

News story: NATO must improve agility and spend, Defence Secretary urges

Sir Michael Fallon is pressing NATO members to step up defence spending during a two-day defence ministerial at NATO's HQ in Brussels, following his first meeting with US Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Reflecting the strength of the UK-US Defence relationship, Sir Michael was the first minister Secretary Mattis called after his appointment and their hour-long meeting at NATO's HQ was the first bilateral working session today.

During their recent phone call, shortly after Secretary Mattis' confirmation, both ministers agreed on the need for NATO to be more agile and responsive so it can respond faster to new threats including cyber and terrorism.

In July NATO confirmed that the UK meets the two per cent spending target, which includes a £178bn equipment plan and rising defence spending every year of this parliament.

The Defence Secretary spoke to fellow ministers to call for other states to spend both 2% overall and to spend 20% of that on new equipment to help tackle threats.

In his face-to-face meetings with Secretary Mattis Sir Michael reassured him that the UK stands shoulder to shoulder with the US in calling for NATO to be more agile to meet new threats in the fields of cyber warfare and counter terrorism.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

NATO has been a guarantee of mutual security for more than half a century. Britain is now calling for our partners to step up and share burdens on spending and help it become more agile in dealing with new threats including cyber and terrorism.

As leading player in the Alliance we recognise the importance of backing up our operational and exercise commitments with investment in new equipment to deal with threats to our security.

Sir Michael is discussing the UK's leadership in NATO. The UK's Enhanced Forward Presence deployment to Estonia is gathering momentum, seen this week in a 600-strong exercise in Sennelager in Germany which features British personnel from the Battle Group for 5 RIFLES. Hundreds of British troops including 5 RIFLES personnel from Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire have spent the last week exercising with four Challenger II tanks, Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicles and Jackals – alongside Estonian, French and Danish troops.

The deployment of 800 British personnel to Estonia under EFP is part of a

package of measures that the UK is leading in NATO this year. These include leading the land element of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force with 3,000 British troops ready to deploy rapidly to threats wherever they arise in the Alliance, and committing RAF Typhoon aircraft to the NATO Southern Air Policing mission to offer reassurance to in the Black Sea region.

Over the two-day ministerial, defence leaders will discuss issues such as protecting NATO's southern border, developing NATO's deterrence and defence posture, and strengthening the transatlantic bond.

News story: Defence Secretary to attend NATO meeting of Defence Ministers

This week's NATO Defence Ministerial is the first of the year and the first chance for Allies, including our Defence Secretary Michael Fallon, to meet collectively with the new US Defence Secretary Mattis.

Secretary Mattis knows NATO well from his time as Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation, a post he took up 10 years ago. But the security environment facing NATO has itself been transformed in the intervening decade. So this week's meeting is a chance for the 28 Allies to take stock on the challenges and opportunities we face, to the East and South of the Alliance, to reinforce the transatlantic bond and to affirm our commitment to deepening that link and our wider Allied engagement.

For the UK therefore, our priorities will be two-fold:

- to ensure the Alliance continues to make progress on taking forward the ambitious agenda agreed at Warsaw, in particular on modern defence and deterrence towards Russia. On that front (literally), the enhanced forward presence of NATO battlegroups is deploying this Spring to the Baltic States and Poland, with the UK proud to be leading the formation in Estonia, one of our most effective Allies in the Helmand campaign; and
- to take stock of what NATO has done since Warsaw to expand NATO's role in addressing instability on our Southern flank and beyond, including the new NATO Training and Capacity Building activity in Iraq, helping Iraqi security forces build their ability to secure the country after the defeat of Daesh.

All this requires resources and reform.

We are one of only four Allies other than the US currently meeting the NATO target of spending 2% of GDP on defence. We support the new US Administration's focus on this burden-sharing issue.

But a more effective Alliance is not only about money. It's also about continuing to modernise our structures and ways of working to ensure the Alliance is capable of addressing simultaneously the complex and challenging world around us, including the scourge of terrorism.

So this week's Ministerial will help set this year's agenda. One where NATO builds on the achievements and decisions of the Wales and Warsaw Summits and, looking ahead to the next Summit later this year, shows it is gripping collectively the new challenges we will face together.

News story: Doors open at unique nuclear archive

Speaking today at the Nucleus (Nuclear and Caithness Archive) in Wick, NDA chairman Stephen Henwood, said:

Today we see a new chapter in the important role Caithness has played in the UK's nuclear history. For many decades Dounreay was at the forefront of the development of the British, and world, nuclear industry and now Nucleus will see this knowledge protected for future generations.

NDA Chief Executive John Clarke added:

Across the UK, at over 17 sites, we have accumulated large volumes of important and valuable records, some dating back to the 1940s. Now we have Nucleus, we have ensured that this information is accessible, secure, and managed efficiently for the taxpayer.

At its peak, Dounreay employed more than 3,000 staff and brought a wide range of contracts for local businesses. By placing Nucleus in Wick, the NDA is honouring our responsibility to help offset the economic impact of closing down sites that were once major regional employers.

Located near one the UK's earliest nuclear research sites, Dounreay in Scotland, the Nucleus archive will have a dual role: as well as housing

nuclear records, the facility will contain a collection of local Scottish records that has outgrown its existing home.

