

UK-France joint statement: enhancing cooperation against illegal migration

14 November 2022

The Home Secretary of the UK, Mrs. Suella Braverman, and the Minister of Interior and Overseas territories of France, M. Gérald Darmanin, today confirmed a series of steps in their continuing cooperation to tackle all forms of illegal migration including small boats crossings, within the framework set by international law.

The UK and France have worked together to address illegal migration preventing over 23,000 small boat crossings in 2021 and over 30,000 so far this year. Alongside this we have dismantled 55 organised crime groups (OCGs) and made over 500 arrests supported by the work of the UK-France Joint Intelligence Cell, where UK and French officials collate and analyse operational intelligence to prevent crossings from taking place and to dismantle the gangs behind them.

However, the number of attempted crossings continues to rise. To that end, the UK and France will intensify cooperation with a view to making the small boat route unviable, save lives, dismantle organised crime groups and prevent and deter illegal migration in transit countries and further upstream.

A joint strategy

The UK and France will implement new Joint Strategic Objectives and a Joint Operational Plan to drive forward the next phase of cooperation. The Joint Strategic Objectives set out our strategy with three overarching objectives:

- stemming the expansion of illegal crossings and making the small boats route unviable by deploying technological and human resources specifically dedicated to surveillance, detection and interception of attempts to cross the border illegally (“smart border”);
- dismantling organised crime and facilitation networks through genuine joint work including but not limited to the collection and use of intelligence from disembarked or intercepted migrants (“resilient border”); and
- preventing and deterring illegal crossing attempts through joint work across a range of policy, operations and communication activities spanning as far upstream as possible, in connection with migrants’ countries of origin and transit (“deterrent border”).

A new integrated approach

The UK and France will undertake significant and innovative action which will result in a more integrated and effective approach including:

- the expansion of the highly successful Joint Intelligence Cell to deepen intelligence sharing further and generate additional investigations to dismantle the criminal gangs;
- the deployment of more French officers to patrol French beaches with agreement to increase deployments by 40% in the next 5 months;
- the deployment, for the first time, of reciprocal teams of embedded officers with the objective to, without prejudice to sovereignty, increase joint understanding of the threat through first-hand observations, strengthen migrant debriefing and increase information sharing on the threat;

- a joint approach to working with near neighbours, to maximise our efforts to disrupt traffickers' operations before they reach France, including a meeting in the coming weeks at Ministerial level in the Calais format;
- a taskforce focussed on reversing the recent rise in Albanian nationals and organised crime groups exploiting illegal migration routes in to Western Europe and the UK;
- more intricate operational cooperation with the French-command HQ coordinating and exchanging information between the two countries in the fight against cross-Channel illegal migrations, supported by joint UK-France analysis teams with an exchange of liaison officers;
- increased joint efforts to target the movement of goods that facilitate crossings using intelligence networks, tackling another key component of the smuggler's business model;
- investment in cutting-edge surveillance technology to enable swifter detection of crossing attempts to ensure immediate alert and disruption of launch attempts;
- funding for detection dogs at ports to identify individuals seeking to cross illegally;
- investment in port security infrastructure such as more CCTV at key border crossing points along the Channel coast;
- investment in reception centres in the south of France, to deter migrants entering France via the Mediterranean migration route from moving to the Channel coast and from attempting dangerous crossings, providing them instead with safe options;
- investment in removal centres to support voluntary returns to countries of origin where appropriate, safe and legal.

The activity will begin with immediate effect. The UK has committed to a financial investment of up to €72.2 million in 2022/2023 to support delivery of this work. The objectives outlined are part of a multi-year strategy that will require continued and ongoing commitment by both sides to support delivery of the work.

Next steps

The Ministers will keep the impact of these measures and their implementation under close review via a UK-France Joint Monitoring Committee

The Ministers recognise the importance of cooperation with other neighbouring countries and European partners and will take forward further discussions with partners to ensure a multilateral approach via an imminent meeting of near neighbours.

The Ministers acknowledge that efforts cannot stop here and are committed to maintaining regular dialogue on what other innovative steps can be taken to address illegal migration at all levels. This statement will be the foundation for a more ambitious and comprehensive partnership between our two countries, looking ahead to the UK/France leaders' summit next year.