

UK further commits to NATO and European Security through JEF Readiness Declaration and deployment of Typhoons to Lithuania

At the first NATO Defence Ministers' meeting of the year, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced a series of contributions the UK will be making to the Alliance that has protected Europe for over 70 years.

Alongside the six other NATO members who are in the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) – Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – Mr Wallace signed a Readiness Declaration that commits the JEF to making an enduring and substantial contribution to NATO's Readiness Initiative.

This contribution includes land capabilities as part of a UK-led brigade and in the maritime domain through a UK Carrier Strike Group.

Mr Wallace also announced that this summer four RAF Typhoons will deploy to Lithuania where they will patrol NATO skies alongside allies as part of the NATO Air Policing mission.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

A Global Britain will continue to play a leading role in NATO, working with multiple Allies and contributing a range of capabilities, cementing the UK as a Tier 1 military power.

That was clearly demonstrated today with the declaration that the Joint Expeditionary Force will contribute to the NATO Readiness Initiative, including through a UK-led land brigade and the UK Carrier Strike Group.

While at NATO Headquarters in Brussels the Defence Secretary met a number of counterparts from across the Alliance – including US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper – as well Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

JEF Readiness Declaration

The JEF is a partnership of like-minded nations that provides a high-readiness force of over 10,000 personnel. It is committed to supporting global and regional peace, stability and security either on its own or through multinational institutions such as NATO.

Made up of northern European nations, the JEF's prime interest is in Euro-Atlantic security with efforts focused on but not limited to the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic regions where it can complement the NATO deterrence efforts in the region. The signing of a joint declaration to make a substantial commitment to the NATO Readiness Initiative recognises this and the Readiness Initiative's future contribution to European peace and security.

NATO Baltic Air Policing

The Defence Secretary also announced that the UK would deploy four RAF Typhoon jets to Šiauliai Air Base this summer where they will contribute to the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission.

Alongside fast jets from Spain, the RAF quick reaction alert pilots will patrol Baltic skies, deter threats and intercept any incursions into NATO airspace. This follows the UK's previous deployments on NATO Baltic Air Policing in Estonia and on NATO Southern Air Policing in Romania.

NATO in the Middle East

In working sessions with fellow Defence Ministers, the Defence Secretary discussed a range of issues affecting NATO including the future of NATO's Mission in Iraq as well as the role the Alliance can play in the wider Middle East. The UK agrees with the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that NATO could contribute even more to regional stability and the fight against international terrorism.