UK-Ukraine joint leaders statement: 1 February 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's joint statement.

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Boris Johnson met President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on February 1, 2022 to discuss ongoing Russian hostile activity, including military build-up.

The Prime Minister emphasised the United Kingdom's unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The United Kingdom stands shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine in the face of ongoing Russian aggression, which threatens regional peace and security and undermines the global order. The two leaders emphasised that it is the right of every Ukrainian to determine their own future.

The leaders warned that any further Russian incursion in Ukraine would be a massive strategic mistake and have a stark humanitarian cost.

Ukraine and the United Kingdom agreed to work together to strengthen Ukraine's security and ability to defend itself. The leaders also expressed their commitment to strengthen Ukraine's energy security and support its efforts towards the green transition. The Prime Minister announced £88 million of new funding to aid efforts to build Ukraine's resilience and reduce reliance on Russian energy supplies.

The leaders reaffirmed their desire to deepen the strategic partnership between Ukraine and the UK in all areas of mutual interest, and to continue their engagement, particularly in the framework of the Ukraine-UK Strategic Dialogue.

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Chief of the Air Staff Defence Space Strategy speech

With this strategy, the Ministry of Defence will protect and promote the United Kingdom's interests in space; and we will take a leading role in the coalition of like-minded nations and organisations who have come together to ensure space is there for the benefit of all.

Space is fundamental to our national security and our way of life. Any loss or disruption to our access to space would have a disastrous effect on people's day-to-day lives. What is happening 100s of miles or more away, is not something our average citizen frets about. We don't hear much about a disruption to space services at a personal level and how they could affect all of us – no bank transactions, little food on the shelves, no petrol in the pumps, traffic gridlock, and a malfunctioning national power grid.

We are all dependent on space, whether that is in our personal lives, or in my case commanding air and space operations, so we must ensure the safety and security of the space domain.

In Defence terms, Space gives us and our closest allies a unique operational advantage. Every military operation from a Land Battle to the Carrier Strike Group is dependent on Space. Space operations for the RAF are not conceptual or experimental forays into a sci-fi future; they are an essential element of the multi-domain integrated force of today. And Space is a natural continuum of the Air Domain, where the importance of gaining and maintaining control of the air can equally apply to the Space Domain.

And we have work to do. Today, space is a far from benign environment, with almost daily cyber-attacks and dubious sub-threshold activity. In recent years, Russia and China have tested anti-satellite weapons creating debris fields that will linger for decades, posing threats to the satellites and the space systems on which the world depends.

Russian satellites continually make close approaches to other satellites, what we call rendezvous and proximity operations, possibly an indication of espionage activity, or possibly rehearsing something much more sinister. Meanwhile, China seeks to become the world's pre-eminent space power by 2045, an aspiration supported by its developments in cyber, electromagnetic and kinetic systems that potentially could threaten other users in space. So we must continue to build our understanding of what malign actors are doing in space, and the means of protecting our critical interests and freedom of operation in space.

We will do this through UK Space Command, a joint command attracting our brightest and best, which was established at RAF High Wycombe on 1st April last year, bringing together a cadre of experts from across the UK Armed

Forces, our allies, the Civil Service and industry, to integrate, coordinate and deliver decisive space power in a truly national endeavour.

At its heart, the UK Space Operations Centre is the UK Armed Forces Operational level Command and Control organisation that provides space effects across all Domains, and monitors what our potential adversaries are doing 24/7.

This was demonstrated only too clearly late last year with the Russian Anti-Satellite Test, which you just heard the Minister speaking about, I'm proud to say our UK Space Operations Centre immediately proved its worth: it took a leading role in the debris categorisation and issued warnings of a potential threat to life to those working on the International Space Station – including Russian nationals.

Last year, we published the UK's National Space Strategy, and today I am delighted to be here at the launch of our Defence Space Strategy. In the context of what I have just described, it defines the Ministry of Defence's critical role in the Protect and Defend element of the National Strategy utilising our space systems and platforms, our operational expertise and our partnerships, while also growing our cadre of space operators ready for the challenges of the future.

We have three strategic objectives:

The First is – Protecting and Defending our interests in and through space. This includes being able to identify and attribute threats to our space systems and then respond in a proportionate and coordinated way.

