

Written Evidence Submitted by the Ministry of Defence

The Defence Command paper sets out the Ministry of Defence's contribution to the Integrated Review (IR). It recognises that NATO will remain the foundation of collective security in our home region of the Euro-Atlantic and that we will continue to be the leading European ally within NATO. Euro-Atlantic security is the UK's highest security priority. The IR also highlights the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific and sets a framework for increased UK engagement. The Indo-Pacific is home to half the world's people and 40% of global GDP but is also at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with multiple potential flashpoints. It matters for our prosperity, our security and our values.

Defence is an essential part of the UK's integrated, long-term offer to the region as part of a whole of government Indo-Pacific Tilt. Working with allies and partners our aim will be to mitigate growing threats to our security, work with Indo-Pacific partners to build resilience and capacity, tackle shared security challenges and uphold freedom of navigation and international law. We will develop capability partnerships and support UK prosperity by strengthening defence exports.

The Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG 21) deployment which concluded in December 2021 was a highly ambitious and successful inaugural deployment, demonstrating the Indo-Pacific Tilt in action and providing a platform for engagement with key regional allies. Although primarily a defence mission, the UK also leveraged the CSG for progress on industrial cooperation and economic ties. The deployment of the Littoral Response Group South (LRG(S)), based on an amphibious capability, will build on the achievements of the CSG by demonstrating enduring UK interest and presence in the region. Our investment in new strategic defence hubs in Kenya and Oman provide opportunities to project into the Western Indian Ocean and beyond. The deployment of HMS SPEY and HMS TAMAR marks the first Royal Navy permanent presence in the Indo-Pacific region for more than 25 years and will build on the CSG's work with allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific.

We have a permanent UK military presence in Brunei and Singapore and the British Indian Ocean Territory. We are deepening and expanding defence partnerships and industrial relationships across the region, including with Australia, Japan, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Republic of Korea underpinned by co-operation on science and technology. We are also enhancing our programmes of exercises, exchanges and capability development with these key partners.

The UK continues to support stability in the Indo-Pacific through the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), alongside Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore and via the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The achievement of Dialogue Partnership Status in August 2021 allows us to work with the pre-eminent multilateral group in Asia on global challenges. It complements longstanding relationships including with our Five Eyes partners (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and US). The announcement of the trilateral partnership between the UK, Australia and the US (AUKUS) is further demonstration of delivering on the commitment the UK made in the IR to deepen security and defence cooperation across the region.

From a bilateral perspective, the 2030 Roadmap with India, our planned roadmap with Indonesia, our plans for a Reciprocal Access Arrangement with Japan, progress on trade partnerships and agreements and COP26 announcements are concrete examples of our deepened investment in the region.

The Indo-Pacific and the UK

1. In the Defence Command Paper, we were clear that, while NATO and our relationship with the US will remain the foundation of our collective Euro Atlantic security, integration with allies across the globe will be fundamental to retaining our global strategic advantage. To respond to new threats and to increase further our interoperability and burden sharing across the world, we are looking to other alliances and partnerships, including in the Indo-Pacific.
2. Our defence relationships with Indo-Pacific partners such as Australia, New Zealand, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the US continues to build a global network to promote security, free enterprise, freedom, democracy and good governance from a position of strength.
3. The UK's achievement of Dialogue Partner Status with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the 2030 Roadmap with India, the negotiation of a Reciprocal Access Arrangement with Japan, our planned roadmap with Indonesia, the AUKUS Treaty, accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement and COP26 announcements are concrete examples of our deepened investment in the region.
4. Our interests in the Indo-Pacific relate to our economy, our security and our values:

a) Economic Opportunities

The Indo-Pacific is the world's growth engine. Home to half the world's people and 40% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it is also home to some of the fastest-growing economies and tech superpowers and is at the forefront of new global trade arrangements. The region is leading and adopting digital and technological innovation and standards, investing strongly in renewables and green tech and is vital to our goals for investment and resilient supply chains. The Indo-Pacific already accounts for 17.5% of UK global trade and 10% of inward Foreign Direct Investment and the UK is building this further, including through new trade agreements, dialogues and deeper partnerships in science, technology and data.

b) Security

The region is also at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with multiple potential flashpoints: from unresolved territorial disputes to nuclear proliferation and miscalculation and from climate change to non-state threats such as terrorism and Serious and Organised Crime. It is on the frontline of new security challenges, including in cyberspace. Much of the UK's trade with Asia depends on shipping that goes through a range of Indo-Pacific choke points. Preserving freedom of navigation is therefore essential to the UK's national interests.

c) Values

As a global leader in international development, we are deepening and expanding our partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to promote free enterprise, freedom, democracy and good governance from a position of strength. The UK will continue to uphold the international rules and norms that underpin free trade, security and stability whilst also delivering humanitarian support to those in need. We remain committed to development in a region that is home to one-third of the world's poorest people.

