

UK Urged to Fast-Track Defence Innovation or Risk Falling Behind

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Britain is being warned it must overhaul its defence innovation strategy to remain globally competitive, with legal experts at Taylor Wessing calling for regulatory and investment reform to support emerging military technologies. Their latest industry insight stresses that without clear legal frameworks and strategic public-private collaboration, the UK risks being overtaken by more agile international rivals.

Taylor Wessing, a leading law firm advising on aerospace and defence transactions, has outlined key barriers holding back Britain's defence innovation sector. These include overly complex procurement processes, fragmented export controls, and a lack of tailored legal infrastructure to support cutting-edge developments such as AI-enabled systems, autonomous drones, and satellite technologies.

The firm points to major advancements overseas, notably Germany's defence AI firm Helsing, which recently secured over £350 million in funding rounds to modernise combat aircraft and armoured platforms. Taylor Wessing acted as legal counsel in that transaction and now advocates for similar frameworks in the UK to unlock comparable growth and capability.

Their report underscores the need for more venture capital incentives and streamlined government procurement that would enable small and mid-sized British defence companies to scale technologies quickly. At present, UK firms often struggle to navigate overlapping regulations, leaving them at a disadvantage when competing for global contracts or collaborating with the Ministry of Defence.

Significantly, the firm calls for a revision of Britain's dual-use export licensing regime and stronger safeguards for intellectual property to ensure innovation is protected without stifling progress. A consistent legal structure, they argue, would allow defence innovation to flourish without sacrificing national security.

The call comes amid growing concern that the UK has failed to match its rhetoric on defence modernisation with meaningful action. While other countries are pairing long-term strategic investment with legal clarity,

Britain's approach has been characterised by delay and bureaucratic complexity. This lack of pace threatens to undermine not only the UK's defence industrial base but also its strategic autonomy in an increasingly unstable world.

Taylor Wessing's position is clear: legal and policy reform must work hand in hand with technical progress. If the UK is to remain a serious player on the world stage, defence innovation needs to be treated as a national priority, with a framework that supports speed, scale, and security. Anything less, they warn, leaves the country playing catch-up.