Secondly – to integrate space operations into Defence and Security Multi-Domain operations, including the delivery of resilient and assured space services such as satellite communications or intelligence gathering which are crucial to our operations today and into the future.

And Thirdly – to develop, up-skill and grow our cadre of space experts from across the Navy, Army, Royal Air Force and Civil Service, equipping future generations with the skills to face the threats of the future. Our ultimate success within the Space Domain also rests in our next generations of UK Space Operators, whose interest, intellect, experience and professionalism we must develop now.

We will own our capabilities and lead their development where there is a pressing sovereign advantage to do so; we will collaborate where we can from projects with our lead ally, the United States; to support the UK Space Agency's UK space launch programmes; and we will assure access to the shared resources of our like-minded allies and coalition partners.

As you have already heard from the Minister, we are making considerable investments in our military capabilities through our Defence Space Portfolio, capitalising upon the UK's world-leading science and space technology sector.

Our SKYNET programme provides a constellation of assured and secure satellite communications, representing a strategic investment of £5 billion, and a

critical national capability into the 2040s and beyond.

Our additional investment of £1.4 billion over the next decade through the programmes you have just heard about like MINERVA, ISTARI, AURORA and PROMETHEUS 2 will:

Enhance our understanding of the threats and hazards within the Space Domain. Give our armed forces assured access to the highest quality real-time information and intelligence as they increasingly operate around the globe.

Provide novel sensor combinations able to identify and track targets and directly support the warfighter across all domains.

Gain greater understanding of emerging technologies which can be used to protect and defend our interests. This coherent and growing programme of investment will underpin our Defence vision and mission in space in close collaboration with our strategic allies and partners. This is the foundation of an exciting future for UK Defence in this exciting operational domain.

Space is critical to the day-to-day life of every citizen of the UK. That is why this Government has published the UK's first National Space Strategy. The ambition is clear; the Space sector is important to the nation and, as a nation, we must be at the forefront of this explosion of technological and commercial opportunities in Space. From a military perspective, its contribution to current and future multi domain military operations is ever more significant, and non-discretionary. That is why the publication of our Defence Space Strategy is so important, to better protect and promote the United Kingdom's interests in space and make a leading-edge contribution to the coalition of like-minded nations and organisations who have come together to ensure space is there for the benefit of all.

Update to the repayment thresholds of post-2012 and postgraduate Income Contingent Student Loans

News story

The Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed the annual updates to the thresholds of post-2012 and postgraduate Income Contingent Student Loans.

Income Contingent Student Loans for post-2012 (Plan 2) loans

The repayment threshold for post-2012 (plan 2) loans will remain £27,295 for the period 6 April 2022 to 5 April 2023.

The interest rate thresholds for post-2012 (plan 2) loans for the period 6 April 2022 to 5 April 2023 will be as follows; the lower threshold will remain £27,295 and the higher threshold will remain £49,130.

Postgraduate Loans

The repayment threshold for Postgraduate loans remains £21,000.

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Defence Procurement Minister launches Defence Space Strategy

It’s a huge pleasure to be here today on the next step in our execution of the Integrated Review, the Defence Command Paper and Defence and Security Industrial Strategy.

A lot has happened in Defence in the last year. From assisting in homeland resilience in issues as varied at vaccine delivery to Heavy Goods Vehicle support to the largest Royal Navy deployment in decades making our positive presence felt on the far side of the world.

Above all, as I speak, the Defence Secretary is meeting NATO partners, discussing the truly concerning situation on Ukraine’s borders – the most serious threat of a major war on our continent since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

However the British people know that what they can always expect from UK Defence is calm, determined, delivery.

We are continuing to progress the positive future for Defence to ensure we can meet the threats of the future with the most modern, integrated, technologically advanced forces reaching out through every domain.

For hundreds of years we have faced down threats from land and sea. Over the last century we rose to the challenge of air warfare.

One of the threats of the future. A threat that has the ability to fundamentally threaten so many of our key interests in and from Space.

Building on our National approach published last year, we promised a Defence Space Strategy which I am proud to announce today.

We know the opportunities that space delivers from effective global communications through to ISR. We also know of the threat. Several states are pursuing hostile capabilities that can disrupt and deny others' use of space.

