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UK Defence Secretary Confirms Troop Plans in Ukraine

August 16, 2025

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Britain's Defence Secretary, John Healey, has confirmed that the UK is prepared to deploy troops to Ukraine if necessary, in support of a ceasefire and wider peacekeeping efforts. Healey made the remarks on BBC Breakfast, coinciding with the Alaska summit between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

When asked whether the UK's role was simply to "watch and wait," Healey stated, "No, the UK's role is to stand with Ukraine on the battlefield and in the negotiations, and prepare, as we have been, leading 30 other nations, with military planning for a ceasefire and a secure peace through what we call the coalition of the willing."

He added that over 200 military planners from this coalition, comprised mainly of European countries, have been engaged in "detailed planning for the point of a ceasefire," ensuring that the forces are "ready to act from day one." Healey described the military plans as complete, emphasising that the deployment of UK troops would both reassure Ukrainians and help secure safe skies and seas, while strengthening Ukrainian forces. "The best deterrence against renewed aggression is the strength of Ukraine to stand for itself," he said.

Asked about the potential for British forces to face Russian attacks, Healey affirmed that UK troops would have "the right to defend themselves if attacked."

The proposal aligns with previous plans put forward by the UK and French governments. Earlier this year, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron announced the coalition of the willing, aimed at deploying troops and aircraft to support Ukraine. The plan intended to complement US support, with Washington providing intelligence, satellite data, and a backstop in the event of attacks on European forces.

According to reports, European governments feared that a change in the US administration could reduce America's involvement in the Ukraine conflict. To safeguard their strategic and economic interests, London, Paris, and Berlin developed plans for a European-led peacekeeping presence in Ukraine.

However, initial efforts to assemble a 30,000-strong force were hindered by limited commitments from European countries and a lack of guarantees from the US administration at the time. Bloomberg reported in June that European allies concluded President Trump would not provide the assurances sought for the Europe-led coalition.

In July, during a state visit by Macron to London, discussions continued regarding a proposed European force of up to 50,000 troops. Talks also covered broader security issues, including nuclear deterrence, and reinforced commitments to support Ukraine. Despite these ambitions, military chiefs have adjusted expectations to more achievable objectives. According to the Times, the UK now envisages a "realistic mission" focusing on

air reassurance over western Ukraine, training support for Ukrainian forces, and the clearance of mines from the Black Sea.

The European nations involved have expressed concerns that a large-scale deployment could be too risky, limiting their willingness to commit sufficient numbers of troops to deter potential attacks. A joint statement by the co-chairs of the coalition of the willing highlighted that the group is “ready to play an active role, including through plans by those willing to deploy a reassurance force once hostilities have ceased.”

Healey’s latest statements underline the UK’s continued engagement in planning and coordination with European allies, emphasising both support for Ukrainian sovereignty and preparedness for military contingencies. While the scale of any deployment remains subject to political and operational considerations, the UK maintains its commitment to contributing to peace and security in the region.