

Defence Secretary discusses shared security response in face of Russian invasion of Ukraine

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has met with Defence Ministers from the [Joint Expeditionary Force \(JEF\)](#) nations to provide plans for ongoing support for Ukraine against the invasion from President Putin's forces.

The ministers discussed what increased measures can be brought forward to support Ukraine against Russia's brutal assault and how the group will work together to promote European security, complementing NATO activity.

The Defence Secretary met with his counterpart Kalle Laanet in Tallinn, Estonia to discuss the crisis and the impact on wider security across Europe. Like the UK, Estonia has also sent a range of defensive and non-lethal aid to Ukraine to help the country defend itself, providing javelin anti-tank missiles and anti-aircraft ammunition as well as food and medical equipment.

Minister Laanet awarded Ben Wallace with the Ministry of Defence Cross of Merit, First Class – the highest decoration conferred by the Ministry – for his commitment to European defence and security.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, the Defence Secretary met with a number of his counterparts from the JEF nations to see off Danish Frigate HDMS Niels Juhl. The vessel is providing a naval escort to support the deployment of Danish land forces in Estonia, where they serve alongside UK troops as part of the recently strengthened [NATO enhanced Forward Presence \(eFP\)](#) battlegroup. The Danish ship will be joined by Royal Navy frigate HMS Northumberland and Swedish corvette HSwMS Karlstad before accompanying a supply ship delivering specialist vehicles and equipment.

Ben Wallace also held a bilateral meeting with the Danish Defence Minister, Morten Bødskov and laid a wreath at the Danish National Memorial in Kastellet, central Copenhagen.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

President Putin's invasion of Ukraine is an attack on our freedoms, our values and the security of Europe. He has sought to break our defensive alliances, which is why now, more than at any point in the history of the JEF, our partnership is so vital.

We are united in our resolve across the JEF nations to support Ukraine. Our values are Ukraine's values and we will continue to provide lethal and non-lethal aid, alongside sending additional forces to Estonia serving with our Danish allies.

The UK is playing a leading role in supporting Ukraine, including providing defensive anti-tank weapons and non-lethal aid including helmets and medical supplies. Britain [has also imposed comprehensive sanctions](#) covering Russian elites, companies and financial institutions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In response to the crisis, the UK has also [bolstered its contribution to NATO's eFP](#) in Estonia, where British and Danish troops have been deployed together alongside other NATO nations since 2018. The JEF supply mission will support this long-standing UK contribution.

The JEF is a coalition comprising of 10 nations working together to deliver forces at high readiness across a range of roles, complementing NATO and European security. Its members are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK.

Defence Ministers from all ten countries met less than two weeks ago in Belvoir Castle, issuing a [joint statement condemning Russia's aggression towards Ukraine](#).

The JEF has carried out successful exercises in recent months, including Exercise Joint Protector 2021. In the coming months, militaries will be working together across its core areas of the North Atlantic, High North and Baltic Sea Region, with a particular focus on the upcoming command and control Exercise Joint Protector later in 2022, followed by the Live Exercise JEF Warrior in 2023. JEF will also conduct an exercise demonstrating freedom of movement in the Baltic Sea in a show of the group's solidarity.