

UK to make more forces available to NATO to counter future threats

The UK has announced an increased contribution to NATO as the Prime Minister and Defence Secretary attend the NATO summit in Madrid.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

We have always been clear that our strength and security comes from our alliances, and NATO is at the heart of that.

The New Force Model and our presence in Estonia will ensure that the Alliance is able to respond at pace, helping to determine stability across Europe in the decades to come.

RAF Typhoon and F-35B Lightning fighter jets, Royal Navy vessels including Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, and brigade-sized land forces will all be made available to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) as part of the New Force Model.

NATO has introduced the New Force Model in support of Leaders' decision to modernise and strengthen the NATO Force Structure for the future. Allies will declare capabilities, equipment and forces available to support SACEUR, ensuring they are in the right place at the right time. This will allow the Alliance's military command to plan for emerging threats, safe in the knowledge that these assets will be available to take part in the Alliance's response.

The UK will also contribute to the new Allied Reaction Force: an agile, multi-domain and combat-effective force ready to deploy at very high readiness and to respond to a range of crises.

It comes as the Alliance has agreed a new posture of stronger forward defences to reflect the radically changed security context since Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK increased its presence in Estonia to include the temporary deployment of a second battlegroup, doubling the total number of deployed personnel to over 1,600. The lethality of these deployments will be enhanced with advanced capabilities including helicopters and artillery systems. Meanwhile, the UK's existing HQ in Tallinn will be expanded. Led by a Brigadier, it will support the rapid deployment of high readiness forces at the brigade level.

The UK will also support Estonia with training and logistics, the development of its first divisional-level HQ, as well as developing new ways of fighting through their joint hosting of the [Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic](#) European HQ, and supporting innovative dual use start-ups

through the NATO Innovation Fund.

In addition to increasing its deployments to Estonia, since the Russian invasion the UK has also deployed hundreds of troops to Poland and sent more aircraft to conduct air policing in Romania. Meanwhile, HMS Prince of Wales has [led the Alliance's Maritime High Readiness Force](#) since January 2022.

[Top apprenticeship employers for 2022 announced](#)

The country's most outstanding apprenticeship employers for 2022 have been recognised today (29 June) for their vital work boosting career opportunities for more people.

The public sector secured the prestigious top slots on the [Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2022](#) list, with the Ministry of Defence first, the Royal Navy second and Royal Airforce in fourth place, closely followed by the Department of Work and Pensions in fifth position.

Lander Automotive Ltd has also topped a new category this year – [Top 50 SME Apprenticeship Employers 2022](#) – which for the first time recognises the critical role these organisations play in creating opportunities, particularly for younger people and those in disadvantaged areas.

The leader boards are designed to showcase the very best of England's apprenticeship employers, with those listed recognised for providing some of the most successful apprenticeship programmes over the previous 12 months.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

It is a fantastic achievement to be listed as one of the country's most outstanding apprenticeship employers. Apprenticeships offer people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to gain the experience and skills needed to hit the ground running in their chosen career, while delivering the skilled workforce businesses need to grow and thrive.

I would like to congratulate all employers large and small for their brilliant work. I look forward to hearing more about their successful apprenticeship programmes.

Colonel M T Ketterer of The British Army said:

Being listed in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers is a real

achievement for any employer – but for an >ambitious organisation who is justifiably proud of its apprenticeship programme and strives to 'be the best', we are delighted to have been ranked at number one.

The quality of our people and their competence in role is vital to the British Army that needs to be ready to meet every challenge as it delivers such an important and indeed varied role for the nation – and our apprenticeship programme is an integral part of our extensive training programme to ensure it can.

For those within the organisation, being in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers helps to validate our programme, the employment offer made to every soldier and helps to ratify what we do. Externally, it showcases the scale, reach, diversity and quality of our programme and reinforces the variety of employment, trades available and development opportunities for those seeking to join us.

Managing Director Len Palmer, Lander Tubular Products said:

At Lander Tubular Products we have a long history of developing future talent through our apprenticeship schemes. Over many generations in the business the apprentices have always provided us with an incredible pool of talent. We are proud of our commitment to apprenticeships, and we are always happy when we are recognised externally for the brilliant outcomes, we deliver for our youngest team members.

The rankings attracted strong entries from across a wide range of industries including healthcare, banking, media and the automotive industry in the private, public and charitable sectors.

