



Ministry
of Defence



Defence Diplomacy Strategy

Keeping Britain Safe:
secure at home and strong abroad

Public Summary



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secure at home and strong abroad**

Public Summary

March 2026



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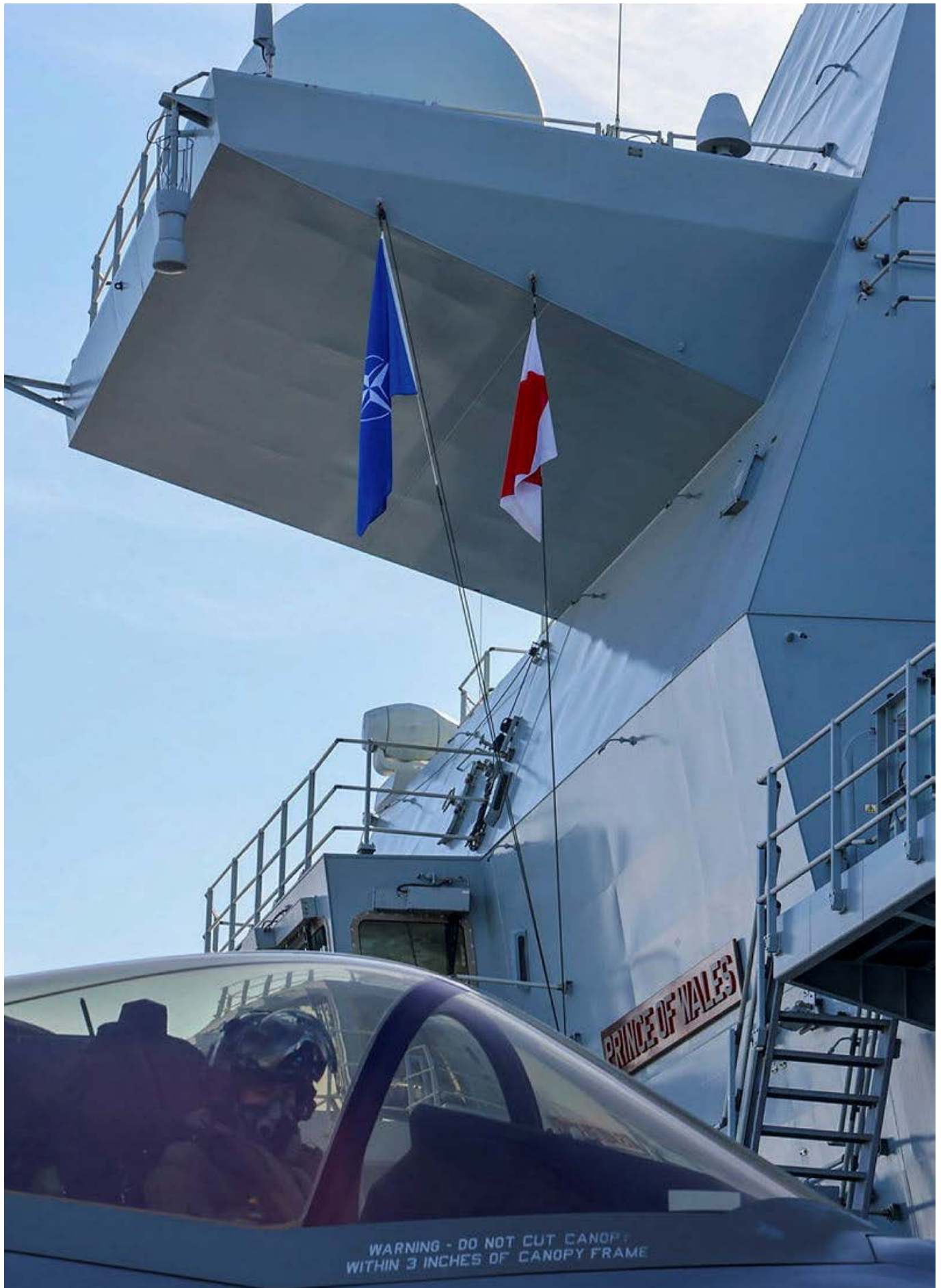
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Ministerial foreword

Our world has changed. The threats we face are more serious and less predictable than at any time since the Cold War. This government is stepping up to meet those threats, committing to the largest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War. In this new era, our first ever Defence Diplomacy Strategy lays the foundation for UK Defence to be more deliberate, targeted and coherent in deepening its international relationships with allies and partners. This public summary captures the strategy's core elements.

At a time when Europe has rightly been challenged to step up and meet the security demands in its own region, and in the face of growing Russian aggression, the primary focus of our defence policy, and of our defence diplomacy, is on supporting our commitment to NATO. There is no British security without Europe, and no European security without Britain. Since coming into office 18 months ago, we have delivered the largest increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War secured strategic agreements with Germany, France and Norway, all of which strengthen our national security and make defence an engine for growth in the UK. We have signed an ambitious new Defence and Security Partnership with the EU. We have galvanised international support for Ukraine. Since February 2025, the UK has stepped up to co-chair the Ukraine Defence Contact



Group with Germany – the international forum responsible for providing military equipment for Ukraine's Armed Forces. We also co-lead the Coalition of the Willing with France, created to help secure lasting peace in Ukraine.

