

Press release: PM: Britain is unconditionally committed to the defence and security of Europe

Prime Minister Theresa May will reiterate Britain's ongoing commitment to maintaining European security as she visits British troops in Estonia.

The 800 UK soldiers stationed in Tapa are part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Eastern Europe. They have been at the base since April leading a NATO battlegroup alongside Estonian and French armed forces, providing deterrence in the face of increasing Russian assertiveness. They will be joined by troops from Denmark in the new year.

The Prime Minister will be joined on the visit to Tapa by President Macron of France and Estonia's Prime Minister Ratas.

She is in Estonia for a meeting of EU leaders at the Tallinn Digital Summit, where she will call for greater global cooperation to tackle the growing threat of hostile cyber activity. She will be accompanied by Ciaran Martin, CEO of the UK's National Cyber Security Centre, to share his expertise on this agenda.

Speaking ahead of her visit to Estonia, the Prime Minister said:

From terrorism to cyber-crime, illegal migration to Russian aggression, the threats we face as Europeans are increasing in their scale and complexity. Now more than ever it is in all our interests to confront them together.

With the largest defence budget in Europe, a far-reaching diplomatic network, world-class security, intelligence and law enforcement services, and our position at the heart of NATO, the UK's role in Europe's defence has never been more vital.

As we prepare for Brexit, I want to build a bold, new security partnership with the EU. A partnership that reflects our shared history, promotes our common values, and maintains a secure and prosperous Europe.

NATO remains the bedrock of our collective security, and there is no clearer demonstration of the UK's unconditional commitment to Europe's defence than the 800 British troops now in Tapa, leading a NATO battlegroup and standing shoulder to shoulder with their Estonian, French and soon their Danish counterparts too.

We will continue to work with our NATO allies, our European neighbours and the EU, to support a future partnership of unprecedented breadth and depth, that will guarantee the security

and stability of the continent for generations to come.

Addressing the Tallinn Digital Summit later today, the Prime Minister will highlight recent cyber-attacks in the UK and Europe and the danger this poses to our shared security. She will urge member states to work more closely together to combat the threat to our democratic institutions, financial systems and public sectors.

As part of Britain's commitment to deepen its security partnership with Europe, the Prime Minister will offer to share UK expertise – including through the world-leading National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) – to help EU nations build up their own cyber-security capability and resistance to attacks.

For instance, she will invite member states to take part in an event hosted by the NCSC next month, in the wake of recent attempts to undermine election processes in the West. Nations will come together to share information and learn from each other's experiences in order to strengthen the collective global response to this growing threat to our democracies and way of life.

Speech: “As a long standing friend of the Burmese people, the United Kingdom has watched in horror at the violence that has erupted over the past month.”

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the Security Council briefing on Burma

Thank you Mr President and thank you Mr Secretary-General for your briefing, and for all that you have done to bring this issue before the Council.

As a long standing friend of the Burmese people, the United Kingdom has watched in horror at the violence that has erupted over the past month. What began as a series of attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army has spiralled into an acute humanitarian crisis – one which now poses a threat to stability and security in the region.

We have all heard the reports, Mr President. We have all heard of the extrajudicial killings, the burning of villages. We've heard of the cruelty; the sexual violence, the landmines laid along routes taken by refugees. Half a million people have fled, many bearing the scars of the violence.

The vast majority are Rohingya Muslims, although they also include Buddhists, Hindus, and other minorities. But make no mistake, this is a human tragedy and an acute humanitarian crisis that has exploded at an almost unprecedented speed.

At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the government and people of Bangladesh for providing safety and shelter to so many until they can return safely, voluntarily, and sustainably to their homes in Burma. I also want to acknowledge the important diplomatic efforts undertaken by Indonesia, ASEAN, the OIC, and the United Nations. It is becoming increasingly clear, Mr President, that world opinion, whether among countries or international organisations, is aligning on this issue.

In the face of such opinion, it falls to Burma – and in particular the Burmese military – to respond. For it is the Burmese military who bear the primary responsibility for resolving this crisis. There is a way out.

First, the Burmese military, under Commander in Chief Min Aung Hlaing, must immediately stop the violence in Rakhine State and ensure the protection of all civilians, including the Rohingya. In this chamber I repeat my government's condemnation of the attacks carried out by the ARSA last month. But military operations in response have been excessive and vigilante groups have carried out sectarian violence unchecked. This cannot continue. The hate speech and incitement to violence must stop. The Burmese military must act immediately and uphold the rule of law and we are particularly concerned to ensure that the violence doesn't spread to central Rakhine.

Second, the Burmese authorities need to grant UN agencies and their partners full and unhindered humanitarian access to Rakhine. We welcome the government's cooperation with humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and we welcome the Red Cross's efforts to respond to the crisis. But the humanitarian needs inside Rakhine vastly exceed the Red Cross's capacity. Only UN agencies and their partners can provide urgent, life-saving assistance at the scale required. We believe the authorities should calm anti-United Nations rhetoric and stop it immediately in state media outlets.

