

# Speech: PM's address to British Troops at Tapa Military Base in Estonia

I'm delighted to be here today and to have this opportunity to pay tribute to all of you for the work you are doing in this vital NATO mission to protect the security of the Alliance's Eastern flank.

Russia's continued aggression represents a growing danger to our friends here in Estonia – as well as in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. And our response must be clear and unequivocal.

That is why this mission that you are carrying out is so important. By stepping up NATO's deterrence and defence posture, you are showing that we are equipped to respond to any threat we face. You are showing that we are ready to do so. And you are showing – through our actions as well as our words – that our collective commitment to NATO's Article 5 remains as strong as ever. And that an attack on any one of our NATO allies, would be treated an attack on us all.

So I am proud that over 800 British servicemen and women are here leading a multinational effort, together with their French and Danish partners, and working alongside their Estonian hosts – and that this British deployment is one of the largest we have made to Eastern Europe in recent times.

For when a nation like Russia deliberately violates the rules based international order that we have worked so hard to create, we must come together with our allies to defend that international system – and the liberal values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law by which we stand.

I am clear that Britain will always stand with our allies in defence of these values.

From the fight against Daesh in Iraq and Syria to our commitment to meet the target of spending 2 per cent of our GDP on defence, we have been at the forefront of the NATO alliance and that is exactly where we will remain.

And while we are leaving the European Union, as I have said many times, we are not leaving Europe. So the United Kingdom is unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe's security. And we will continue to offer aid and assistance to EU member states that are the victims of armed aggression, terrorism and natural or manmade disasters.

Our resolve to draw on the full weight of our military, intelligence, diplomatic and development resources, to lead international action, with our partners, on the issues that affect the security and prosperity of our peoples is unchanged.

And our determination to defend the stability, security and prosperity of our European neighbours and friends remains steadfast.

But these commitments are only possible because of the work that you are doing.

It is your work across differences in language, culture and technology that has brought together an international combat-ready battlegroup able to defend the Baltic region by responding to the full range of threats that might exist.

It is your part in the current series of major multinational NATO exercises that is helping to provide deterrence and demonstrate our military capability to counter those who would threaten us.

It is your deployment – in the British case, the fielding of a combined arms battlegroup – that is reassuring our European partners of the scale and scope of our commitment to their security.

And beyond your military contribution, the work you are doing in communities across Estonia is deepening the friendship between our countries and our peoples – and showing you to be some of the finest ambassadors we have.

As with all our brilliant servicemen and women – and I know I speak for President Macron, Prime Minister Ratas and Prime Minister Rasmussen too when I say this: our countries have nothing but the deepest admiration for everything you have achieved and the exceptional courage and professionalism that you have demonstrated in achieving it.

Away from your families for months at a time, the sacrifices you make, the expertise that you bring and that sense of service that you embody is what gives meaning to the commitments we make and the values that we stand for.

So as many of you move on shortly to new deployments, I hope you will do so with an incredible sense of pride.

And to the British servicemen and women in particular, let me say a heartfelt thank you, on behalf of our whole country, for all that you have done here in Estonia, for the security of this region, for the commitments of this Alliance and for the defence of the values and the way of life that we all hold dear.