

France and the UK Strengthen Conventional Forces with Lancaster House 2.0

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The United Kingdom and France have formally agreed to strengthen their shared military capabilities under a renewed pact known as Lancaster House 2.0. The declaration reflects both nations' resolve to bolster their conventional forces, improve deterrence in Europe, and enhance their contributions to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

During French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit to Britain on July 10, he and Prime Minister Keir Starmer signed the Lancaster House Joint Declaration on Modernising UK-French Defence and Security Cooperation, informally referred to as Lancaster House 2.0., pledging to transform the longstanding Combined Joint Expeditionary Force into a more robust Combined Joint Force. This new formation is intended to refocus joint military efforts on the Euro-Atlantic region and prepare for large-scale conventional operations if required. For the first time, the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) will be placed on a genuine operational footing, signalling a clear shift toward joint readiness and enhanced NATO contribution.

Under the agreement, the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force's capacity will expand to develop the ability to plan and command a corps-level land force, although official sources have not confirmed a specific fivefold increase. This step is framed as vital for ensuring that Britain and France remain credible military partners and can offer NATO a fully interoperable strategic reserve corps when necessary. Defence leaders say the move will provide greater flexibility to respond to crises that threaten European security, a priority given ongoing tensions related to Russia's activities in Eastern Europe and wider instability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The declaration also outlines new missions for the Combined Joint Force to deter adversaries in the Euro-Atlantic theatre and reassure NATO allies. To support these goals, a dedicated cell will be created to coordinate military activities and strategic planning between British and French forces worldwide. This mechanism is intended to simplify decision-making, align deployments, and reinforce mutual commitments to collective defence.

While the British government's recent defence decisions have faced criticism on other fronts, this renewed partnership with France is widely viewed as a pragmatic step to maintain Europe's security architecture. By focusing on conventional warfighting capacity and interoperability, London and Paris are demonstrating that reliable defence cooperation can still transcend political divisions and deliver tangible results.