

“Britain’s global role – stepping up”
Rt Hon Michal Fallon MP, Defence Secretary
Washington, 21 July 2016

This year marks 70 years on from Winston Churchill's famous speech “The Sinews of Peace” delivered in Fulton, Missouri back in 1946 when he talked about the “special relationship.”

That phrase is very well known, what is less well known that Churchill was actually in Fulton to receive an honorary degree from Westminster College.

A very apt name as Westminster was the place he received a large part of his political education. And more than anyone, Churchill seemed to embody the will of the British people. To the extent that both sides in the recent Brexit Referendum sought to claim that he would have backed their particular position.

We can be sure that Churchill would have.

We do know that whatever the outcome he would have accepted the result, rolled up his sleeves and got on and delivered using all the considerable powers at his command to help Britain forge a new path.

I am very much aware that vote has raised some questions about the implications for Britain’s role in the world.

I am here to assure you that we have a new Prime Minister, technically a new government

...who wants Britain to continue to play a global role

...who is determined to make Brexit a success

...and who will put security front and centre of its efforts.

Today I'd like to set out the UK's government's approach.

It is based around three things.

1. DEFENCE OF OUR VALUES

First, the defence of our values of democracy, of the rule of law, and of freedom.

Back in 1946, Churchill memorably imagined an Iron Curtain spreading from East to West across Europe.

Today the Cold War is over but new threats that spread an equally new shadow.

In recent days we've seen the horrific truck attack on innocent men, women and children from France and many other countries enjoying a summer's evening on Bastille Day.

That attack and the others we've seen over the last year in places as far apart as Orlando, Brussels, Paris, Ankara, and Baghdad are similar manifestations of extremism.

That isn't the only danger we're facing.

We're seeing a resurgent Russia and a more assertive China.

We're seeing North Korea continuing to rattle the nuclear sabre.

We're seeing cyber-attacks on states as well as on companies and seeing hybrid warfare.

Dangers which, taken together, seek to undermine our rules-based international order on which the security and prosperity on which ourselves and next generation depend.

Like Churchill, we believe Britain like the United States has a responsibility not just to defend its own security but to defend the global system itself.

And we do have the will and intent to respond to those threats whenever, or wherever, they come from.

Thanks to our Strategic Defence and Security Review published before the end of last year, we will match our will with greater capacity.

That review gives us stronger defence with more than \$200bn to spend over the next 10 years on a more agile Joint Force with more ships, more planes, more troops at readiness, better equipment for Special Forces, and increased spend on cyber.

Let me tell you about those forces, last year our forces were active all round the world.

We had 80,000 soldiers deployed on more than 400 commitments during calendar year '15.

We had more than 30,000 sailors deployed, with over 700 ship visits, from Africa to Asia, Europe to Latin America.

And we had more than 10,000 Royal Air Force personnel deployed in over 60 countries on operations, training exercises and defence engagement and will have a similar level of commitment in 2016.

2. STRONGER NATO, STRONGER DEFENSE

My second point is that to defend our values we will rely on a stronger more united NATO.

And we will continue playing a leading role in helping the Alliance to adapt.

Two years ago our Prime Minister, David Cameron, then stood alongside your President at the Wales Summit and challenged other nations to step up – to spend more on defence and new capabilities. Since then we have led by example.

And having honoured our pledge to meet the 2 per cent target we're now seeing other nations follow suit.

Twenty allies have now increased their spending since Wales – and the overall decline in Alliance spending has been halted.

As well as increasing spending NATO has now agreed its Readiness Action Plan to ensure that the alliance can respond swiftly and strongly.

Once more the UK is at the forefront of those efforts.

Our Typhoons are today conducting Baltic air-policing missions from a base in Estonia.

Our ships are making a significant contribution to NATO's naval forces.

And we will lead NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Taskforce next year, with 3,000 UK troops ready to deploy within days.

And at last month's Warsaw Summit we again helped to lead the way as NATO adapts its deterrence posture to challenges from both east and south.

We are helping to deliver that enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

The UK is one of four nations to lead a framework battalion, those battalions will be defensive in nature, but fully combat capable. Our force will be located in Estonia with two UK companies, a headquarters element and equipment including armoured vehicles, Javelin anti-tank guided missiles and mortars.

That contribution is underpinned by our network of Allies, including our partnerships with the French and the Danes...it is “multi-national by design” – reflecting the “international by design” approach in the strategic review.

In addition to hosting a full battalion to Estonia, we will also deploy additional troops to Poland.

We also continue to train the Ukrainian Armed Forces with a further 4,000 Ukrainian personnel due to be trained by British troops this year.

All of that is part of NATO’s response to Russian aggression.

A response that is rooted in balancing strong defence with dialogue.

Dialogue remains right and where it is in our interests to deliver hard messages to promote transparency and build the understanding necessary to avoid the risks of miscalculation.

As well as its efforts in the east, the Alliance is now enhancing its role in the south.

We are increasingly seeing unstable or fragile states that threaten our collective security putting a greater onus on NATO’s role in tackling the sources of potential conflict.

And following the Wales Summit NATO now has a defence capacity-building initiative, to provide more tailored support to project stability and we will be conducting more training under NATO auspices and more training and capacity building inside Iraq itself.

NATO's biggest operation of course remains its Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. That mission has helped local forces take on the responsibility for providing security across their country.

It is right that as a leading member of NATO, we stand by our allies and the Afghan people as they seek to build a safer Afghanistan because that also helps to keep our streets safer in the West.