A few months ago, Russia recklessly destroyed an inactive satellite – sending debris spinning around the Earth and endangering the International Space station.

Just consider a simple fleck of paint travelling in space at five miles per second in Low Earth Orbit can cause huge damage to critical space assets.

But what we're talking about here with Russia's actions is at least 1,500 pieces of debris that we can track, its probably, ten times that amount, travelling at that speed through space, with potential to cause disastrous results to any space equipment with which it collides.

Such irresponsible actions underline the dangers in a domain on which we place ever increasing reliance.

Satellite constellations in orbit link up almost every aspect of our daily lives, from mobile phones, the internet and television to transport networks, and the world's financial trading systems. Our allies and we rely on space to deliver secure global communications, provide surveillance intelligence and missile warning, as well as support our deployed forces globally.

So our new Defence Space Strategy sets out a plan for us to become more resilient, more robust and a more significant space player on the global stage. We've begun laying the groundwork. Last April we established a single joint UK Space Command that will conduct day-to-day space operations, deliver leading-edge capabilities and generate the Force structure we need. And last September, we published our first integrated National Space Strategy. It set out our ambition to strengthen the UK's status as a world-class space nation and become one of the most innovative and attractive space economies in the world.

Defence is integral to this ambition. So we've been investing to deliver. In addition to the £5 billionn over 10 years already allocated to our future Skynet Satellite communications, a further £1.4 billion has been allocated to support defence operations over the next decade.

Our priorities are set out within today's strategy.

£970 million will go into our new ISTARI programme. This puts in place the foundations of a next-generation constellation of ISR in Low Earth Orbit. They will be fitted with a variety of sensors which can 'see' across multiple aspects of the spectrum – allowing for 24/7 observation capabilities whatever the weather.

Related to this, we are investing £61 million in a programme called TITANIA, which will experiment with optical laser communication technology. This will enable the transfer of data in, to and from Space at an equivalent capacity to high-speed broadband.

£85 million is destined to develop our Space Domain Awareness capabilities. Enhancing our ability to properly understand activity in space stretching as far as geostationary orbit and beyond – more than 36,000km from Earth. Our Space Domain Awareness activity also includes close collaboration with our US and Australian partners on the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability programme announced last July by the Defence Secretary.

And £135 million has been allocated to boost our Command and Control capabilities over the decade. Besides underpinning our new Space Command, this cash will deliver our AURORA programme. Developing the architecture on which we'll build game-changing apps so our commanders can make rapid decisions in real time.

Finally, we are investing £145 million on Space Control to explore capabilities that deliver carefully calibrated effects to protect our access to space and our operational independence.

Our ambitions don't end there and are not capped at £1.4 billion. So today I am delighted to announce we're going to invest a further £127 million over the next four years in Minerva. This project emerged from a Dragon's Den style process. Testing the great ideas that come through from the Defence Innovation Unit (DIU).

Minerva is about the best means to deliver the digital backbone upon which our space enterprise will depend. It is focussed on the processing power, the radio frequencies, the imaging capabilities, and the data streams to deliver space-based intelligence.

Not only will it make us fully interoperable – enabling us to tap into our key Space allies. But it will allow us to share what space-derived data we discover across every domain in a timely manner. We'll share what we know. They'll share what they know …to our mutual benefit. Best of all we are working closely with UK companies to deliver it.

Together, MINERVA and ISTAR will form the building blocks of our Defence space ISR capability. Collectively they will help us learn lessons about how to spirally develop our capabilities in an agile manner – outpacing both the rapidity of technological advancement and potential adversaries.

As I hope I've begun to show, this strategy is about more than capabilities.

It is about partnerships. Government working as one with industry and international allies. With this in mind, I am delighted to announce another really exciting innovation. Our Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is manufacturing a tiny shoe-box-sized satellite – otherwise known as Prometheus 2. Manufactured in the UK, it is operated by the company In-Space Missions, with ground station support from Dstl's international partners and Airbus Defence & Space UK.