NATO First does not mean NATO only. Security in the Euro-Atlantic is indivisible from security in the Middle East and Indo-Pacific. The UK remains fully committed to working with our global allies and partners on shared priorities. Over the past 18 months, we have built on our ground-breaking AUKUS agreement with the US and Australia, moving to translate plans into hard capability. The deployment of our Carrier Strike Group on Operation Highmast was supported by 30 nations from across the world, the operation supported 91 UK companies to pursue a potential £20 billion in export prospects.

The Defence Diplomacy Strategy enables us to co-ordinate more closely across government, ensuring we use all UK Defence's levers to support our foreign policy. It sets out the need to maintain a ruthless focus on defending the UK homeland, including our Overseas Territories, and on meeting our commitments to NATO.

For the first time, supporting UK defence exports and capability collaboration is a central objective of a Defence Diplomacy Strategy. 2025 was a record year for defence exports: we signed the largest ever warship deal in our history with Norway, the biggest fighter jet deal in a generation with Turkey and an unprecedented deal with India on maritime propulsion. Through this strategy, we will put industrial co-operation at the heart of our partnerships and embed this approach across the department, bringing all of Defence together to deliver warfighting readiness and jobs and growth at home.

The UK's allies and partners are our strategic strength. This strategy makes diplomacy a core role for Defence; by implementing it, we will make Britain safer: secure at home and strong abroad.

Lord Coaker

Minister of Defence in the House of Lords

UK Defence Diplomacy in Numbers

Our Defence Diplomatic Activity

Over **400**
UK non-operational
activities conducted
with Allies and
Partners through 2025

UK defence
personnel
deployed to **over**
97 countries
through 2025



Since coming into office Defence Ministers
have conducted **240 engagements with**
allies and partners across the globe

Our powerful Integrated Global Defence Network (IGDN)



UK Defence Representation in **172 nations**,
enabled by **239 Defence section staff**

Over **1,000 personnel** embedded in
NATO's Command and Force structures

70 Defence Exports staff based overseas

Our extensive international training offer

Almost **600** international student
places across the UK's military
education institutions, training
students from **over 100 countries**

36 exportable courses, deploying
UK experts to reach **up to 1,000**
international students





Introduction

Defence diplomacy is how we use all the levers and tools of Defence, short of military operations, to build and sustain international relationships and strengthen international alliances and partnerships, achieving influence globally and advancing Defence strategic outcomes. It includes how we engage adversaries or competitors. It supports and is supported by broader government diplomatic efforts and wider national levers of power.

The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) recognised that the current international security context requires a landmark shift in our deterrence and defence. It called for a move to warfighting readiness to deter threats and strengthen Euro-Atlantic security. It emphasised the importance of our alliances and partnerships, recommending the development of a Defence Diplomacy Strategy. The 2025 National Security Strategy also made clear that we are entering a period in which we are likely to be facing a radical renegotiation of the terms on which we co-operate with allies and other partners, with major implications for how and where we invest our resources. In this period of rapid change and uncertainty it is more important than ever that the UK invests in maintaining and deepening our alliances and partnerships, which are a major source of our competitive strategic advantage.

Our definition of defence diplomacy covers a broad swathe of activity, whether that is training alongside our allies to increase warfighting readiness, securing defence export deals and direct investment or sending high ranking military delegations to build personal relationships. Defence diplomacy amplifies the influence that our military capability brings. It involves all of Defence, from our Ministers to our Defence Attachés, from our soldiers, sailors and aviators to our procurement staff. Whenever our people are working in or with another country, they are conducting defence diplomacy and representing not just Defence, but the UK.

All the activity we conduct overseas builds the UK's influence. Establishing relationships, trust, and respect with our allies and partners amplifies the UK's voice on the world stage. It enables us to build world-beating capabilities through co-operation with allies, rally international support to our priorities, and strengthen our hand in competition with adversaries. Without defence diplomacy we would be weaker abroad and less safe at home. Defence does not act alone. It must be integrated into the Government's overall international strategy, requiring close co-ordination with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other departments.

This public summary captures the tenets of the Defence Diplomacy Strategy, with a focus on the concrete actions that we will take to ensure its delivery. The full strategy, containing detailed assessments of the UK's interests, relationships and activities, is necessarily classified internally within the Ministry of Defence.



Vision – The case for strengthened defence diplomacy



Vision

“To make the UK secure at home and strong abroad, defence diplomacy will focus on the partnerships that underpin NATO First and shape wider UK interests.”

“In this new era of threat, now is the era for hard power, strong alliances and sure diplomacy. Since we entered office, our government has strengthened the UK’s relationships with our key allies and partners. We’ve got new defence agreements with Norway, Germany, France, the EU. We’ve delivered record defence export deals. And I’m proud that the UK is leading on international support for Ukraine. This is critical for delivering security for people at home, boosting NATO’s collective deterrence and making defence an engine for jobs and growth.”

The Rt Hon John Healey MP, Secretary of State for Defence

Defence last considered its approach to defence diplomacy in the 2017 International Defence Engagement Strategy. Since then, the world has changed drastically. Today, the SDR underscores the centrality of allies and partners, in NATO and beyond, with whom we can build industrial power and common capabilities and ultimately fight and win. Together, the UK and our allies have greater economic, military, and diplomatic influence than any of our potential adversaries – individually or combined. We have shown that we can co-ordinate in great effect,

supporting Ukraine, creating the Coalition of the Willing, which now covers almost all of Europe, as well as Canada and our friends in the Asia-Pacific.

