

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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[The Government's Customs Bill is another attempt to run roughshod over the House of Commons – Peter Dowd](#)

Peter

Dowd MP, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, commenting on the Lords Delegated Power and Regulatory Reform Committee report on the Taxation (Cross Border Trade) Bill said:

“The House of Lords report gives a damning verdict on the Government’s Customs Bill, which hands vast sets of Henry VIII powers to the Treasury instead of to Parliament.

“The Bill is yet another attempt by the Government to run roughshod over the democratically elected House of Commons. Taken with the EU Withdrawal Bill and the Trade Bill, this is a centralisation of control not seen since the Second World War.

“The Prime Minister has no mandate to award her Government these powers.”

[Owen Smith comment on announcement of new Northern Ireland talks](#)

Owen Smith MP, Labour’s Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, commenting on the announcement that new talks aimed at restoring devolution in Northern Ireland will begin next week, said:

“Despite the new name over the door of the Northern Ireland Office, it sounds like more of the same in the talks planned for next week. Twelve months of secretive discussions between Sinn Fein and the DUP has failed and there is widespread scepticism that another round will break the deadlock.

“Karen Bradley must show that she has a clear plan to rebuild trust between the parties and restore power-sharing. This should start with enlisting an independent chair to help address concerns that she cannot be neutral given the Conservative Government is being propped up by the DUP.”