Third, Burma should work with Bangladesh to establish a safe, voluntary, and sustainable way for those who have fled Rakhine to return to their homes. We welcome the civilian government's commitment to the right of return. But previous arrangements have been inadequate. There needs to be a process which allows those who have fled to register themselves as refugees. It needs to be a process which acknowledges that many fled without documents or never had them in the first place, a process which allows people to return to their homes and places of origin safely, voluntarily, and sustainably. And we welcome the UN's willingness to support this.

Fourth, the recommendations of the Annan Commission on Rakhine State must be implemented swiftly and in full. We welcome the Burmese authorities' public commitment to this and the establishment of a Ministerial Implementation Committee. It is essential that we now see progress, particularly on citizenship.

Fifth, we urge the Burmese authorities to cooperate with the UN Fact-Finding Mission established by the Human Rights Council. If the Burmese authorities have any doubt about what is happening, this is how reports can be independently verified and those responsible held to account.

Mr President, this Council deliberates many crises around the world. But the situation in Burma strikes many of us around this table with particular poignancy. Many of us here today have stood by the people of Burma for long years, have watched the inspiring steps taken towards democracy, and have welcomed the country back into the international community with open arms.

Given our history and long-standing friendship with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the UK is perhaps foremost. And we remain committed to Burma and to all of its people. We want to see further progress towards democracy. And we want Burma to thrive within the international community. And it is because of that commitment, Mr President, that we speak so frankly today in this Chamber. This crisis now casts a deep shadow over Burma's international reputation, on its leaders and its military.

The Burmese authorities must now take the decisions that will decide their place in history. They can choose to end the violence and protect civilians and defend human rights. They can choose to allow humanitarian access including by the United Nations. They can work with Bangladesh on the return of refugees and they can address the long-term issues raised by the Annan commission.

But should they fail to do so, they will find themselves on the wrong side of history. And this Council must be ready to take further action.

Thank you, Mr President.

[News story: The AAIB is sending a team to Warwickshire](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The AAIB is sending a team to a light aircraft accident near Coventry.

[News story: Brokenshire: utterly](#)

repugnant to force families from their homes

Earlier this evening Mr Brokenshire commented:

It is hugely disturbing that the families should feel they had no option but to leave their homes. No-one should be forced out of their property because of threats and intimidation.

This sort of situation is utterly repugnant and has rightly been condemned across the community. It underlines the importance of work by Government departments, law enforcement agencies, community and voluntary sector partners to tackle intimidation in communities.

Press release: M23 smart motorway plans to go on show this weekend

Drivers, business owners and local residents are invited to find out more about the plans, which will add an extra lane in each direction to the M23 near Gatwick Airport, between junction 8 for Merstham and junction 10 at Copthorne, to upgrade it to an all lane running smart motorway. New technology will help to manage traffic to reduce delays and give drivers up to date information about conditions on the road ahead.

Public information events are being held this weekend (Friday 29 and Saturday 30 September, and again next weekend (Friday 6 October and Saturday 7 October), where people can find out more about the plans and put any questions directly to the project team. Highways England project manager Miguel Machado said:

This new stretch of smart motorway will tackle congestion and improve journey times not only for the tens of thousands of drivers who use the M23 every day, but also for business travellers and holiday makers using Gatwick Airport, as well as residents and businesses based in the area.

Smart motorways are central to our ambitious plans for modernising the motorway network and will add 120 miles of new lanes to

motorways in the South East by 2020. They add vital extra capacity, improve journey times and maintain high levels of safety. Drivers will also see better information about conditions through new smart motorway technology which helps us to manage incidents, smooth traffic flow and make journeys more reliable. I encourage anyone interested in the upgrade of the M23 to a smart motorway to come to meet the project team at one of the information events to find out more.

The M23 is a key strategic road which connects Crawley and Gatwick Airport to the M25 motorway, routes into London and the rest of the UK.

This stretch of the M23 is heavily used by traffic travelling to and from Gatwick Airport and between Brighton and London, especially during UK holiday periods. The upgrade to a smart motorway will add a third extra capacity on this section, and will improve safety, ease congestion make journey times more reliable. Junction 9 on the M23 is also the main access for traffic travelling to and from Gatwick Airport, and currently experiences heavy congestion on a daily basis.

Under the plans, the hard shoulder will be permanently converted into a live running lane between junctions 8 and 10 in both directions. New signs and signals will be used to vary the speed limit to reduce congestion at busy times, and to control traffic if there is an obstruction on the road ahead.

Work is scheduled to start in March 2018, with the smart motorway being fully operational in early 2020.

Anyone interested in the scheme can visit the [Highways England's project page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.