

Press release: PM attending Eastern Partnership summit: 23 November 2017

Prime Minister Theresa May will attend the Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels.

On a trip to Brussels tomorrow the Prime Minister will set out her commitment for the UK to continue to play a critical role in European security after the UK leaves the EU.

Taking a leading role at the Eastern Partnership summit, the PM will reflect on the significant economic and social advances in the region and will join the renewed commitments to work together to tackle corruption and foster economic growth.

As the UK prepares for its exit from the EU, Theresa May will also welcome the unified approach to tackle threats and attempts of destabilisation from other foreign powers like Russia.

The Prime Minister will conclude by reaffirming the UK's support to the region – we are providing £50 million this financial year to support reform and security in the region through projects like tax reform in Moldova and de-mining in Ukraine; we are also spending £100m over five years in the Eastern Neighbourhood to counter disinformation.

The Prime Minister is expected to say:

From agriculture in Ukraine to the tech sector in Belarus – there is a huge amount of potential in the Eastern neighbourhood that we should nurture and develop.

But we must also be open-eyed to the actions of hostile states like Russia which threaten this potential and attempt to tear our collective strength apart.

This summit highlights the crucial importance of the European countries working together to protect our shared values and ideals. The UK may be leaving the EU but we are not leaving Europe, and we are unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe's security.

Speech: Secretary of State's Speech at Belfast Partners event

I'm really delighted to be here this evening at the latest Belfast Partners event here in the magnificent Mansion House right in the heart of the City of London.

It follows on from the highly successful launch event you held at Canary Wharf earlier this year ... and of course the hugely successful visit to Dublin and Belfast by the previous Lord Mayor of London just last month.

Lord Mayor, it is a pleasure to be here this evening ... and I'd also like to extend the very warmest welcome to Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nuala McAllister.

All of this is testament to the ever growing and strengthening links between the City of London and Belfast ... and I'd also like to pay tribute to Suzanne Wylie and Patrick Magee for all the tremendous work that they are doing in taking that forward.

But I know that this is only the start ... and that Belfast Partners have ambitious plans to forge new business networks between Belfast and other cities globally. I'm also aware that this reception concludes a Business Mission to London by a delegation of Belfast tech entrepreneurs.

And only last week the Government announced that Belfast has been chosen to be one of ten new regional hubs across the UK for emerging tech firms.

That announcement is clear evidence of our commitment to Northern Ireland and confirms its position at the leading edge of technology and digital development.

It also underlines the Government's support across the UK for digital startups and the expansion of existing businesses in the technology sector.

Tonight's event is also taking place of course in the immediate aftermath of the Chancellor's Autumn Budget delivered in the House of Commons yesterday.

I strongly believe that it was a Budget that will make great strides in building an economy that's fit for the future ... and that works for everyone across our United Kingdom, including of course in Northern Ireland.

It injects £660 million into Northern Ireland ... meaning that over the current spending review period the block grant will see a real terms increase.

It helps hard-working people by freezing fuel duty for the eighth successive year ... raising personal allowance and income tax thresholds ... and increasing the National Living Wage to deliver a £600 annual pay rise to full-time workers.

And of course in line with our manifesto commitments at the last election,

the Chancellor set out the way forward for a comprehensive and ambitious series of City Deals across Northern Ireland ... with negotiations to begin for a deal for the Belfast region.

Sajid Javid and I have already had some early discussions with partners in the Belfast City Regions and this will now be stepped up.

Again I'd like to pay tribute to the massive amount of work Suzanne and her team are putting into this.

We've seen in England, Scotland and Wales how City Deals can boost investment and employment. So it's right that Northern Ireland should start getting City Deals to boost economic growth ... not just in the Belfast region but to Londonderry and across Northern Ireland.

And we want to work with other Councils to see how we can develop plans to achieve that. In recent years the Northern Ireland economy has been performing well.

Growth was 1.6 per cent in the past year. There are 42,000 more people in employment than in 2010 and 4,600 more businesses.

Between 2010 and 2017 the earnings of an average full-time employee grew faster in Northern Ireland than in any other region.

And in the most recent year, Northern Ireland has seen the fastest annual productivity growth of all the UK nations and regions.

But I want us to do much, much better ... and unlock further the huge potential that Northern Ireland has to offer.

I believe that yesterday's Budget will help us to achieve that.

As will the restoration of a fully functioning Northern Ireland and Executive and Assembly.

A few times yesterday in interviews about the Budget I was asked "who is going to spend this extra money?"

And my very clear answer is that I want a Northern Ireland Executive in place to spend this money according to local priorities and on behalf of the whole community in Northern Ireland.

I also want to be able to devolve Corporation Tax powers to Northern Ireland.

The Government firmly believes that it could have a major impact in helping to transform the local economy ... and we reiterated our commitment to it yesterday. But we can only devolve it if there is an Executive in place with stable and sustainable finances.

So Northern Ireland is clearly missing out on huge economic opportunities by there not being an Executive in place.

At the same time key decisions that could transform public services and improve people's lives are not taken. So there's an absolute imperative to get devolution back up and running.

And the Government will continue to do all that it can to work with the parties to help resolve differences between and reach a successful outcome.

But in conclusion, this evening let's celebrate once more the strength of the links between Belfast and the City and I wish you all a very successful evening.