Employers including BT, Deloitte, Greene King and BAE Systems, Troup Bywaters + Anders, Lee Marley Brickwork Ltd alongside police forces, fire and ambulance services and several government departments have also been named for their efforts.

The Top 10 Apprenticeship Employers for 2022 are:

1. British Army
2. Royal Navy
3. BT
4. Royal Air Force
5. Department of Work and Pensions
6. Clarkson Evans
7. Mitchells & Butlers
8. RSM
9. BAE Systems
10. Grant Thornton

The Top 5 SME Apprenticeship Employers for 2022 are:

1. Lander Tubular Products
2. Adopstar
3. Lee Marley Brickwork
4. Applebridge
5. Darke & Taylor

The employer rankings have been developed by the Department of Education, in partnership with [High Fliers Research](#), who independently assess and rank the country's top apprenticeship employers.

[Review launches to future proof role of academy trusts](#)

The Department for Education has today, Wednesday 29 June, launched a [review](#) of how it works with academy trusts, helping make sure the children in schools within trusts get the right support to fulfil their potential.

The review will look at the standards trusts are held to, and the thresholds at which the government uses its powers to intervene in rare cases of underperformance, helping minimise trust failure and retain parents' confidence.

It will also look at how the government supports the growth of existing strong trusts and the creation of new strong trusts, helping trusts improve schools. The government intends for all schools to be in or joining strong academy trusts by 2030.

The review will conclude by the end of 2022, and is intended to give clarity on how the powers in the Schools Bill, currently going through parliament, will be applied.

Schools Minister Baroness Barran said:

As we work towards all schools in strong academy trusts, we have a once in a generation opportunity to drive up standards for pupils that sadly remain too low in too many areas of the country.

The very many strong academy trusts across the country do a great job of improving their schools, working to the highest national and international educational standards while keeping their schools rooted in their local communities. Our proposals to allow local authorities to

establish trusts will help draw the best of the maintained school sector into the new trust-led system.

But not every school is currently in a strong trust or has the option of joining one. Our three-pronged approach between the Schools White Paper, Schools Bill, and our new regulatory review, will change that. It will create a new, higher performing school system that parents love and gives every child every chance of success.

The review will:

- Look at how to retain and maximise academy trusts' innovation, and reduce regulatory burdens, by producing clear standards that are transparently enforced
- Look at improving how intervention works against the new standards, by producing proportionate thresholds for the use of new powers in the Schools Bill for intervention in academy trusts themselves, and focusing government action on preventing failure before it occurs
- Consider how to commission new academy trusts and the expansion of existing trusts, helping make sure there are no 'cold spots' of the country where a school does not have an option to join a strong trust that is a good fit for its needs

The review will also build on the definition of a strong trust set out in the Schools White Paper – providing a high quality and inclusive education across their schools, improving their schools' standards, maintaining their schools' strong local identities, developing their workforce, and displaying strong financial management.

It will be chaired by the Schools Minister Baroness Barran, and be directly informed by an Expert Advisory Group including the Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman, Confederation of School Trusts Chief Executive Leora Cruddas and LSE Professor of Political Science and Public Policy Martin Lodge, alongside further representatives from the academy trust sector to be confirmed shortly.

Confederation of School Trusts Chief Executive Leora Cruddas said:

I look forward to working with Ministers and the Department for Education through the period of the Commissioning and Regulatory Review.

It is essential that the approach to strategic commissioning and risk-based regulation protects the independence of School Trusts and promotes high quality education as a public good, as we move forward to build a strong and sustainable education system in England.

LSE Professor of Political Science and Public Policy Martin Lodge said:

I am honoured to be joining the external advisory group. It is an exciting challenge to contribute to the critically important development of the regulatory framework for academy trusts.

The review will engage throughout with parliamentarians, representatives from unions including ASCL and NAHT, and other interested parties via working groups, visits and workshops to test and iterate proposals.

It will consider what change might be needed immediately, in the medium-term and long-term, reflecting the Department's commitment that in the first instance, the Schools Bill will not seek to materially change existing academy trust standards, and future changes will be informed by the findings of the review or further engagement with the sector.

[Commissioner launches police camera survey](#)

The Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner is beginning the process of gathering the latest information from all police forces under his jurisdiction on their use of overt surveillance camera systems.

