

UK and France Advance Plans for Post-War Security Force in Ukraine

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The United Kingdom and France are moving forward with detailed plans to establish a joint European-led military presence in Ukraine once the current conflict ends. The proposal aims to deter future Russian aggression and support long-term regional stability without over-reliance on the United States.

At the heart of the effort is a peace framework being finalised by London and Paris, which both countries plan to present to Washington after coordinating the strategy with Ukraine's conditions. Military planners from over 20 nations have already participated in operational discussions at the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, underscoring the multinational scope of the initiative.

Central to the plan is the potential deployment of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), a Franco-British rapid deployment force. Originally structured at brigade level, CJEF could be expanded to a corps-strength formation of up to 50,000 troops. Instead of functioning as a traditional peacekeeping mission, this force would prioritise airspace security, maritime protection, deterrence operations, and the defence of vital infrastructure, including energy facilities and major ports.

The initial configuration would depend heavily on-air power, supplemented by logistical support from the United States. Ground troop numbers are expected to remain relatively modest, staying below 30,000, but strategically positioned in key regions. Responsibilities would include deterrence patrols, train Ukrainian forces, and providing a rapid reaction capability should tensions resurface.

The concept gained momentum after the London Summit on Ukraine in March, where Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron jointly outlined a vision for long-term military support. The summit's key priorities included protecting Ukraine's sovereignty, sustaining Western military assistance, deterring post-ceasefire aggression, and formalising multinational defence cooperation.

From a centre-right perspective, the initiative marks a necessary evolution in European security thinking. It reinforces European leadership within the NATO framework, asserts strategic autonomy without excluding American involvement, and encourages shared responsibility among allies. It also positions the UK as a leading architect of a future-focused deterrence strategy.

However, the proposal is not without controversy. Some European nations, including Germany, Italy, and Poland, remain hesitant to commit troops to Ukrainian soil, citing constitutional or geopolitical constraints. Russia, meanwhile, has warned against any Western military presence in post-war Ukraine, heightening diplomatic sensitivities.

Nevertheless, the UK–France strategy represents a pragmatic and forward-looking defence blueprint, anchored in realism, designed for deterrence, and intended to secure peace through strength rather than complacency.