

# More French officers to patrol beaches to tackle small boat crossings

Numbers of officers in northern France will increase by 40% over the coming months as a result of UK funding to step up action to reduce illegal small boat crossings, following a new UK and France agreement signed today.

The Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, is in France today (Monday 14 November) to finalise the arrangement with the French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin. The new agreement lays the foundations for deeper UK-French co-operation to tackle illegal migration and marks the next step for the close operational partnership between the 2 countries which has prevented over 30,000 crossings this year.

The arrangement means, for the first time, specialist UK officers will also be embedded with their French counterparts, which will increase information sharing, improve understanding of the threat, and ensure UK expertise is at the heart of efforts to disrupt crossings and clamp down on people smugglers. This more integrated approach will also include strengthened operational co-operation, including joint UK-France analysis teams supporting the co-ordination and exchange of information by French-command HQ.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said:

We must do everything we can to stop people making these dangerous journeys and crack down on the criminal gangs. This is a global challenge requiring global solutions, and it is in the interests of both the UK and French governments to work together to solve this complex problem.

There are no quick fixes, but this new arrangement will mean we can significantly increase the number of French gendarmes patrolling the beaches in northern France and ensure UK and French officers are working hand in hand to stop the people smugglers.

Joint working between UK and French officers so far has secured more than 140 convictions connected to people smuggling since the start of 2020 – and these criminals now face a combined 400 years behind bars.

The UK-France Joint Intelligence Cell, which has so far dismantled 55 organised crime groups and secured over 500 arrests since its inception in 2020, will also be expanded.

This latest multi-year arrangement between France and the UK is worth up to 72.2 million euros in 2022 to 2023. It will strengthen security at ports to help clamp down on illegal entry by funding investment in cutting edge surveillance technology, drones, detection dog teams, CCTV and helicopters to help detect and prevent crossings.

It will also go towards supporting reception and removal centres in France for migrants whose journeys to the UK are prevented, to further deter crossing attempts.

A new taskforce will also be set up, focused on reversing the recent rise in Albanian nationals and organised crime groups exploiting illegal migration routes into Western Europe and the UK.

This enhanced approach will boost joint British and French collaboration, which has already prevented over 30,000 illegal crossing attempts since the start of the year – more than 50% more than at the same stage last year.

The renewed partnership marks the next step in joint efforts to reduce these dangerous crossings and paves the way for deeper co-operation between the 2 countries in future, looking ahead to next year's UK-France leaders' summit.

The Home Secretary will travel to Frankfurt later this week, where she will meet her international counterparts from the G7 to discuss a range of priority issues including tackling serious organised crime. She will also meet with neighbouring countries as soon as possible as part of the UK's ongoing co-operation with European partners to drive progress on the issue of illegal migration.

The UK's work with international partners is a key part of the government's wide-ranging approach to fix the broken asylum system, break the business model of people smugglers facilitating these journeys and clamp down on illegal migration.

This includes the measures introduced through the Nationality and Borders Act to prevent abuse of the system, such as introducing life sentences for people smugglers and increasing the maximum penalty for entering the UK illegally, as well as our world leading partnership with Rwanda which will see migrants who make these unnecessary journeys relocated there to have their claims considered and rebuild their lives.