The Commissioner, Professor Fraser Sampson, has written to the chief officers of all 43 geographical forces in England and Wales, the Ministry of Defence, the British Transport Police and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, asking for details of their use and governance of all overt surveillance camera systems deployed in public places.

The survey covers all facial recognition enabled systems, drone mounted camera systems, helicopters or aeroplane mounted systems, Body Worn Video (cameras on police uniforms), ANPR (automated number plate recognition) systems and any other surveillance camera systems in public places that fall within the definition of section 29(6) of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The survey asks about the capabilities of systems, whether they use equipment from non-UK suppliers about which there have been ethical or security concerns, what due diligence they have undertaken to ensure they are working with trusted partners, and how their systems comply with the Home Secretary's Surveillance Camera Code which they have a legal duty to observe.

About facial recognition in particular, Professor Sampson's survey asks forces whether they currently use facial recognition technology and, if so, whether it's live (real-time) or retrospective, and whether it is initiated by officers using cameras on their mobile phones or some other kind of system. If none is currently in use, the survey asks whether the force intends to start using facial recognition technology in the future.

Professor Sampson said: "There is little doubt that the police use of surveillance camera systems in the public sphere has been increasing in recent years. This survey will provide an important snapshot of what kinds of overt surveillance camera systems police are using, what they are being used for, and the extent to which facial recognition technology is now being used. It should also tell us whether police forces are complying with the new Surveillance Camera Code as they should be.

"It will be very interesting to see how much things have changed since similar surveys were conducted in 2017 and 2019 by my predecessor in the role of Surveillance Camera Commissioner," he said.

The government's revised [Surveillance Camera Code of Practice](#) came into force in January this year and emphasises the importance of the legitimate use of technology 'to a standard that maintains public trust and confidence'.

Stressing the importance of diplomatic efforts over military solutions to deliver long-term stability for DRC

Thank you, President. Let me begin by thanking SRSG Keita and Ms Lusenge for their briefings today – and I also welcome the participation of the countries of the region in the meeting.

I will focus my intervention on three points – the security and humanitarian situation in eastern DRC; regional efforts; and MONUSCO.

President, the United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the security situation in eastern DRC. The current spike in violence jeopardises recent efforts to pursue peace and prosperity, and exacerbates the already severe humanitarian situation.

The risk of regional war is the highest it has been for many years. An immediate de-escalation on all sides and a mutual respect for sovereignty is urgently needed. De-escalation efforts should include an absolute rejection of hate speech and the manipulation of regional public opinion by self-interested actors.

President, we welcome ongoing diplomatic efforts, including through the Nairobi process led by President Kenyatta and AU-endorsed engagement by President Lourenco. The United Kingdom offers our support to these efforts to pursue dialogue, de-escalate tensions and to make use of regional mechanisms to resolve disputes.

As these efforts continue, the United Kingdom stresses the primacy of political and diplomatic efforts over military solutions to deliver long-term stability and prosperity for DRC and the region. It is equally vital that regional engagement works with existing political processes, in particular the Government of DRC's newly developed DDR programme, and which contributes towards the end of the State of Siege, enabling the re-establishment of local civilian governance.

We await with interest the plans for the proposed East African Community (EAC) regional force and urge EAC Partner States to engage closely and effectively with MONUSCO to manage the potential risks of parallel military deployments. As they design their intervention, we encourage EAC Partner States to draw on lessons learnt from MONUSCO's deployment.

President, humanitarian considerations must also be given sufficient attention by all actors to ensure the 5.9 million internally displaced civilians in DRC receive the assistance they need. Recent violence by the M23 armed group has resulted in a large spike in humanitarian need.

Kidnapping and violence against humanitarian workers is increasing and is severely impacting the ability of agencies to reach affected populations. We urge the Government of DRC to work more closely with humanitarian agencies, including OCHA, to find specific, and practical solutions to the threats to humanitarian delivery – including through strengthened civil-military cooperation.

President, let me acknowledge the challenges facing MONUSCO in this complex context. As we have seen by the loss of nine MONUSCO personnel in recent months, the Mission operates in dangerous circumstances, and we pay tribute to their personnel for what they do. We call on all actors to avoid any statements or actions which increase the risk to MONUSCO personnel and express our full support for the Mission in implementation of its mandate. In concluding, let me commend SRSG Keita and MONUSCO as a whole for their continued efforts in increasingly challenging circumstances.

I thank you.