

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.

Press release: Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult: Chair appointed

Kevin Crofton joins the [Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult](#) with a 25-year career in the semiconductor industry. He has executive experience in the UK and USA, currently acting as President of SPTS Technologies in South Wales, and Corporate Vice President of Orbotech Inc.

His experience and insight will be invaluable in establishing the Catapult within the rapidly growing compound semiconductor cluster in South Wales.

It is the 11th Catapult to be opened by Innovate UK.

The market opportunity for the UK

Compound semiconductors are at the heart of many devices we use today, from smart phones to tablets and satellite communication systems. They are central to the development of new technologies including:

- 5G network
- high-efficiency lighting
- power electronics for next-generation electric vehicles
- new imaging techniques in security and health diagnostics

Data from the [BCC Research and MarketsAndMarkets](#) forecasts the global market for compound semiconductors to be in the range of £75 billion to £125 billion by 2025. There is a market opportunity for the UK due to its world-class research base in this field, which has led to the creation of many companies along the value chain.

Maximising business and research opportunities

Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Jo Johnson said:

The government's investment in the Compound Semiconductor Application Catapult is testament to our track record as a leader in advanced electronics – a strength that we will build on through our Industrial Strategy to ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of innovation.

The appointment of Kevin Crofton as Chair and his wealth of industry experience will help drive this and continue the Catapult's vital role in developing new technologies.

Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

Much of the advance technology powering our mobile phones and other devices is being pioneered right here in Wales. The new research centre will underline our reputation as a world leader in semiconductors and, with Kevin Crofton at the head, put us in the front row of digital development.

Innovations like the Catapult will lead to the creation of more high skilled and high paid jobs in Wales.

Innovate UK Chief Executive Ruth McKernan said:

Kevin's experience and expertise will spearhead the development of the new Catapult, and ensure we are maximising the business opportunities from the important compound semiconductors market.

Kevin Crofton added:

I look forward to helping to guide the Catapult's vital contribution to the compound semiconductor industry in the UK.

We expect the Catapult to bridge some of the primary research, development and test challenges that exist in the UK compound semiconductor sector. This should help to accelerate innovation among existing businesses and to aid spin-out companies in their success.

News story: Bedford man pleads guilty to providing illegal immigration advice

From:

First published:

15 February 2017

Part of:

Unqualified immigration adviser pleads guilty to providing unregulated immigration advice.

Mr Ziaur Rahman, aged 37, of Wendover Drive, Bedford, pleaded guilty at Luton Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 24 January 2017, to two offences of providing unregulated immigration advice between 5 June 2012 and the 28 December 2012.

Mr Rahman was previously regulated by the OISC but this ceased on 21 February 2012 however he continued to provide immigration advice unlawfully.

On 14 February 2017 Mr Rahman was sentenced to 6 weeks imprisonment on each count suspended for 12 months, to run consecutively. He was also ordered to complete 200 hours unpaid work within the next 12 months, and to pay compensation to the victims of £480 and £1352. He was ordered to pay prosecution costs of £1581.

When sentencing magistrates said:

"These were serious offences against two vulnerable victims. Mr Rahman knew the implications and devastating consequences for the persons he advised when he knew he was no longer qualified."

Speaking about the decision, Deputy Immigration Services Commissioner Dr Ian Leigh said:

"This is not a technical or victimless crime, Ziaur Rahman was advising vulnerable people who could not handle their immigration cases on their own. They trusted him and he betrayed that trust. I am delighted with the outcome in this case."

[News story: CMA updates register of advisory and warning letters](#)

From:

First published:

15 February 2017

The CMA has updated its register of competition law advisory and warning letters with details for 2016.

The register lists the letters that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) sent out in 2016 to companies it was concerned might be breaking competition law, along with details of the relevant sector and the suspected behaviour of concern.

The CMA sends [advisory and warning letters](#) to businesses where it is concerned that their practices may be harming competition, but where a full formal investigation would not currently be justified under its [prioritisation principles](#). However, such letters do not preclude the possibility of a formal investigation at a later date.

Letters contain a deadline by which the business should confirm receipt and, in the case of warning letters, explain what steps it is taking to ensure it is complying with the law.

Both advisory and warning letters may also be sent in connection with a formal investigation; these are noted on the registers where relevant, and some CMA [case pages](#) and communications may also refer to these.

Further information on the CMA's use of advisory and warning letters is available on the [guidance](#) page.

[News story: February 2017 Labour Market Statistics for Scotland](#)

The Scottish unemployment rate is 4.9 per cent, above the rate of 4.8 per cent for the whole of the UK.

The labour market statistics also show that employment in Scotland increased by 8,000 over the three months to December 2016. The number of those in employment in Scotland now stands at 2,611,000.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, said:

There is cause for some cautious optimism about the state of Scotland's labour market, with employment up and more women returning to the labour market.

However, declining economic activity during the last 12 months, and the gap between the Scottish and UK labour markets, remains a concern.

We have devolved a raft of new powers to the Scottish Parliament. It now needs to use those levers to strengthen the Scottish economy.

Headline statistics for the October to December 2016 quarter:

- Employment in Scotland increased by 8,000 over the quarter, and fell by 20,000 over the year, to stand at 2,611,000.
- The Scottish employment rate increased by 0.1 pp over the quarter to 73.6 per cent. The rate is below the UK average of 74.6 per cent.
- Unemployment in Scotland rose by 6,000 over the quarter and is down 27,000 over the year. The level now stands at 135,000.
- At 4.9 per cent, the Scottish unemployment rate is above the UK's rate of 4.8 per cent.
- Economic activity increased by 13,000 over the quarter and now stands at 2,746,000. Also, the economic activity rate decreased over the year to stand at 77.6 per cent.
- In January 2017, the number of people out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance was 50,100 and claimant count, including Universal Credit was 76,400.

Latest Data for Scotland:

Employment

The Labour Force Survey indicates that the number of people in employment in Scotland from October to December 2016 was 2,611,000. Employment was up by 8,000 compared to the previous three months, and down by 20,000 compared to the same quarter last year. The employment rate was up 0.1 percentage points on the previous quarter, and down by 1.0 percentage points compared the same quarter last year. By comparison, the Scottish employment rate is below the UK average of 74.6 per cent.

Unemployment

Unemployment in Scotland was up by 6,000 over the quarter October to December

2016 at 135,000. The level was down 27,000 on the same quarter last year. The unemployment rate was up 0.2 p.p. on the previous quarter at 4.9 per cent, which is down 0.9 p.p. over the year.

Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit

The number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) fell by 2,100 to 50,100 in January 2017. The level is down by 10,400 on January 2016. The claimant count level (JSA and Universal Credit) is down 4,300 over the month at 76,400 and the rate is down 0.2 p.p. over the month and up 0.1 p.p. the year to 2.7 per cent.

Economic Activity

The number of economically active (defined as those in employment or ILO unemployed, and seasonally adjusted) in Scotland in the October to December 2016 quarter was 2,746,000. This was up 13,000 on the previous quarter, and down by 47,000 on prior year levels. Among those aged 16-64 the economic activity rate was 77.6 per cent, up 0.2 pp on the previous quarter, and down 1.7 pp over the year.