The SDR notes that Defence’s wider ways of working remain suited to a peacetime era and need to change – defence diplomacy is no different. Intensifying competition makes it more difficult for the UK and its allies to shape global events. This requires a fundamental change to how Defence conducts its international non-operational

activity. The Defence Diplomacy Strategy will ensure we prioritise more effectively, using new systems and processes to distribute our resources and forces across the globe.

Through an improved culture of collaboration, including with other government departments, new processes, and dedicated resources we will move more rapidly, both to seize opportunities and react to world events.

The Defence Diplomacy Strategy brings together all four areas of Defence: the Department of State, Military Strategic Headquarters, the National Armaments Director Group, and the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, unifying Defence's voice internationally, ensuring we are always acting as One Defence.



1. Ends – Our objectives for defence diplomacy

In delivering our vision, our defence diplomacy will contribute to Defence's core roles as set out in the SDR.

1. Defend, protect and enhance the resilience of the UK, its Overseas Territories, and Crown Dependencies.

Defence diplomacy will contribute to a more secure UK homeland, working with our allies and partners to strengthen our collective security, learn from their experiences and improve our resilience and preparedness. Our activity must maintain the essential UK defence presence in Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands, the Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus, as well as, Ascension islands and Diego Garcia. This will include working with partners to build defence industrial capability and societal resilience.

2. Deter and defend in the Euro-Atlantic

Beyond the homeland, defence diplomacy will directly support our relationships in the Euro-Atlantic, both multi-laterally in supporting NATO First, and bilaterally in strengthening our closest relationships. Our recent ambitious agreements with European allies highlight the impact of defence diplomacy in strengthening deterrence.

3. Shape the global security environment

NATO First does not mean NATO only; Defence must help shape the global security environment in favour of the UK's interests. Our security connections across the globe are important for the Euro-Atlantic region and the UK. We will use defence diplomacy to support our interests in priority regions and countries, helping to safeguard trade and energy supplies, protect British citizens abroad, and counter transnational security challenges.

4. Drive secure and resilient economic growth

The Defence Industrial Strategy sets out how this Government will make Defence an engine for growth by backing UK jobs, UK industry and UK innovation at the same time as we strengthen our security. The Defence Industrial Strategy is a core part of the UK's wider Industrial Strategy, supporting regional productivity, sovereign capability, resilience, and workforce development. Defence diplomacy will play its role delivering the Defence Industrial Strategy, securing exports, industrial partnerships and inward investments. Since July 2024, UK Defence has secured a record £3.2 billion in foreign direct investment. Having a secure, thriving and innovative industrial base helps to build lasting strategic relationships with our allies and partners. This is based on technical leadership and compatibility, interoperability and close collaboration, as well as mutual job creation.

5. Support wider government objectives

Defence diplomacy will also leverage Defence's distinctive tools – including our global network of Defence Attachés, deployable military, specialist engineering and logistics, credible maritime presence, cyber and space expertise, and trusted military-to-military access – to support the aims of the FCDO, Cabinet Office, Home Office, Department for Business and Trade, and other government agencies and departments. This is most critical at post, where heads of mission integrate all government activity within their country business plans. Defence diplomacy must play its full role in this process and fit within the plans, with our activity tightly aligned to government priorities.



2. Ways – How we will transform defence diplomacy

To support our objectives and achieve our vision, the Defence Diplomacy Strategy sets out five new ways to focus our activity and direct how Defence should act internationally.

1. Prioritising our approach

The SDR calls for a prioritised approach to our engagement to support Defence and government objectives. We will focus on those relationships that best allow us to deliver for our national interests and **bolster warfighting readiness**. We will double down on our strongest partnerships, renewing and refreshing key alliances, while protecting a broad base of influence across the globe. This approach is a marked shift for Defence, providing clear top-down direction from Ministers on which relationships, forums, and regions we invest our finite resources.

Aligned with the National Security Strategy and SDR, this prioritisation begins with **NATO First** and an associated focus on

relationships in the **Euro-Atlantic**, which is where the weight of our effort must fall. We will step up on European security by leading in NATO, shaping strategy, and generating credible, ready forces that deter and, if required, fight and win. We will progress the commitments made at the Hague Summit, with the historic agreement from 32 NATO allies to increase spending to 5% on security and defence by 2035. We are the only European ally to declare its nuclear deterrent in full to NATO, demonstrating our cast iron commitment to the Alliance.

We recognise the United States as the UK's most important defence and security ally, the need to deepen our defence and security relationships with our European allies, continue our large-scale support to Ukraine, and strengthen co-operation in the face of the urgent and pressing threat posed by Russia.



Leading international support to Ukraine

The scale and ambition of the UK's Defence support to Ukraine demonstrates how we have used our collective strengths and strong international partnerships to help Ukraine resist Russia's illegal war of aggression.



Capability support

The Ukraine Capabilities Hub has delivered high-end capabilities funded by the UK and partner nations to Ukraine.

We have enhanced UK-Ukraine industrial collaboration through **Task Force Hirst** and the **LYRA** agreement.

We co-lead the over **50 nation Ukraine Defence Contact Group** with Germany. In 2025 we secured pledges of over **\$45 billion** in military aid. A further **\$35 billion** has been pledged so far in 2026. 

We co-lead the **Drone Capability Coalition** with Latvia. 

We co-lead the **Maritime Capability Coalition** with Norway. 

The UK-administered **International Fund for Ukraine** has raised over **£2.6 billion** from **14 partner nations**.  



Training support

Operation Interflex, supported by **14 nations**, has trained over **62,000** Ukrainian personnel.