Delivering the Indo-Pacific Tilt

Goals for UK Defence

5. The Integrated Review highlighted the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific for the UK's security and prosperity and sets a framework for increased UK engagement in the region. As we made clear in the Defence Command Paper, Defence is an essential part of the UK's integrated offer to the region and, as such, we are strengthening our regional defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific to build wider security partnerships.
6. Our aim will be to mitigate growing threats to our security, working with Indo-Pacific partners to build resilience and capacity, tackle shared security challenges and uphold freedom of navigation and international law. We will develop capability partnerships and support UK prosperity by strengthening defence exports.
7. The Secretary of State for Defence was clear in his foreword to the Defence Command Paper that it is an honest assessment of what we can do and what we will do. We are matching resourcing to these credible ambitions thus ensuring Defence is ready to confront future challenges, seize new opportunities and lay the foundations of a more secure and prosperous United Kingdom.

Carrier Strike Group 2021

8. The CSG21 deployment was a highly ambitious endeavour and an early embodiment of many of the principles of the Integrated Review. This included the use of significant national assets, support to international partnerships, the centrality of the Euro-Atlantic region and the tilt to the Indo-Pacific. It was a powerful illustration of our ability to project influence worldwide, having invested in world leading capabilities which match our global responsibilities. This deployment proved the Carrier Strike capability, improving interoperability with the US and key partners in the region. During CSG 21, the task group conducted engagement with 19 states and territories in the region, including four significant engagements with Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, and India. The group also participated in six military exercises in the region, including Exercise PACIFIC CROWN with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force and Exercise KONKAN SHAKTI with the Indian Navy.
9. The CSG's southbound navigation of the South China Sea in September was undertaken with international regional allies and became a six-nation event (UK, US, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand and Japan) to underscore our shared approach to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We also sent a strong message on our support for international norms and our responsibilities as a member of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) by conducting sanction enforcement operations, monitoring suspected violations of UNSC Resolutions 1874, 2375, and other relevant resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and proving that we will not be deterred in standing up for our values.
10. The deployment was conducted against the challenging background of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that our initial ambitions had to be modified as the deployment was underway, and host nation concerns were reflected in the activity we could conduct. We responded to these COVID-19 constraints by exercising huge agility: revising our programme (such as moving the Pacific Future Forum) and developing alternative and sometimes innovative arrangements to maximise our impact.
11. CSG 21 provided a platform to make progress on industrial cooperation and economic ties, including supporting the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a Memorandum of Understanding on future carrier capability in South Korea and the GREAT campaign in India.

12. Our regional security approach, to be 'confident but not confrontational' was understood and reassuring to countries who were keenly observing the implementation of our tilt. But a single deployment like CSG21 cannot alone achieve our aims in the region. We are clear that this first deployment must be part of a consistent schedule of UK activity and needs to be considered as part of an ongoing effort. Future deployments, follow up visits by ministers and officials, subsequent trade engagement and the use of our Defence Network will be key to exploiting its initial impact. A persistent presence alongside partners and states in the region can in turn help to bolster confidence in the region to reject the influence of potentially harmful state actors.

