

News story: Defence Secretary hosts first meeting in UK with Secretary Mattis

Both have just returned from NATO and counter-Daesh Ministerial meetings in Brussels, where the alliance agreed to adapt its command structure to better reflect the security environment, announcing the establishment of two new headquarters: an Atlantic Command and a Logistics Command.

NATO is the cornerstone of UK and US defence and both nations have been leading calls for NATO to adapt to future threats. The meeting in London focussed on three themes: current threats, capability and shared prosperity.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“From fighting in the trenches of the Great War to countering Russian aggression and tackling Daesh today, the UK has been America’s closest partner for a century. Today our countries are cooperating on everything from operations and intelligence to innovation and this meeting is an opportunity to continue strengthening our special relationship.”

Despite being close to defeat in Iraq and Syria, Daesh remains a concern for the UK and US and the British Defence Secretary reaffirmed his support to the US-led coalition. The pair also discussed the increasing assertiveness from the Kremlin, as the UK stands side by side with US and NATO allies, leading the enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup in Estonia and contributing soldiers to the US-led Battlegroup in Poland.

Amongst only six NATO countries meeting the commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence, the UK and US are investing heavily in next generation technology, including the F-35 aircraft. US F-35s will fly from the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier in 2021, demonstrating the close relationship between the two countries.

The defence trading relationship between the UK and US is worth £3 billion a year and as the UK looks beyond Brexit, both countries hope to strengthen that relationship too.