Operation Interstorm, co-ordinated with **Denmark and France**, has trained **200** Ukrainian pilots.  

Project Renovator, supported by **five NATO Allies**, invested **£40 million** to upgrade Ukraine's military rehabilitation hospital and train medical staff.



NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) includes

50 UK officers and over **£171 million** has been contributed to the UK administered NSATU Trust Fund by Allies and partners.



The UK, alongside France, leads the **35 nations** of the **Coalition of the Willing** and has developed plans for **Multi-National Force-Ukraine** to regenerate Ukraine's land forces, secure Ukraine's skies and to support safer seas. 

The Euro-Atlantic is also critical for growth, with allies procuring high-end equipment both with and from the UK, spanning complex weapons, air and maritime systems, training, sustainment and digital services. By aligning defence export and industrial co-operation with our allies' needs, we will convert security leadership into British jobs, investment and prosperity.

We will work with allies and partners in mini-lateral formats, including the E3 (with France and Germany), E5 (with France, Germany, Italy and Poland) and through the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). Beyond the Euro-Atlantic region, we will increasingly seek opportunities for enhanced co-ordination with our closest allies and partners on our shared interests globally, as we have through our partnership with Italy and Japan on the Global Combat Air Programme.



Strengthening defence partnerships across Europe

Since the 2024 election, we have agreed a range of expansive defence agreements with our allies to collectively strengthen European defence, striking landmark deals at pace. The **Trinity House Agreement** with **Germany** was signed on 23 October 2024. Since the launch of the agreement, German companies have committed to invest £800 million in the UK Defence industry over the next decade, creating 600 skilled jobs across locations including London, Telford, Swindon, and Plymouth – supporting the Government's Plan for Change and making Defence an engine for growth across the UK.

On 10 July 2025, the **Lancaster House 2.0 Agreement** was launched with **France**, rebooting deep co-operation across the warfighting, industrial and nuclear domains, and increasing our contributions to collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic. This agreement sustains 1,300 highly skilled jobs across the UK, including more than 300 jobs at UK manufacturer MBDA for upgrading existing Storm Shadow production lines.

On 4 December 2025, the UK announced its flagship strategic agreement with **Norway**, **Lunna House**, which brought together all the levers of Defence to find new areas of co-operation, from wargames through to operations. The result of this pan-Defence effort was **Norway's biggest ever defence procurement deal**, which will see a combined fleet of 13 Anti-Submarine Warfare frigates – eight British and at least five Norwegian – operate jointly in Northern Europe, securing £10 billion for the UK economy and sustaining 4,000 UK jobs, including more than 2,000 in Scotland.



In the **Middle East**, we will maintain and build key relationships through our persistent military footprint in the region, supported by temporary deployments, security assurances, increased joint capability development, and export opportunities, while also advocating for increased burden sharing and intelligence exchanges with regional partners.

In the **Indo-Pacific**, we will focus on capability and technology collaboration, exports, military training and exercises, and intelligence sharing with key partners, including making the most of our membership of the Five Powers Defence Arrangements, while seeking to maintain a persistent military presence.

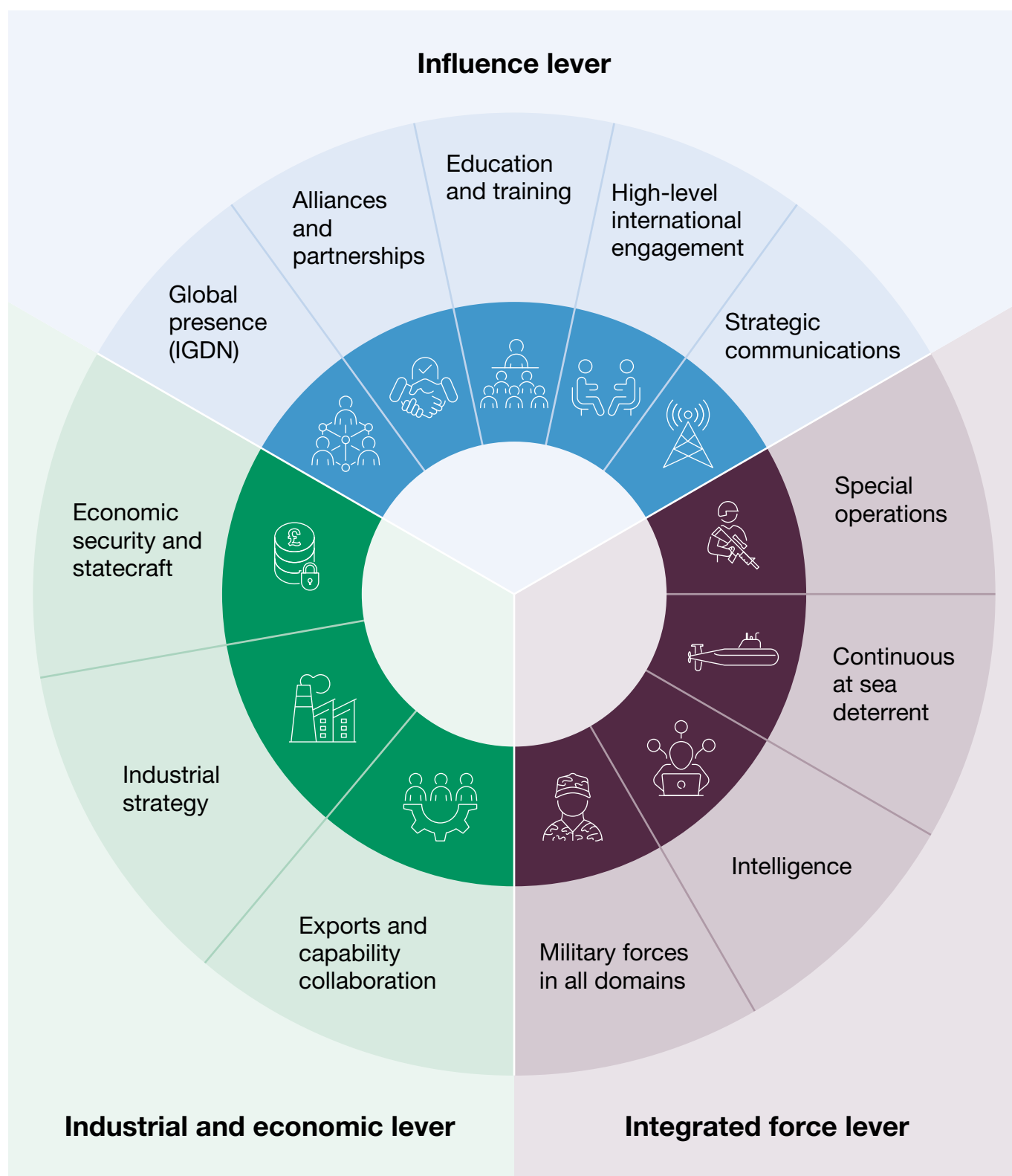
In **Africa**, we will support our strategic partners to promote peace and stability and address upstream threats to UK and our allies' interests, securing NATO's southern flank, and exploiting export opportunities.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, we will maintain key relationships with regional partners and allies through military co-operation, a persistent military forward presence, and seizing export opportunities. This activity contributes to our ability to protect our Overseas Territories in the region.

