

Ukraine Defence Partnership set to boost global production and national security

17.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The UK and Ukraine are set to agree a new world-leading partnership to boost global defensive capability against the proliferation of low cost, high tech military hardware, including drones.

- President Zelenskyy set to visit Downing Street today as leaders agree new military partnership and announce new AI Centre of Excellence in Kyiv
- Comes as UK and Ukrainian personnel continue to provide defensive drone support to partners in the Gulf in the wake of indiscriminate Iranian attacks
- NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte also expected to visit London tomorrow for discussions on Euro-Atlantic security

The UK and Ukraine are set to agree a new world-leading partnership to boost global defensive capability against the proliferation of low cost, high tech military hardware, including drones.

The Prime Minister will host President Zelenskyy in the UK today [17 March 2026] as both Ukrainian and British drone experts continue to support partners in the Gulf from the continued barrage of Iranian attacks.

It comes as the two leaders are expected to agree an enhanced security and defence industrial declaration, capitalising on Ukraine's expertise and the UK's industrial base to manufacture and supply drones and innovative capabilities.

As part of the agreement, the UK and Ukraine will also look at opportunities for increased defence industrial and technological cooperation with third countries, boosting international security and ensuring the latest defence technology is in the hands of those who need it most.

The UK will also fund a new AI Centre of Excellence that will sit within the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. This team of experts, backed by £500,000, will ensure AI is being utilised to its fullest to deliver a battlefield advantage. The UK will then in turn benefit from the lessons learned for our own defence - another example where our collaboration brings advantages for both countries.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said:

We must work in lockstep with our partners and allies to deliver security at home and abroad, and this new partnership with Ukraine will do just that.

Drones, electronic warfare and rapid battlefield innovation are now central to national and economic security, and that has only been further magnified by the conflict in the

Middle East.

By deepening our defence partnerships, we are strengthening Ukraine's ability to defend itself from Russia's brutal, ongoing attacks, while ensuring the UK and our allies are better prepared to meet the threats of the future.

Pervasive drone surveillance, extensive electronic warfare, AI-driven targeting, and the rapid, battlefield-driven innovation of uncrewed systems as seen in the ongoing war in Ukraine has changed the way wars are being fought across the globe.

In response, Ukraine has honed world leading expertise in defending cities, civilians and command posts from drone attacks with their Armed Forces working hand-in-glove with software engineers and tech experts, iterating and adapting to new threats on an almost daily basis.

This latest step in the 100-Year Partnership, which the Prime Minister signed with President Zelenskyy in Kyiv last January, will boost Ukraine's Armed Forces ability to defend itself from Russia's barbaric attacks, while ensuring allies and partners are able to use the lessons learnt on the battlefield to outmanoeuvre Russia and its cronies in contested theatres across the world.

It will also cement Ukraine as a leading technology contributor to the global defence industry, with closer collaboration between British and Ukrainian defence firms and a long-term aim of establishing joint production lines, research and development projects and the integration of defence supply chains.

Defence Secretary John Healey MP said:

Ukraine's military expertise is defending against Putin's brutal attacks and boosting European security, and I am proud of how the UK is stepping up support to Ukraine to achieve peace on their terms.

The axis of aggression between Russia and Iran makes it increasingly important that we build on Ukrainian expertise and innovation, supported by British industry, and ensure that Ukrainian fighters see benefits from that as they continue to push back Putin's illegal invasion.

I pay tribute to the huge courage and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people - military and civilians alike - and I am determined to make 2026 the year this war ends.

The Prime Minister is also expected to host the NATO Secretary General at Downing Street as part of the visit. All three leaders will discuss efforts to secure a just and lasting peace for Ukraine, progress on Coalition of the Willing in the event of a ceasefire and the need to maintain sanctions pressure on Russia.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukraine-defence-partnership-set-to-boost-global-production-and-national-security>