

Joint Statement from the leaders of the Joint Expeditionary Force: 26 March 2026

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Leaders of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), met today in Helsinki to reaffirm their commitment to European security and stability, their strengthened support to Ukraine and pressure on Russia, and their continuous effort to respond to regional security challenges together.

The leaders exchanged views on the increasing number of incidents involving foreign unmanned aerial vehicles. JEF nations highlighted an urgent need for investment in capabilities required for detection and interception of drones as well as exploring options for collective response.

The Leaders also discussed the situation in the Middle East and how it has demonstrated the importance of maritime security and the trade routes that sustain us and are essential to our collective prosperity and security.

The Leaders welcomed the JEF's continued development since their last meeting in Oslo in 2025 as a flexible and relevant tool for dialogue, deterrence and defence in Northern Europe.

Today, it was agreed:

1. To reinforce JEF members' ongoing steadfast support to Ukraine through ambitious delivery of the JEF/Ukraine Enhanced Partnership

Last year in Oslo, Ukraine was invited to form an Enhanced Partnership with the JEF. Today, leaders recognised the notable progress to date and the mutual benefits the partnership has brought to all parties. They committed to maximising future operational collaboration opportunities and welcomed President Zelenskyi's remote participation at today's Summit to discuss the implementation of the partnership. This will include the active participation of Ukrainian units in the JEF's signature JEF LION series of exercises later this year. They also looked ahead, to increasing the exchange of tactical and operational experience on modern warfare, including total defence, technological innovation, through further integration of Ukraine into broader JEF activity under the terms of the Enhanced Partnership.

2. To further leverage the JEF's specific geographical focus and collective expertise of operating in the Arctic, High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea regions to strengthen NATO's northern flank

The JEF nations reaffirmed that the Baltic Sea region, the High North and the North Atlantic form the core, interlinked, geostrategic area of concern and mutual interest for the JEF. In this context, remote participation of the Canadian Prime Minister at the Summit today was welcomed by JEF Leaders.

The JEF nations will increase awareness, understanding and coordination of activities and efforts across the whole JEF region. Special attention is given to the JEF's significance in the Arctic, North Atlantic, and Baltic Sea regions, including the JEF's contribution to NATO's developing posture in the region, its role in the European burden shifting effort, and JEF's role as a bridge between national and NATO operations as well as its function in the transition from crisis to conflict.

The JEF LION series of exercises will further develop and demonstrate the value of the JEF operating model.

3. To further increase the JEF's deterrence and peacetime activity

The JEF nations are committed to contributing to credible deterrence in peacetime, and to reacting quickly and flexibly in close coordination with NATO in a crisis situation, especially in response to security threats that do not meet the threshold of NATO's Article 5.

The JEF nations will bolster their efforts to counter hybrid influencing and warfare and continue to share best practices and develop common approaches to deliver greater cumulative effect. This includes closer collaboration on addressing the threats posed by Russia's Shadow Fleet, along with an ongoing focus on the military aspects of hybrid warfare.

The JEF nations will increase JEF effectiveness by ensuring further harmonisation with NATO planning, exploring closer cooperation on contributions to NATO enhanced vigilance activities, and ensuring that JEF Response Options remain aligned to the security threats faced by all JEF members.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-from-the-leaders-of-the-joint-expeditionary-force-26-march-2026>