2. Using all levers of Defence to support defence diplomacy

By using Defence's three levers and 12 tools (outlined in Figure 1 below) in a more strategic, co-ordinated and deliberate manner, we will maximise Defence's contribution to delivering our objectives. We will cohere this through the Defence Strategic Effects Cycle, our internal process which prioritises and directs the delivery of global Defence activities to achieve the department's strategic objectives and outcomes. This will mean that we deploy our assets where they best achieve our objectives – whether through a Royal Navy ship visit, an Army short term training team, an RAF liaison officer, a Defence Academy leadership course, or by sharing intelligence.

Figure 1:



3. Making defence diplomacy an engine for growth

In line with the Defence Industrial Strategy, we must work more closely with our international partners and allies to ensure both industrial resilience and drive growth. The Defence Diplomacy Strategy places a focus on capability collaboration, exports and innovation, as specific levers which must be strengthened; growth must be a driving force for Defence internationally.

Unlocking Defence's growth potential through defence diplomacy will bring a more competitive, innovative and lethal Defence sector, boost deterrence and bring economic growth for the UK and our allies and partners. Our collaboration with allies and partners has a critical role in opening markets, shaping standards, securing supply chains, and attracting investment. Defence diplomacy, will make us more attractive and less risky to investors, meaning industry could go faster, more efficiently and more affordably. Providing an alternative capability offer provides a means to confront adversaries or competitors through economic competition.

Defence diplomacy also helps to establish the UK at the leading edge of innovation in NATO. By working closely with our allies on science and technology, shared challenges, we can harness innovation and deliver cutting edge capabilities.

4. Making defence diplomacy a whole-of-society effort

Defence is a powerful tool in the UK's foreign policy toolbox. It should be used in concert with other tools of national influence to achieve the government's most critical objectives. Our new approach to defence diplomacy offers a pathway to deeper integration. Defence diplomacy will also support the whole-of-society approach directed by the SDR. This public summary supports that approach, explaining how Defence works internationally. We will also work with our allies to understand their approaches to strengthen our own national conversation.

5. Investing in our people, processes, and technology to supercharge our influence

Defence must build and maintain the network, people, skills, and experience needed to deliver defence diplomacy. This means not only upskilling our Integrated Global Defence Network, but also including everyone engaged in defence diplomacy, in the UK and overseas. We will harness the power of data and AI to deliver and track defence diplomacy and build on Defence's data and AI-powered capability partnerships. Underpinning these changes is the Defence Reform programme – the widest shake up of how Defence works in 50 years.



Building enhanced partnerships through exports

In 2025, Defence enhanced some of its most significant relationships through the UK's defence exports. This included our **Typhoon partnership with Turkey**. The UK and Turkey share a special and deep relationship, two NATO Allies defending Europe's eastern and western flanks. Securing an £8 billion export deal for 20 UK Typhoon fighter jets marks a new high point for our relationship, giving us a common platform to face our common threats. Securing the deal also demonstrated our ability to work collaboratively across Europe, bringing together the other three Eurofighter nations, Germany, Italy and Spain, to ensure success. This involved close collaboration across Defence and in partnership with the FCDO.

The UK has also deepened its **strategic partnership with Indonesia** through a landmark £4 billion Maritime Partnership Programme led by Babcock, under which the first agreement has secured the sale of two Arrowhead 140 frigate licences. More broadly, the programme will jointly develop naval capacity and deliver more than 1,000 fishing vessels built in Indonesia using British expertise, securing around 1,000 UK jobs across Rosyth, Bristol and Devonport. This co-operation supports economic growth through high-value exports and skills and helps uphold freedom of navigation across the Indo-Pacific.



