

# Penny Mordaunt attends NATO's 2019 Defence Ministerial

Last week I attended my first Defence Ministers' meeting in NATO. Over the two days we covered many important topics, from Russia's non-compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) to NATO's adaptation to the changing nature of conflict. The decisions that we made will ensure NATO is fit to meet the challenges of tomorrow and help keep our citizens safe

Many people felt that NATO would become irrelevant at the end of the Cold War. But the threats that we face now are as serious as they have ever been. With Russia resurgent, increasingly aggressive, and challenging the rule based international order; terrorism a daily threat; and new technologies presenting both opportunities and challenges for our security, we need a strong NATO now more than ever.

The United Kingdom's commitment to European security is unwavering and will remain so. We believe that when our neighbours are more secure, we are more secure. And our commitment is clear to see. We have thousands of personnel on NATO operations around the world from Estonia to Afghanistan. Our Typhoons police Baltic skies and will soon be protecting Icelandic airspace. Our vessels tackle piracy and our nuclear submarines have contributed to NATO's security for 50 years. The United Kingdom has offered a significant contribution to the NATO Readiness Initiative over land, sea and air. Our nation's future flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth and cutting-edge F-35 jets will be at the heart of this offer.

Deterrence is better than intervention. But defending democracy, values and each other costs. It requires world leading defence equipment and capabilities and involves contributing to operations. As Allies, we all need to honour our commitment to invest 2% of GDP in defence so that we can collectively maintain the security of the one billion people that NATO protects. The UK has and always will continue to meet this commitment.

The lasting impression from meeting my counterparts was how 29 Ministers, from different countries and backgrounds, united in interests and values, can take shared action on some of the world's most difficult issues. In an uncertain world, it is vital to have Allies that you can rely on.

We will be delighted to host NATO's Leaders in London in December. The challenges that we face today are different from those when NATO was founded in 1949, but no less significant. And we will continue to face them together.

Best wishes,