News story: Defence Minister returns to Chelmsford to announce £18m contract to support Royal Navy radar systems

The contract will ensure the continued availability of the battle-winning Long Range Radar (LRR) equipment on the UK's six Type 45 Destroyers, including maintenance and repairs. The work will sustain 11 highly-skilled jobs with BAE Systems in Chelmsford, as well as four in Portsmouth.

The announcement was particularly personal to the Defence Minister, who had her first ever work experience placement at Marconi in Chelmsford at the age of fifteen, with the expertise in radar technology from that site still evident today.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin, said:

It's been great seeing the cutting-edge innovation of British industry today, especially as my first experience of British business was so close to this site. This multi-million pound contract will boost the future of both this high-tech hub and our Navy's battle-winning radars.

Visiting BAE Systems' Great Baddow site, Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin announced a new £18 million contract. Crown Copyright.

Formerly the Marconi Research Centre and Advanced Technology Centre, the BAE site continues to be a cradle of innovation where some of the best brains in the world of electromagnetics and antennas develop new digital communications technologies. It is credited as the "Birthplace of Radio" after Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi started his business in Chelmsford.

Whilst at the site in Great Baddow, which homes BAE Systems' research and technology hub AI Labs, the Defence Minister met scientists and engineers and discussed space opportunities as well as Long Range Radar technology.

The Long Range Radar provides the Royal Navy with a detailed air surveillance picture of the battlespace, capable of automatically detecting and tracking hundreds of separate targets simultaneously at ranges of greater than 200 miles.

It is a key element of the Type 45 air defence capability and is also employed on the new Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers.

Richard Smart, Director Weapons for Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, said:

The UK's Type 45 Destroyers are part of the backbone of the Royal Navy and this contract supports their primary air defence role, offering the best protection available to the ships and crew.

This support agreement is the product of the strong skills base we have in UK Defence. It will keep Royal Navy personnel safe at sea as they defend our interests all over the world.

The new contract, which will run for the next five years, will cover support for the entire Type 45 fleet as well as one shore-based facility in Portsmouth.

Les Gregory, Product and Training Services Director for BAE Systems said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this follow-on contract to support the Long Range Radars across the Royal Navy's Type 45 Destroyer fleet, which will also enable us to explore further growth opportunities.

[News story: Border Force seize 20 kilos of cocaine at Dover](#)

On the morning of Tuesday, 21 November, Border Force officers at the inward freight controls at Dover's Eastern Docks stopped and searched a Lithuanian-registered lorry finding packages concealed within the floor of the vehicle.

The contents of the packages tested positive to a field test for cocaine. The drugs weighed approximately 20 kilos and have a potential estimated street level value of £1.2 million.

Paul Morgan, Director of Border Force South East and Europe said:

This was an excellent detection. Results like this demonstrate the vital work Border Force officers are doing on the front line to keep dangerous Class A drugs off the streets of the UK, where they cause significant harm to individuals and communities.

Every year Border Force officers operating at the UK border seize Class A drugs worth hundreds of millions of pounds. Working with law enforcement partners like the NCA we are determined to prevent drug trafficking and to bring those responsible to justice.

A Lithuanian national, Mindaugas Antana Antanavicius, 38, has been arrested and the investigation passed to the National Crime Agency (NCA). He was later charged with the attempted drugs importation.

At Folkestone Magistrates Court on Wednesday, 22 November, Antanavicius, of no fixed UK address, withheld his plea and was remanded in custody until his next appearance on 20 December at Canterbury Crown Court.

Border Force officers use hi-tech search equipment to combat immigration crime and detect banned and restricted goods that smugglers attempt to bring into the country.

They use an array of search techniques including sniffer dogs, carbon dioxide detectors, heartbeat monitors and scanners – as well as visual searches – to find well-hidden stowaways, illegal drugs, firearms and tobacco which would otherwise end up causing harm to local people, businesses and communities.

Anyone with information about activity they suspect may be linked to smuggling should call the hotline on 0800 59 5000.

[News story: Afghan National Army Officer Academy celebrates 10th graduation](#)

Afghan Officer Cadets have passed out of the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) today as part of the 10th graduation ceremony held at the site in Qargha, on the western outskirts of Kabul.

UK personnel, working with mentors from Australia, New Zealand and Denmark, are helping to train the next generation of Afghanistan's military leaders through mentoring the Afghan training staff and instilling the Sandhurst ethos at the academy.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The 10th graduation marks an important milestone in the academy's short but successful history. It has trained thousands of Afghans from all over the country, which is testament to our enduring commitment to Afghanistan.

Keeping Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorism helps keep our streets safe too. We are dedicated to building a capable and professional Afghan Army that will be the foundation of a strong and secure Afghanistan.

With UK support over 3,000 cadets have commissioned from ANAOA since September 2014. The training of female Officer Cadets is progressing well, with much of their training integrated with their male colleagues. The 10th graduation will mean over 100 female Officer Cadets have now commissioned.

This year signals a milestone in the academy's history with the first female Officer Cadet awarded the 'Duntroon Sword' for the best overall Officer Cadet to commission from the Academy. Somaiya, 24, has excelled in a range of traditional military areas such as Skill at Arms and field craft and is extremely proud to have worked with the British Army and will be travelling to the UK next year to further her Officer training.

In addition to helping to train the next generation of Afghanistan's leaders at ANAOA, UK personnel play a leading role in NATO's Resolute Support mission. They lead the Kabul Security Force, which provides force protection for NATO staff in Kabul, and advise members of the Afghan Air Force in vital areas such as air-to-ground integration, command and control, and Training and Exercises.