3. Means – Our resources to deliver defence diplomacy

Defence invests significantly in the staff and resources to deliver its international functions. The Defence Diplomacy Strategy will ensure we are using these means more efficiently, effectively and coherently. The resources available to the department include the following:

- Over 100 defence diplomacy staff in the Department of State in London, developing and delivering coherent international policy and strategy as well as engaging our international partners overseas and in London.
- A new international collaboration and exports area under the National Armaments Director, of over 400 staff. incorporating those previously in the Department for Business and Trade, including the new Defence Exports office, and around 70 staff employed overseas, which will supercharge our ability to drive growth and capability co-operation.
- A powerful overseas footprint currently consisting of:
 - Eight British Defence Staffs, six training estates and six regional hubs.
 - Representation in 172 nations, 91 countries with Defence Sections and 81 countries with non-resident attachés, covering almost 90% of the world.
 - 239 Defence Section staff, embedded within UK missions around the globe.
 - 8,500 military and Civil Service staff deployed overseas, including over 1,000 personnel embedded in NATO's Command and Force structures.
- A newly established Defence Section in London, supporting the 102 foreign Defence sections accredited in the UK.
- A dedicated British Defence Staff of 150 people in the United States, and a wider network of almost 900 embedded alongside our closest ally.
- A defined funding stream for defence diplomacy programmes, designed to better target our resources for catalytic effect.
- An extensive training pipeline providing world-class military education to overseas students from over 100 different nations, including:
 - Almost 600 international student places across the UK's military education institutions, such as the Royal College of Defence Studies, Defence Academy, the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth, the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and Royal Air Force Cranwell.
 - 36 export courses, deploying UK experts to develop partner nations' wider security skills, economic security and institutional leadership, reaching up to 1,000 international students.
- A pioneering digital programme for defence diplomacy, establishing new data systems, tools and AI-enabled insights.

Implementation and actions

This strategy puts implementation and effective delivery at its heart. Defence diplomacy is a pan-Defence effort which can diffuse responsibility and accountability. Therefore, the Defence Diplomacy Strategy prescribes concrete actions to the department and assigns accountable senior officials to oversee implementation, reporting as appropriate to Ministers.

1. Prioritising our approach

1.1 Embed clear international prioritisation across Defence

For the first time since 2017, Defence will follow a single ministerially endorsed and driven international prioritisation, focused on Defence's own interests, while considering views across government. The prioritisation will guide all of Defence's international action, from driving the Strategic Effects Cycle through to choosing capability partners, enabling all of Defence's services and agencies to make clear international decisions. An element of this will be implementing a new digital-led approach to delivering high-level international engagement, maximising the impact of every ministerial or senior military visit against our priorities.

1.2 Deliver NATO First

Across the entirety of Defence, we have embedded NATO into how we think, plan and act. Specifically, this means that NATO will be foremost in how the Armed Forces plan, invest, train, and equip themselves. The vision set out in the SDR ensures we place our contribution to NATO at the heart of the UK's capability planning. We will reinvest in supporting and strengthening NATO as an institution, sharing our expertise, insights and intelligence. We will put NATO at the heart of our engagement with allies and maximise the benefits of NATO partnerships. Whether building our bilateral relationships with European allies, leading JEF as framework nation, or our new UK/EU Security and Defence Partnership, all must reinforce NATO. We will also work more with NATO beyond the Euro-Atlantic, recognising the Alliance as a platform for global engagement, in the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific, North Africa, and beyond.

1.3 Develop our nuclear relationships with our closest allies

Our independent nuclear deterrent, the bedrock of UK security and the cornerstone of our commitment to NATO, is underpinned by our long-standing international partnerships. The Defence Nuclear Enterprise will continue to work closely with our most important partners, including continued collaboration with US under the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement and 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement, delivering AUKUS Pillar 1 with the US and Australia, and deepening co-operation with France under the 2025 Northwood Declaration.

1.4 Optimise Defence's global footprint to support our priority relationships

The Integrated Global Defence Network Review will examine all overseas Defence personnel not on operations, including our extensive network of Defence Sections and Exchange and Liaison Officers, and ensure it aligns with our strategic prioritisation. The review will explore where regionalisation would be appropriate but avoid introducing a one size fits all approach. It will reinforce Defence's role as an engine for growth, through integrating UK overseas defence exports personnel formally part of the Department for Business and Trade, into Defence's global overseas network. Network review options will be presented to Ministers in spring 2026.



2. Using all levers of Defence to support defence diplomacy

2.1 Review our approach to intelligence sharing and co-ordination

Sharing intelligence with allies and partners builds a common understanding of the geopolitical context, supporting strategic and operational decision-making. We will strengthen Defence's intelligence sharing posture by ensuring activity is informed by, and contributes to, Defence's international prioritisation. The newly established Military Intelligence Services will cohere our approach across Defence, supported by an underpinning review of intelligence relationships, including how sharing can reinforce a NATO First posture and enhance UK influence, providing recommendations by the end of 2026.

2.2 Leverage Defence's use of economic levers and tools

We face evolving threats from foreign powers who are deliberately attempting to use economic levers to undermine our Defence operations, programmes, and capabilities. We will strengthen collaboration and information sharing with allies and partners to enhance our collective protection against the full range of economic security threats and counter wider economic coercion.

