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2.10.2026 - | UK Ministry of Defence

The UK is ramping up its defence of the High North and Baltic to combat Russian hybrid threats with the Joint Expeditionary Force conducting major exercises across the region.

- Hundreds of British personnel train with allies from the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) to counter rising Russian threat in Exercise Lion Protector 26.
- Training takes place across the North Atlantic, High North, and Baltic Sea, with Royal Marines conducting the first exercise in the Faroe Islands since the Second World War.
- Comes as the Defence Secretary meets JEF counterparts in Iceland, with Canada and Ukraine also in attendance.

The UK is ramping up its defence of the High North and Baltic to combat Russian hybrid threats with the Joint Expeditionary Force conducting major exercises across the region.

Allies from the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), which is led by the UK, have conducted Exercise Lion Protector 26, which saw forces train across the North Atlantic, High North, and Baltic Sea to protect critical national infrastructure, strengthen joint command and control, and counter emerging threats.

From the data cables that connect the UK to the world, to the energy infrastructure that powers homes and businesses, the North Atlantic and High North are vital to our national security.

It comes as the Defence Secretary today meets with his JEF counterparts at a summit in Keflavik, Iceland, where ministers will progress discussions on Canada's application for membership of the JEF Framework.

Ministers will also discuss deepening cooperation on countering hybrid threats, furthering industrial collaboration, and support to Ukraine through the JEF-Ukraine Enhanced Partnership. As Canada and Ukraine continue to cooperate closely with JEF, Canadian and Ukrainian ministers will also be in attendance.

Part of Exercise Lion Protector 26 saw Royal Marines from the UK's Special Operations Maritime Task Group conduct the first exercise since the Second World War on the Faroe Islands, alongside Danish forces.

Marines and their Danish allies carried out maritime interdictions, amphibious landings, and vertical ascent training on the Faroes, which was the location of a key Royal Marines deployment during the Second World War.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting MP said:

The North Atlantic, High North, and Baltic are the frontline of the UK's security, which

is why British leadership of the Joint Expeditionary Force is so vital to our defence.

From conducting amphibious landings on the Faroe Islands, to deploying a standing headquarters north of the Arctic Circle, our recent JEF exercises have shown how Britain is working with our allies to enhance NATO's defence of the region in the face of rising Russian threats.

I was also delighted that we welcomed our Canadian and Ukrainian counterparts to the summit as JEF seeks to expand its cooperation with these crucial allies.

Lion Protector launched in August with a rehearsal of a multi-national maritime escort operation stretching the length of the Baltic Sea. Warships and aircraft from Denmark, Latvia, Sweden and the UK escorted a Danish vessel carrying military equipment to Latvia, testing the JEF's ability to coordinate rapidly across sea, land, air, cyber and space.

The UK's Standing Joint Force Headquarters coordinated activity across the High North and Baltic Sea region, deploying north of the Arctic Circle in Norway to test its ability to command allied forces at speed and range.

JEF is a UK-led coalition of ten like-minded nations comprising high readiness forces configured to respond rapidly to crises in support of NATO security. JEF brings together the UK, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden to secure the Baltic Sea, North Atlantic, Arctic and High North for NATO.

Today's summit builds on the JEF Leaders' Summit in Helsinki in March where leaders agreed to reinforce steadfast support to Ukraine through ambitious delivery of the JEF-Ukraine Enhanced Partnership.

It also builds on the Prime Minister's discussions with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Støre this week about the hybrid threat Russia poses.

Exercise Lion Protector 26 comes ahead of the Atlantic Future Forum and the International Sea Power Conference, both taking place in Oslo in November.

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