So next year, we will be increasing our troop contribution by 10% to help continue to build the capacity of the Afghan security institutions. And let me welcome the on-going commitment of the United States' to that particular mission.

Finally, NATO is responding to the longer-term demands of 21st century warfare with initiatives on cyber and hybrid warfare among others agreed at Warsaw.

NUCLEAR DETERRENT

But if our defence and deterrence are to retain their credibility, it must also respond to both conventional and nuclear dangers.

NATO remains a nuclear alliance - and our independent nuclear deterrent, in Britain, makes a key contribution to the Alliances overall security.

That's a contribution recognised by the Warsaw Communiqué, and I quote:

“The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and contribute to the overall security of the Alliance. These

separate centres of decision-making, three of them including the United States, contribute to deterrence by complicating the calculations of potential adversaries.”

And what’s clear to us, as the world becomes more dangerous and more unpredictable, is that the nuclear threat has not gone away. If anything, it is increasing.

We can't today second-guess the sorts of extreme threats to our very existence we might face in the 2030s, 2040s and 2050s.

So our deterrent gives us that priceless advantage.

Our adversaries know that the cost of an attack on the UK or our allies will always be far greater than anything it might hope to gain.

That’s why our Defence Review committed to building four new Successor submarines to replace the Vanguard class which start going out of service in the early 2030s.

On Monday, this week, the Prime Minister made it her first duty in Parliament to lead the debate on renewing that deterrent.

And the House of Commons voted by an overwhelming majority of 355 - over 100 more as a majority than it was last debated in principle back nine years ago - that the house voted to maintain our deterrent to protect our way of life and that of our allies.

3. US-UK PARTNERSHIP

Let me say something about the partnership with the United States.

A powerful NATO is vital to our future.

So too are our key bilateral relationships.

And leaving the European Union means that we will be working harder to commit more to NATO but we will also be working harder with our key allies. We will reshape that relationship with Europe, restoring sovereignty to British parliament but making sure our security and trade relationships remain strong while we forge new ones right cross the globe.

70 years on, however, from Churchill's speech, the UK has no stronger bilateral relationship than that with the United States.

We're proud that together we continue to lead the world on security.

Nowhere is that better demonstrated than in our operations against Daesh.

At the end of last year, the UK erased the stain of its previous Syria vote in 2013 with Parliament voting overwhelmingly to extend our airstrikes from Iraq to Syria.

Since then we've upped the intensity and tempo of our efforts.

Our aircrews have conducted more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria than any other country apart from the United States.

At the same time, our surveillance aircraft are co-ordinating Coalition air effort and providing a significant amount of the Coalition's overall ISR.

Those collective efforts are paying off. Daesh has lost some 40% of the territory it once held. Major progress has been made in liberating the key cities of Ramadi, Hit and Fallujah.

But we're going this year to go further.

At the Counter Daesh ministerial, which I have just come from, we have focused on reviewing our campaign plan and building on this progress that we have already seen in the Euphrates River and Tigris River Valley.

And we are responding to calls for all members of the Coalition to accelerate their efforts by increasing our presence in Iraq.

We will be sending around 50 additional trainers to the Al Asad Airbase in Western Iraq to instruct on countering improvised explosive devices, to improve their infantry skills and training them in combat first aid.

We will be working closely with US and Danish forces, providing training to the Iraqi Army 7th Division, Border Guards and to the Iraqi Federal Police.

The UK will also provide around 100 people to assist in guarding the airbase, personnel to form an HQ to command the mission, and an engineering squadron to build the necessary infrastructure.

Those efforts as part of the Counter-Daesh coalition are just a small illustration of our co-operation with the US.

A collaboration as broad as it is deep.

And that joint-working is only set now to intensify.

On exercises we've recently agreed to integrate a UK division more effectively into a US corps.

On equipment there's on-going collaboration on F-35 and a week ago we saw this fifth generation fighter soaring over our new Queen Elizabeth carrier from whose decks the F-35 is going to fly in years to come.

I look forward to the day when not only do our planes fly from your carriers but yours fly from ours.

And our carriers will be protected by another of our new equipment collaborations.

Our nine new P-8 maritime patrol aircraft whose multi-billion dollar purchase I announced last week...alongside a further decision to buy and 50 AH-64E Apache helicopters.

But besides thinking of today's technologies, we're looking together with the United States ahead to tomorrow's.

Last year, on his visit to London, Ash Carter and I challenged our two teams to develop together new technologies, new disruptive capabilities and new concepts of operation.

And we're seizing on the exciting opportunities. Last week, we announced the first project to develop autonomous robotic technologies...driverless technology that can ferry equipment over that last, most dangerous mile, to the frontline

It's this sort of collaboration that will help us maintain the West's technological edge.

And it's this fraternal association that Churchill spoke about 70 years ago when he said:

"If all British moral and material forces and convictions are joined with your own in fraternal association, the high-roads of the future will be clear, not only for us but for all, not only for our time, but for a century to come"

So in conclusion, let me reassure you that Britain is not stepping back, on the contrary, we're stepping up.

Standing up for our values.

Strengthening NATO.

Backing our independent nuclear deterrent.

And seeking a stronger alliance with you in the United States.

There's been much speculation in recent weeks about UK defence and security policy.

Let me reassure you, we may be leaving the EU, we are leaving the EU but we've not forgotten that deterrence is underpinned by cohesion and solidarity.

We're still committed to those vital sinews of peace.

And be in no doubt.

We remain committed to European and Atlantic security and we are not turning our back on Europe or the world.