Defence Presence in the Indo-Pacific Region

13. A key element in demonstrating our ongoing commitment to the Indo Pacific region will be the Littoral Response Group (South) (LRG(S)). This will be a new high-readiness force, built around Royal Marines and Royal Navy capabilities. It will focus primarily on the Western Indian Ocean, taking advantage of investment in new facilities and relationships with Kenya, Oman, our new partnership with India, and the presence of other countries with similar objectives to ours. In line with our commitments in the Defence Command Paper, we intend for the response group – comprising around 450 personnel from 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, amphibious shipping and the Fleet Air Arm – to begin to operate in the region from the second half of 2023. The Royal Marines have commenced regional engagement to inform and shape that deployment and we are developing a range of options for the international engagements that will take place. LRG(S) will operate alongside our allies and partners in areas of UK interest, helping to pre-empt and deter sub-threshold activity, and counter state threats, and deliver training to our partners. We are currently developing the detail of the specific activities that LRG(S) will undertake in support of the Indo-Pacific Tilt.
14. Our relationships with key partners provide us with platforms for regional access into the Indo-Pacific and we are bolstering and investing in our presence in multiple key locations. Kenya, occupying a strategic position on the Indian Ocean, will continue to be our enduring regional strategic partner in East Africa. We continue to work closely with Kenya regionally and internationally to tackle collective threats and promote regional stability. Work is already underway to make better use of defence programming and exercises for institutional development of the Kenya Defence Forces in all domains, as well as strategic enablers such as strategic communications, cyber and medical. The UK is supporting Kenya in their role as a regional security leader, not least in Western Indian Ocean, an area of shared interest economically and geopolitically where Kenya is looking to do more. The UK is working closely with the Kenyan Navy to develop their maritime capability, increasingly through their newly established Marines for visit, board, search and seizure training. This will help counter the movement of illicit cargo through their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and as such disrupt criminal activity taking place in support of regional violent extremist organisations.
15. The UK and Oman are long-standing friends and our strategic intelligence partnership is critical to the UK's national security. Following the Sultan's succession in January 2020, Oman and the UK remain committed to the 2019 Joint Defence Agreement and the Comprehensive Agreements. As set out in the Defence Command Paper, the UK is working to develop an advanced training facility at Duqm, investing to expand the UK Joint Logistics Support base (established 2018), and investing in the nearby Ras Madrasah Training Area. The utility of Duqm and Ras Madrasah was aptly demonstrated when the Carrier Strike Group visited in Autumn 2021 to support the joint UK-Oman land Exercise KHANJAR OMAN.

16. Duqm is pivotal for the UK to be able to project power into the Indian Ocean, conduct Royal Navy maintenance and support regional maritime security. We will also look to convene and encourage other defence partners - such as India and Qatar - to conduct joint force training in Duqm and Ras Madrasah. Duqm will allow the UK to increase deployments to Oman and demonstrate our long-term commitment to the Gulf's stability and prosperity. Furthermore, as part of Future Soldier, the UK identified Oman as a location for persistent forward deployment, improving our global access and allowing our forces to respond rapidly when required.
17. We retain a permanent presence in Brunei, through the Resident Infantry Battalion, and in Singapore through the British Defence Singapore Support Unit. The joint UK and US defence facility on the British Indian Ocean Territory plays a vital role in our efforts to keep the region secure.
18. Our maritime presence in the region has grown. The deployment of our new Batch 2 Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), HMS SPEY and HMS TAMAR, to the Western Pacific in late 2021 is part of our persistent presence approach and will build on the CSG's work with allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific. They are highly versatile platforms with the advantage of being suitable for maintenance in a large number of ship yards around the world. They do not need to be tied to maintenance in a single home base, which maximises range and utility.
19. HMS SPEY and HMS TAMAR are maximising the UK's regional engagement. Their deployment marks the first Royal Navy permanent presence in the Indo-Pacific region for more than 25 years. The vessels will respond to security threats in the region and work alongside allies to uphold international laws and norms and provide a force for good in the region. HMS TAMAR joined the international effort to enforce the UNSC Resolutions on North Korea, patrolling the East China Sea to prevent fuel or refined petrol being delivered – these sanctions were imposed by the UN to target the country's Weapons of Mass Destruction and ballistic missile programmes. In January 2022, HMS SPEY was redeployed to Tonga to support the international humanitarian response to the catastrophic tsunami that hit the islands. The OPV deployment will also support Pacific Island countries undertaking maritime domain awareness activities in the Pacific during 2022 and provide wider support to British Overseas Territories in the Pacific. The planned deployment of Type 31 frigates later in the decade will further evidence our commitment to the region and contribute to regional security and assurance.
20. But our engagement goes far beyond the maritime domain. We continuously look for and take part in substantial and far-reaching opportunities for engagement across land, sea and air. Despite COVID-19 leading to the cancellation of a significant amount of activity, the Army deployed over 500 people to deliver 32 activities in sixteen countries since March 2021 and took part in six sets of Staff Talks. This was alongside exchange programmes, bilateral engagements with the US, Japan and Australia and attendance at the Indo-Pacific Army Chiefs' Conference, with plans in place for participation in major exercises with regional partners in the near future.
21. Royal Air Force (RAF) activity included staff talks with seven nations, exercises with Australia, New Zealand and India, and agreement with Japan to develop a future fighter aircraft engine demonstrator as part of the UK's Combat Air Strategy. Earlier in 2021, 101 Squadron, responsible for operating RAF Voyagers, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with their ROK Air Force counterparts 261 Squadron with the aim of knowledge sharing with a key partner in operating the Airbus Multi-Role Tanker Transport Aircraft. Further senior level military engagement is scheduled for the coming months, following unavoidable limitations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alliances and Engagement in the Indo-Pacific