2.3 Identify high impact low-cost opportunities for engagement

We will explore new approaches to engagement to maximise our global impact. This could include small teams of experts, who can provide guidance to our partners and challenge the narrative of our adversaries. New models will be explored and tested over the course of 2026.

2.4 Transform Defence's international education offer

Defence delivers world-class military education. Our institutions and courses are in high demand among allies and partners and provide a powerful lever for defence diplomacy. We will align the allocation of our most prestigious course places with our international prioritisation and where they will have the greatest effect. The first cohorts under this approach will commence in September 2026. Following the SDR, the Defence Academy and the Royal College of Defence Studies will explore targeted commercial freedoms to maximise impact and value for money.

2.5 Invest in long-term alumni relationships

The broad network of alumni from our world-class military education often rise rapidly as leaders in their national institutions, this includes prominent members such as the current President of the Czech Republic, retired General Petr Pavel. Defence will nurture these long-term relationships by continuing to develop our formal alumni network built from our world-class military education. We will explore how we can enhance our alumni platform, introduce new events for the community, and further support our overseas network in building relationships with graduates. This sustained engagement will strengthen trusted networks as alumni progress in their national institutions, deepening defence diplomacy, shared understanding and shared values.

2.6 Enhance engagement with the community of London-based foreign Defence Attachés

It is important that Defence engages and builds relationships with the community of foreign Attachés accredited to the UK. Through them, Defence can enhance mutual understanding and support its own, and multilateral, activities around the globe. We will refine and develop clear responsibilities across the department to improve our ability to build meaningful relationships and deliver mutual benefit. Through 2026, Defence Section London will improve co-ordination and accountability to optimise opportunities offered by this international community.



3. Making defence diplomacy an engine for growth

3.1 Further develop capability co-operation with our closest allies and partners

We believe like-minded nations should work together to generate strategic advantage and harness the benefits of emerging technologies in order to deter threats. Collaborating with our allies and partners, supports innovation diffusion, advanced manufacturing, and the growth of strategic technologies across both civilian and defence sectors. We will prioritise closer capability collaboration with key allies and partners, implementing strategic agreements with cutting-edge military capabilities at their heart. International partnerships should be considered at the very start of capability development, using the department's international prioritisation to determine who we may wish to work with. We may need to increase flexibility on national capability requirements to fully reap the benefits of co-operation and support our collective security. Working with a particular partner, for geostrategic benefit, may be considered a requirement in itself.

3.2 Improve our export offer in line with the Defence Industrial Strategy

Exports drive growth at home but also establish long-lasting relationships and influence with our allies and partners. We will introduce and resource the UK's first standardised government-to-government offer; review and re-baseline export licensing policy; and embed exports into our design and procurement processes, and improve the performance and efficiency of the export licensing system, ensuring we are providing the best support for defence export programmes. This will unlock further collaboration, strengthen our international relationships, promote interoperability, enable the defence sector to grow and operate at scale and support high-quality jobs across the UK, and challenge the influence of adversary states.

3.3 Embed defence exports practitioners into Defence

As part of the Defence Industrial Strategy, this Government has given Defence responsibility for all defence exports, to make it easier for UK businesses to export to our allies. We will incorporate previous Department for Business and Trade personnel into the department. These staff both in the UK and overseas will be fully embedded into the department by the National Armaments Director Group by April 2026. The Integrated Global Defence Network and International Collaboration and Exports will ensure that they are building the new function into their platform design and policy direction, driving effective and strategic engagement with exports.

3.4 Enhance export literacy

All international facing roles across government need to understand how they can contribute to growth through defence exports and collaboration. The National Armaments Director Group will lead a drive within Defence, and advocate cross-government and throughout our global diplomatic network. This will culturally embed exports and capability collaboration into Defence's strategic cycles and procurement processes; build foreign and security policy professionals' understanding of the geostrategic value of the defence industrial lever and how to employ it; ensure our global network and associated training offer is better engaged with export-enabled statecraft, growth, and industrial objectives.

3.5 Leverage wider engagement for growth

By supporting international industry-to-industry relationships, Defence can further its outreach. We will more closely embed industrial relationships into defence diplomacy. We will also continue and improve our co-ordination with UK Trade Envoys to identify and support export opportunities.

3.6 Leveraging science and technology collaboration to deliver strategic advantage and influence

International research collaboration on science and technology, including on emerging and disruptive technologies, and 'science diplomacy', is an enabler for furthering defence diplomacy. We will identify opportunities for continued collaboration with NATO, Five Eyes, and our close allies, as well as consider additional collaboration opportunities with other international partners where it might further the Government's strategic goals. Our collaboration will be closely aligned and developed with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

3.7 Establish the UK at the leading edge of innovation in NATO

Through the newly established UK Defence Innovation (UKDI), we will continue to find, fund and exploit the best ideas, wherever they originate, supporting small and medium scale enterprises across the UK. UKDI will advance defence diplomacy by rapidly harnessing innovation to enhance capabilities and strengthen deterrence. We will continue to support NATO's DIANA Accelerator, based in the UK at White City.

While committed to NATO, the UK values global innovation partnerships to address shared security challenges. Prioritising collaboration with the US, AUKUS Pillar 2 and NATO DIANA, UKDI drives innovation, strengthens the economy, and delivers transformative change for a secure future. UKDI will be fully operational by July 2026.



