

News story: PM to visit Saudi Arabia and Jordan to 'deepen true strategic partnerships'.

Tackling the terror threat and developing new capabilities to strike at the heart of Daesh are the centrepiece of a new joint initiative between the UK and Jordan, the Prime Minister will announce today.

On her first visit to Jordan as Prime Minister, she will also confirm a plan to improve cooperation on countering violent extremism in the region.

She is expected to say that the tragic attack in Westminster showed only too starkly that terrorism is an evil facing us all and we must come together to fight it.

She will also discuss how we can build on our cooperation with Jordan to manage the fallout from the Syrian conflict.

She is expected to reiterate our commitment to providing humanitarian support to Jordan to bolster its capacity to handle the huge volumes of refugees it hosts, enabling the refugees to stay close to their homes and create meaningful long-term futures for themselves.

At the start of a joint visit to Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister will first visit Amman today (Monday 3 April), where she is expected to agree new support for the Royal Jordanian Air Force to improve their capability to strike Daesh targets and defeat the terrorist threat.

She will then visit Saudi Arabia tomorrow (Tuesday 4 April) and Wednesday, where she will make clear that they are a close and important ally and that we will continue to work closely in a range of areas, particularly on counter-terrorism where UK-Saudi cooperation is vital.

On trade, the Prime Minister is expected to explore ways of boosting our already very strong ties. Saudi Arabia is currently the UK's largest trading partner in the Middle East, with exports of British goods standing at £4.67 billion and services at £1.9 billion in 2015.

Speaking ahead of the visit, the Prime Minister said:

As the United Kingdom leaves the EU, we are determined to forge a bold, confident future for ourselves in the world. We must look at the challenges that we, and future generations, will face and build stronger partnerships with countries that will be vital to both our security and our prosperity.

It is clearly in the UK's security and prosperity interests to support Jordan and Saudi Arabia in tackling regional challenges to

create a more stable region, and in delivering their ambitious reform programmes to ensure their own stability. An even deeper partnership with these countries, and greater knowledge and understanding of one another, will increase our ability to address the issues that concern us, including the promotion of international standards and norms.

To tackle the threats we face from terrorism and from geopolitical instability, we must meet them at their source. Jordan is on the frontline of multiple regional crises and I'm clear that by working with them, we are helping keep British people safe.

Likewise in Saudi Arabia: we must never forget that intelligence we have received in the past from that country has saved potentially hundreds of lives in the UK. And there is so much we can do together on trade, with immense potential for Saudi investment to provide a boost to the British economy.

So I hope my visit will herald a further intensification in relations between our countries and deepen true strategic partnerships, enabling us to seize the opportunities ahead and ensure the security and prosperity of our people for decades to come.

Further information

The Prime Minister visited Jordan in 2012 in her capacity as Home Secretary. She also visited Saudi Arabia in March 2014.

The new support for the Royal Jordanian Air Force will include:

- deploying training teams to help the Jordanians better integrate their Air and Land assets on operations
- providing training in the UK and in Jordan for Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, who are the service personnel who direct combat action of aircraft in offensive operations
- increasing the number of places available to RJAF personnel on UK courses in niche areas such as Air Battle Management and Electronic Warfare
- supporting aviation safety, including through training in both the UK and Jordan

The UK will also commit to partnering with Jordan in the development and implementation of strategies to counter violent extremism, including active consultation with civil society and affected communities, particularly focussing on youth groups.