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UK Defence Deal Secures 125 North East Jobs

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Cook Defence Systems has secured a three-year, £125 million contract with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to supply spare tracks for the British Army's armoured fighting vehicles, including the new Challenger 3 tanks. The agreement will support 125 skilled jobs at the company's County Durham site and fund investment in advanced manufacturing.

The contract aligns with the Government's Plan for Change, which seeks to boost UK defence spending, strengthen security, support domestic industry, and create skilled jobs across the country.

Luke Pollard, Minister for the Armed Forces, said the deal "strengthens our Army's warfighting capability while sustaining hundreds of skilled jobs in the North East." He added, "This investment demonstrates the defence dividend, where higher spending with British firms creates well-paid, skilled jobs nationwide."

Cook Defence Systems has played a crucial role in supporting Ukrainian forces, supplying spare tracks for donated British armoured vehicles and Soviet-era vehicles used by the Ukrainian Army. The new contract underscores collaboration between UK industry and the military to enhance operational capabilities and support allies.

William Cook, Director of Cook Defence Systems, said the company is "critical to the operational independence of the British Army and allied forces." He confirmed that the contract will underpin £5 million of investment in new plant and machinery over the next twelve months and sustain 125 jobs.

The company's work with the MOD also strengthens its export potential, supplying British allies across Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

This contract follows recommendations from the Strategic Defence Review and the upcoming Defence Industrial Strategy, aligning national security priorities with economic growth. The UK government emphasises that every pound spent on defence not only enhances national safety but also contributes to the wider economy.

The UK is simultaneously increasing procurement of artillery ammunition, drones, and combat spares, drawing lessons from the conflict in Ukraine. This year, the UK is providing £4.5 billion in military support to Ukraine, including a £1.6 billion deal for over 5,000 air defence missiles. Drone supply is set to rise from 10,000 units in 2024 to 100,000 units in 2025, while 140,000 artillery munitions have been delivered to Ukrainian forces so far this year.

The MOD-Cook Defence Systems agreement exemplifies the UK's strategy of investing in domestic defence capabilities while supporting allies and safeguarding skilled employment within local communities.