4. Making defence diplomacy a whole-of-society effort

4.1 Strengthen defence diplomacy across Whitehall

Defence will play its full role in supporting wider government efforts, using all the unique levers available to the department. We will be clear with other departments on where our international priorities lie and ensure that all of government supports Defence's distinct priorities and objectives, such as exports and greater interoperability. We will establish appropriate mechanisms incorporating leaders in Defence, FCDO and other relevant departments, such as the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, to drive forward defence diplomacy activity.

4.2 Leverage our culture, history, and ceremonial excellence

Defence's proud heritage is widely celebrated through ceremonial and cultural commemorative events, including the King's Birthday Parade, Armed Forces Day, Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, Royal International Air Tattoo, Farnborough Air Show, and activities around Remembrance (including with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission). While focused on the UK, these events and anniversaries also resonate at our missions, across the Commonwealth and

globally. These, alongside Defence's role in state ceremonial operations and state visits, are powerful representations of the UK, our values, history and culture. We will maximise these opportunities along with wider influence of the Royal Family and Parliamentarians, and closely monitor our impact, alongside cross-government partners.

4.3 Work more closely with think tanks to maximise our impact

The UK's independent defence and security think tanks are an incredible soft power resource for the country. They offer invaluable insight and challenge for our Government, provide a valuable mechanism for strengthening dialogue with foreign governments and international think tanks, and play an influential role in shaping public perception of threats and policy options. Defence, alongside other departments, will reinvigorate our approach to think tank engagement, using them to formulate our approach to defence diplomacy and to help develop joint initiatives with our allies and partners. We will complete a review of the use of think tanks, as part of external assistance, including engaging the UK's think tank community to understand our shared goals.



5. Investing in our people, processes, and technology

5.1 Develop an improved defence diplomacy funding stream to enable use of Defence tools and levers in a more agile, catalytic, deliberate, and co-ordinated way

Enabled by Defence Reform, we will introduce a new Defence Security and Diplomacy Portfolio in the 2026 to 2027 financial year, centralising programme and portfolio management in the Military Strategic Headquarters. This will ensure greater coherence, effectiveness, agility, and consistency in how we shape and deliver catalytic projects that support and enable defence diplomacy objectives, alongside complementary International Security Fund programmes. It will strive for more structured, multi-year programmes that can transform our relationships and provide the best possible support to our allies and partners. It will do so, while retaining sufficient flexibility to support innovative and agile approaches to defence diplomacy and seize opportunities as they arise.

5.2 Establish a Defence Diplomacy Cadre, increasing training and education for international facing staff

Being effective internationally requires core skills in relationship building, negotiation and cultural awareness. We will nurture these skills through a new Defence Diplomacy Cadre for civilian policy professionals, including a dedicated learning and development programme and a network for practitioners to share their experiences of international engagements. The cadre will be piloted across Defence in early 2026, with an initial focus on building the skills for US-facing roles.

5.3 Establish a distinct military career stream for defence diplomacy, creating a more professionalised and informed workforce and developing understanding of specific regions

The UK is committed to strengthening its international defence diplomacy by building a more professional and informed workforce. To achieve this, we are developing a dedicated career pathway for military officers that fosters deep understanding of regions important to the UK. We aim to recognise and reward expertise in international engagement by creating clear routes to senior roles for those who take on these postings. This work will determine best approach – whether through a formal career structure or by improving training, education, and job specifications for overseas military roles.

5.4 Improve formal defence diplomacy and language training

Giving our staff the best training for international facing roles will ensure they are in a strong position to deliver the best national outcomes. This will incorporate ongoing improvements to the training offer for UK Defence Attachés and determining what training could be expanded to the Defence Diplomacy Cadre and wider personnel in defence diplomacy roles. We will also review our defence language provision to deliver enhanced language proficiency, working alongside and learning from FCDO.

5.5 Enhance how we use hospitality and protocol to ensure it demonstrates the value we hold for partnerships

Human relationships are at the heart of all diplomacy, built on shared trust and mutual respect. We will review our hospitality and protocol policy to ensure it showcases the value we place on our international relationships. We will explore increasing use of Defence's historic estate in hosting events and delegations. A new policy will be developed by Q4 2026.

5.6 Create a Defence Diplomacy Doctrine

We will produce a new Defence Diplomacy Doctrine, replacing the legacy 2017 Defence Engagement Doctrine. This will turn strategy into delivery across the Integrated Force. The doctrine will set clear principles, roles and a common approach to planning, engagement and measurement so that activity with partners is focused, coherent and outcome driven. Developed with practitioner input and introduced through our education programmes, it will be in use from late 2026 to strengthen relationships and delivery with our partners.



I Conclusion

The Defence Diplomacy Strategy sets clear and focused direction to deliver international impact. In an era of accelerating competition and persistent threats, the UK's alliances and partnerships remain our greatest strategic advantage. By prioritising key relationships, placing NATO First, and aligning our global activity to our objectives, we will enhance the UK's ability to deter adversaries, bolster collective security, and shape the international environment. This strategy also places growth at the heart of Defence's international role, driving exports, deepening industrial partnerships, supporting inward investment, and strengthening the industrial resilience that underpins our collective defence.

Delivering this strategy requires us to act as One Defence, more agile, better connected, and always deliberate. We will invest in our people, strengthen training, build a more capable global network, harness data and AI, and translate ambition into coherent delivery across government. Through the Defence Diplomacy Strategy's detailed actions, it will make a tangible contribution to security and growth: strengthening our alliances, expanding our global influence, supporting jobs, and ensuring that every UK engagement overseas builds lasting partnerships that keep Britain secure at home and strong abroad.



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