

News story: UK steps up commitment to a modernised NATO

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson met counterparts at a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels. Crown copyright.

Mr Williamson signalled that the UK will meet its commitments, including an uplift of around one hundred personnel in our contribution to NATO's modernised Command Structure – the precise numbers will be determined through further work between now and the Summit. This will help to ensure that NATO can meet the security challenges of today and tomorrow.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

NATO is the cornerstone of our defence but we live in an uncertain world, with the confrontation and conflict we face shifting and evolving. NATO must modernise at the same pace, so we can respond better and faster to deter those that threaten our safety and way of life.

NATO will today discuss a range of issues including burden sharing, cooperation with the European Union, and efforts to modernise the Alliance. A key element of modernising NATO will be the adaptation of the Alliance's Command Structure. Defence Ministers will decide whether to implement a design which includes proposals for a new Command for the Atlantic and a Command to improve the movement of military forces across Europe.

The proposed Command Structure, which has been influenced by senior British staff, represents a key aspect of the UK's priority to modernise and strengthen NATO so it remains able to command and control its missions and operations wherever they are required.

Over the two-day Ministerial, Defence leaders will discuss efforts to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture. Britain's Armed Forces have taken a leading role in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence, providing the Framework battlegroup in Estonia and a providing a company to the US-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Poland. The Defence Secretary welcomed the arrival of Danish forces in Estonia and the announcement that France will return in 2019 to support the UK-led force. NATO's role in the fight against terrorism was also discussed with the Defence Secretary welcoming the progress that has been made.

NATO remains the cornerstone of UK defence and, as one of the largest contributors, is one of only a few NATO countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence.