerable and elderly people. Many lives have been affected by their actions, and some of the victims no longer feel safe in their own homes. The Court's decision to increase these sentences show that crimes of this nature will not be tolerated."