

Joint Statement by the Defence Ministers of the United Kingdom and Estonia

Over the last 12 months, the UK and Estonia have worked in exceptionally close cooperation to implement the commitments pledged at the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid. Our collaboration has delivered a more capable UK presence, better able to deter aggression and to defend Estonia in crisis and conflict. The enhanced eFP contributes to our shared objective of protecting our populations and defending every inch of Allied territory at all times.

Following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, and to support NATO's new era of collective defence, Estonia and the UK continue to work together to strengthen NATO's deterrence and forward defences in Estonia. This is underpinned by a credible forward defence posture in Estonia which includes the Estonian Defence Forces and the UK-led eFP Battlegroup which will be further reinforced, when required, by a sovereign allocated UK Brigade, held in high readiness in the UK. The UK will regularly exercise the projection of forces up to Brigade level for the reinforcement of Estonia in accordance with NATO's regional defence plans, while Estonia will provide suitable facilities to support the UK's permanent presence and surge capacity. Estonia and the UK commit to holding their respective forces at the appropriate readiness required by NATO's regional defence plans and will work together to explore options for future repositioning of equipment and ammunition forward, as required, to enable this.

In accordance with our joint objectives, since signing the Roadmap in November 2022, the UK has allocated an Armoured Brigade at high readiness for the rapid reinforcement of Estonia and uplifted the command of its eFP Headquarters to Brigadier level, enhancing the ability to receive Brigade level reinforcements at a time of need. In recognition of its enduring commitment to Estonia, the UK has also converted a number of staff officer positions to permanent posts. By maintaining Divisional level enablers in Estonia, such as the SHORAD and MLRS, the UK-led eFP Battlegroup continues to ensure a combat-ready presence in-country that offers opportunities for exercising these elements under the command of the Estonian Division HQ. As agreed, the UK has further reinforced these by deploying multiple surges of additional aviation capabilities into Estonia since January 2023.

To fulfil a NATO military requirement, Estonia established the Estonian Division in December 2022. The UK has deployed a Divisional Advisory Team to Estonia on an enduring basis to support the establishment of the Division and will embed staff officers into it in the future to further enhance the UK's integration with the Division. Estonia will continue the development of the Estonian Division, including by acquiring additional high-end, Divisional level capabilities and commit to the Divisional HQ becoming a NATO Military Body with International Military Headquarters status within the NATO Force Structure. The UK will provide staff officers from the allocated Brigade to support the Estonian Division during the War Fighter Program in February 2024, after which the UK and Estonia will continue to look for further joint opportunities for developing the Estonian Division.

The UK and Estonia are committed to enhancing our integration and interoperability in the years to come. We will work together to develop an executable plan to enable the UK to consistently exercise reinforcement with the allocated Brigade, and other relevant units of

choice, in accordance with defence plans. In 2024 the UK will exercise its Very High Readiness Air Assault Brigade Combat Team during Exercise SPRING STORM, and will exercise the allocated Armoured Brigade in 2025. This will be underpinned by a programme of Staff and Command integration activity, with a regular drumbeat of command visits from the allocated Brigade commencing in autumn 2023. The UK and Estonia will continue to work closely together to ensure the UK is fully integrated with the Estonian Defence Force's Command and Control, with the UK Brigade aligned to the Estonian Division and fully integrated into Estonia's National Defence Plan.

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