Despite its tiny size, Prometheus's payload will include a Hyperspectral Imager from Cosine Measurement Systems, Global-Positioning receivers from the University of New South Wales, a wide field-of-view imager from Canadensys, and multiple Software-Defined-Radios from Airbus UK. This exciting project is hugely innovative. We're testing the concept, experimenting, pushing the boundaries. Investing to stay on the cutting edge.

And, on top of this huge pipeline of space investment coming down the track, we've got our SKYNET 6A satellite, being built by Airbus Defence and Space. It remains on track for launch in 2025.

These investments are about security. But they are also about prosperity. Government has already helped create a thriving UK space sector worth over £16.4 billion per year, with a strong talent pipeline employing over 45,000 people in fields from satellite manufacturing to research. This makes the UK an excellent location for space businesses.

The funding I've announced today represents a significant boost for the UK space industry and will play a key part in stimulating wider innovation, commercialisation, and growth.

Rest assured, we will continue working ever more closely with industry to develop the space technologies needed to maintain our advantage and amplify our competitive edge. Knowing that, as we do, our innovative space research and development will inspire a new generation and enhance the expertise of an entire sector.

So, today we're boldly pushing back the frontiers of our Defence space ambitions. Not just enhancing our military resilience, strengthening our security, and furthering our prosperity. We are applying rocket boosters to the UK's innovative instincts and helping our space sector surge ahead of the threats we'll face in the future.

Natural Flood Management work underway in Northumberland village

The Environment Agency is working with Tyne Rivers Trust and landowners to use natural materials to slow the flow of water on the Birkey Burn and Red

Burn catchments upstream of Acomb.

It includes a series of wooden leaky dams, which hold back water during heavy rainfall to temporarily slow the flow of water downstream, and structures based on the childhood game ‘Kerplunk’ – a series of interlocked wooden features designed to slow the flow of water while allowing for fish passage.

Newly constructed leaky barriers on the Birkey Burn

Work expected to be complete in the spring

These features are being made using trees felled on site as part of a thinning process to manage the woodland at Target Wood, reducing the need to transport materials and lowering the project’s carbon footprint.

Work on the £260,000 project began at the end of last year and is expected to be completed in the spring.

It will work in support of the village’s recently completed flood defences, which worked for the first time to protect Acomb from potential flooding over the New Year.

One of the ‘winged’ leaky dams under construction

Hopeful project will ‘provide reassurance for residents’

Caroline Maarouf, Environment Agency Flood Risk Advisor, said:

> At the end of 2020 we completed construction work in the village centre to better protect Acomb from flooding, which included improvements to the bridge and the construction of a new flood wall and embankment.
>
> Now these new upstream natural features will slow the flow of water before they reach the village, working hand in hand with the defences to provide more robust protection.
>
> We understand just how devastating it is to be flooded and have worked closely with the community and our partners to develop a solution which is right for the village. Hopefully this will provide reassurance for residents, who we know have frequently suffered from flooding issues.

Ceri Gibson, CEO at Tyne Rivers Trust, added:

> Natural flood management is becoming increasingly important to help deal with a changing climate and to manage the Tyne catchment’s

sustainability.

We've also worked hard to keep the carbon footprint of this project to a minimum by using trees felled nearby and specialist equipment such as an alpine tractor which uses less fuel and does not impact on soil condition and biodiversity as much. Forestry Commission and other project managers have expressed interest in this way of working which we hope to roll out to many other areas in the catchment.

One of the completed 'kerplunk' structures.

Winter flood campaign

Acomb was previously affected during Storm Desmond in the winter of 2015.

Funding for the scheme is from the Government's £5.2 billion investment to better protect 336,000 properties across England by 2027 by constructing flood and coastal defences. Up to £193 million of this will be invested in the North East, with flood alleviation schemes planned for Hexham and Team Valley, among others.

The work has started during the Environment Agency's winter flood campaign, where people are being encouraged to find out more information on how to make their homes, businesses, and communities more resilient to flooding, and sign up for flood warnings.

People in flood risk areas should know what to do in a flood and they are encouraged to download the Environment Agency's 'Prepare. Act. Survive.' flood plan to help reduce their risk.

Acomb has a very active Flood Warden Group, which works with the Environment Agency to ensure the community is prepared for flooding. This includes site visits to vulnerable areas, creating and updating a Community Flood Plan and supporting residents to create personal flood plans.