An exercise lasting at least five years is now under way to collect many thousands of important plans, photographs, drawings and other records from locations across the UK for transfer to Nucleus.

The site's records – including plans, drawings, photographs and other information – will be the first nuclear collection transferred to Nucleus from the 17 NDA sites. The Caithness collection, with records dating back to the 16th century, are already in place.

Up to 26 km of shelving has been installed in a series of secure pods to take the material and ensure it is preserved. Nucleus will employ a staff of approximately 20 including archivists, preservation experts and support staff.

An operation has already been under way for a number of years to retrieve, collate and organise the huge quantities of records that are currently stored at or near individual sites.

It is hoped that, during 2017, Nucleus will be granted Place of Deposit status by The National Archive at Kew.

Once achieved, it will become one of the largest accredited repositories outside London.

An official opening ceremony will take place later in the year.

Archive material will be catalogued, indexed and stored in a carefully controlled environment, with humidity and temperature kept stable to minimise the potential for deterioration.

Old decaying documents will be transferred to archive-quality paper by on-site preservation specialists, and digitised for improved accessibility.

It is anticipated that interest in the nuclear material will be overwhelmingly from academics, regulators, journalists, industry representatives and all other researchers. The information will be provided digitally, wherever possible, avoiding risks of damage to the original material.

The triangular single-storey building has a large public area, including a reading room and community space for exhibitions, study or training.

The archive will also fulfil an important role for the future geological disposal facility (GDF) that is being developed for the UK, acting as a central repository for detailed waste records that must be safeguarded for many generations.

Discussions are also under way with the wider nuclear industry, including the Ministry of Defence, new build developers and operators of the UK's current nuclear power stations, to potentially consolidate their records at Nucleus.

[Nucleus Archive – video showing construction progress](#)

[Case study: NDA archive: Nucleus \(the Nuclear and Caithness Archives\)](#)

News story: UK Defence companies step up globally at Aero India 2017

Mrs Baldwin, the Minister for Defence Procurement, joins 20 UK companies at the [aerospace exhibition](#) held at Air Force Station Yelahanka. Showcasing some of the most innovative technology in the defence, aviation and security sectors, these cutting edge businesses will be forging long-lasting industrial partnerships and joint ventures with Indian companies.

The visit builds on the [Defence and International Security Partnership \(DISP\)](#) agreed in November 2015.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

The UK and India have much to offer one another in defence: from manufacturing collaboration and simplified export controls, to military cooperation, training and research partnerships.

As Britain steps up globally, we will work together with India to build knowledge, security and prosperity through a close industrial, military and economic partnership.

Mrs Baldwin is accompanied by the British High Commissioner to India, Dominic Asquith; Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Military Capability; and Sophie Lane Regional Director for India in the Department of International Trade's Defence and Security Organisation (DSO).

The UK has a cutting-edge range of world class products across the air, land, maritime and security sectors, and Mrs Baldwin called on UK and Indian companies to develop and sustain long term industrial partnerships, to meet the challenges of the future and launch new products into the global marketplace.

[Read Harriett Baldwin's speech to the 'Make In India' Conference.](#)

News story: The Armed Forces Covenant working on the ground through Eastern England VAPC

If you have served in our armed forces, your regional [Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees](#) are ready to help.

These committees are independent non-departmental bodies of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and are made up of experienced volunteers who have an interest in the welfare of ex-service people. Formerly known as the War Pensions Committees, they advise and liaise with veterans, their families and relevant organisations on their needs, issues and general welfare matters.

A large part of their responsibility is to raise awareness and ensure implementation of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Here is one example of how the Eastern England VAPC assisted one young man in Cambridgeshire. Penny Kingham JP (one of our brilliant VAPC members in the East of England) had been approached by a young man who is in the process of leaving the army, although still currently serving. He had sustained an injury whilst serving and unfortunately now has to walk with a stick. He was having great difficulty in obtaining registration at his local doctors surgery. He became very frustrated and reminded them of the covenant. They said they were at full capacity and were therefore unable to see him at the surgery.

Penny had asked what we could do to get help and in consultation with the Chairman of the Eastern VAPC, Jonathan Jelley MBE JP and Veterans UK, it was felt that we had to explain to him that the covenant was not designed to give those serving or who have served advantage in social provision, but rather more to ensure equality and no disadvantage because of military service.

With that, Penny then relayed this information back to the young man and his mother and showed them the precise relevant part of the covenant which they copied. She suggested to them that they go back to the surgery to explain.

Armed with this, they did indeed return to the surgery concerned to calmly explain the full situation. It seems that the young soldier had been registered with the surgery since childhood. His wife and his own child continue to be registered at the surgery. They explained that he had only left the surgery when joining the army and now wanted to return. Upon hearing this, the Practice Manager became involved and agreed that had he not joined the army, he would still have been registered and therefore under the covenant they took him back onto their list.

What an excellent demonstration of where the covenant can help and how VAPCs can help to ensure favorable outcomes on the ground. This military family although unprepared to make any public comment were delighted with the

outcome. This was due to Penny Kingham JP acting in her capacity as an Eastern England VAPC member with a clear sense of purpose and commitment. As Penny said:

If it helps just one more person it will be worth the effort.

If you or someone you know is a veteran who needs help then please do contact your local [VAPC](#).