

King's Joins US, Aussie Experts on Defense Research

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Academics from King's College London have joined forces with colleagues at Arizona State University (ASU) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW) to find solutions to some of the world's most pressing security and defense issues. The collaboration is part of the PLuS Alliance, a global partnership that combines the strengths of the three universities to address major global challenges.

Through the Security & Defense PLuS Seed Grant Scheme, funding has been awarded to eight innovative research projects. Notably, four of these projects are co-led by King's

researchers, demonstrating the university's strong commitment to shaping the future of defense policy and practice.

The funded projects cover a wide range of critical topics. For example, one research team, led by Dr Jeni Mitchell from the Department of War Studies, will explore how the growing space industry can engage more ethically and effectively with Indigenous communities. As the competition in space intensifies among powerful nations, this work aims to ensure that local communities are not overlooked in the rush to expand commercial and military activities beyond Earth.

Other King-led projects include the development of next-generation solid-state batteries that integrate mechanical defense needs, strategies to secure trusted semiconductor supply chains within the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) framework, and a study on navigating great power rivalry in an era of uncertainty.

These research teams will come together in person to advance their projects, share insights, and create a joint white paper aimed at informing government and defense leaders. Public engagement is also a key part of their mission, helping to connect academic research to real-world policy decisions.

Dr Mitchell expressed her enthusiasm for the opportunity, explaining that the funding will help her team explore how space activities impact communities on the ground and develop a practical framework for collaboration.

The seed grant scheme is designed as a launchpad for long-term partnerships. If the projects demonstrate strong early progress, they may qualify for additional "Stage II" funding to expand their research further. Three projects funded in last year's round have already secured funding through 2025, showing the potential for lasting impact.

Ultimately, the Security & Defense PLS program aims to support research, education, and policy that align with the spirit of the 2021 AUKUS agreement, helping allied nations respond to evolving security challenges together.

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