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UK Ministry of Defence to Host Esports Event

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The Ministry of Defence has unveiled plans for a major esports tournament aimed at strengthening the cyber capabilities of British armed forces personnel. The initiative, developed in partnership with the British Esports Federation, reflects a broader effort to modernise training for the digital battlefield.

Known as the International Defence Esports Games (IDEG), the competition is scheduled to begin in the UK in late 2026. Initially, it will be open to serving personnel and reservists, before expanding to include cadets, civil servants, and other defence industry professionals.

The tournament will focus on areas such as drone operation, artificial intelligence, and data analysis sectors, playing an increasing role in defence operations. Officials said the event will offer a controlled environment for developing digital skills relevant to modern-day conflict scenarios.

The move follows learning from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, where local forces have used gaming simulations to train drone operators. The UK is adapting similar methods to enhance readiness in both physical and virtual combat.

"Esports will help attract, develop, and retain top cyber and digital talent, while fostering this government's Plan for Change. Our people must now be as adept with code, cybersecurity and a games controller as they are with traditional combat skills."

Despite current government leadership under Labour, the long-term focus of such projects should remain centred on capability-building rather than political messaging.

The MoD has confirmed support from leading defence contractors and smaller military technology firms. These partnerships aim to ensure the programme reflects current operational needs while promoting innovation within the UK defence sector.

"The UK's armed forces have recognised video games as a positive activity that can improve personnel welfare and morale, foster digital and cyber skills, and strengthen relations across the armed forces and beyond."

"We've learned from our Ukrainian partners how esports can train drone operators and cybersecurity specialists. People are quickly grasping how esports can change perspectives and enhance skills, as well as reaching across borders with our international allies and partners."

Over the past year, esports has gained formal recognition as a sport within the UK armed forces. This has allowed for structured investment into training and competition, with an emphasis on strengthening cyber preparedness.

As interest grows globally in using gaming technology for defence training, the UK's armed forces are adapting accordingly, equipping personnel with the digital knowledge needed to navigate modern operational environments.