

UK Bolsters Jobs and Security with Missile Buy

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Britain is strengthening its air defences with the purchase of six new Land Ceptor missile launchers, in a move that not only enhances national security but also supports vital defence industry jobs across the country.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed on Friday that the £118 million contract will double the British Army's deployable Sky Sabre systems. The deal is set to support up to 140 jobs,

particularly at MBDA's manufacturing facility in Bolton, reinforcing the Government's Plan for Change strategy by using defence as an engine for economic growth.

The Land Ceptor systems will form a central part of the Sky Sabre missile-defence network, a cutting-edge platform capable of intercepting cruise missiles, aircraft and drones. The system is notable for its precision, reportedly able to strike a tennis-ball-sized target travelling at twice the speed of sound.

Each Sky Sabre unit can reportedly guide up to 24 missiles simultaneously, enabling it to defend against multiple airborne threats at once. The newly acquired systems will provide the British Army with greater operational flexibility both at home and abroad.

A recent live-fire exercise at the QinetiQ range in the Outer Hebrides reportedly showcased Sky Sabre's effectiveness during NATO's Exercise Formidable Shield. The system has also been deployed in Poland under Operation Stifftail, bolstering NATO's eastern flank.

MBDA's Bolton site, which already employs around 1,300 people, will be a major beneficiary of the contract. Across the UK, MBDA employs more than 5,000 staff, and the new deal is expected to sustain its supply chain and provide further stability in the defence sector.

Chris Allam, Managing Director of MBDA UK, welcomed the contract:

"Land Ceptor is an excellent example of the innovative capability that our partnership with the Ministry of Defence has delivered to the British Army. This order sustains our expansion in Bolton while supporting suppliers nationwide. Just as importantly, it gives the Army the decisive capability needed in air defence."

Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard MP said the investment underlined the Government's commitment to strengthening national defence while supporting jobs:

"Doubling our deployable Sky Sabre capability will reinforce the UK's air defences, protect our forces abroad, and deter adversaries. Through this contract we are supporting over 100 jobs, and we are implementing the Government's Plan for Change by using defence to drive growth and national prosperity."

Lieutenant Colonel James Boutle, Commanding Officer of 16th Regiment Royal Artillery, emphasised the operational importance of Sky Sabre:

"Sky Sabre represents a step change in the UK's ground-based air defence. As the Army's most advanced system, it offers a powerful shield against fast jets, precision-guided

weapons and drones. Our partnership with industry ensures it remains at the forefront of technology, guaranteeing we stay ahead of adversary threats.”

The three-year contract underscores the central role of defence in the UK’s wider economic strategy. Recently released figures reportedly show that 151,000 UK jobs are directly supported by Ministry of Defence spending with industry, an increase of 14,000 on the previous year.

The upcoming Defence Industrial Strategy is expected to outline further plans to expand defence manufacturing and supply chains, ensuring what ministers describe as a “defence dividend” is spread across the country.

In addition to securing national security, the latest investment strengthens Britain’s NATO commitments, while reinforcing the message that defence spending is both a shield against external threats and a pillar of economic resilience.