22. The UK is at the heart of an unrivalled global network of economic, diplomatic, technology and security partnerships. These networks and partnerships are key to the UK realising its ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.
23. We are building, deepening and expanding our economic and defence partnerships as well as industrial relationships in the region, including with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Republic of Korea, India and Indonesia and of course the US. To deliver this, we are engaging bilaterally, multilaterally (particularly with ASEAN) and in minilateral groupings and accompanying our efforts with co-operation on science and technology, such as combat air technologies (with Korea and Japan). We are increasing our presence and engagement by enhancing our programmes of exercises, exchanges and capability development, working alongside other agencies and departments. We also deliver extensive capacity building: the transferable value of UK military education, such as that through the Counsel of Commandants and courses conducted in the region, is a key pillar of this.

Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA)

24. The UK continues to support stability in the Indo-Pacific through the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), which last year celebrated its fiftieth anniversary marking one of our longest military partnerships. We continue in our ambition to make a bigger and more consistent contribution to the FPDA and we have provided additional personnel to the FPDA's Integrated Air Defence Headquarters.
25. As part of CSG 21, the Type 45 destroyer HMS DIAMOND played the lead UK role in Exercise BERSAMA GOLD 21 off the Malay Peninsula in October 2021, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the FPDA alongside Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand and demonstrating our commitment to FPDA nations and regional security.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

26. ASEAN states play a vital role in tackling both regional and increasingly global issues. Southeast Asia is a source of global economic growth, with many states home to young populations, vital trade routes, innovative industries and educated workforces. The ability to enhance trade relations with ASEAN markets represents a significant opportunity for the UK. Any threat to restrict ASEAN member states' ability to trade freely and openly in the world will also impact UK interests. It is therefore crucial that such nations have the capacity to uphold our common interests and norms and respond to the emerging threats that seek to undermine them. Many nations in the region recognise the UK's leadership in areas including maritime domain awareness, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism and peacekeeping.
27. We are committed to pursuing closer defence cooperation with the ASEAN member states to tackle shared challenges together and deliver on our wider ambitions across trade, investment and climate change. The UK gained ASEAN Dialogue Partnership Status on 5 August 2021, allowing us to work with them on global challenges, supporting ASEAN's central role in regional stability and prosperity and enabling sustainable development in South East Asia. Supporting ASEAN "centrality" strengthens the rules-based international system, highlights the UK as a trusted partner in the Indo-Pacific, and amplifies the UK's global influence.
28. The UK strongly supports ASEAN-led regional architecture and practical implementation of ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We are working to support ASEAN partners to strengthen regional capacity on maritime law and security. In the last year, the UK has

delivered a series of dialogues and training courses for ASEAN states on the Law of the Sea, maritime security (including upholding UNCLOS), cyber security and efforts to counter transnational crime. We also signed a Maritime Security Partnership with Vietnam on 22 July 2021.

29. Much of our approach focuses on capacity building, in light of our ambition to support our partners' capacity to engage in global goods (e.g. peacekeeping exercises) and to protect global commons (e.g. shipping lanes). In addition to increasing the training the UK provides to Southeast Asian nations, we will also deliver longer and more consistent military deployments in the region, including the OPV deployment, and better leverage our existing regional facilities. Our partnerships with our Five Eyes partners will be at the heart of our tilt to the Indo-Pacific as we work together to tackle the security challenges in the region.

India

30. The UK has agreed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with India through a UK/India 2030 Roadmap signed at a Virtual Summit between the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Modi in May 2021. The Roadmap outlines a range of commitments to enhance the bilateral relationship and includes pillars of work to expand and deepen our strategic defence and security cooperation, strengthen efforts to tackle cybercrime and terrorist threats and develop a free, open and secure Indo-Pacific region.
31. Since the signing of the Roadmap, the UK and India have enhanced maritime cooperation through a Western Indian Ocean Partnership. The Carrier Strike Group visited the region in October which saw the first UK/India tri-service exercise. A Royal Navy Liaison Officer has been embedded in India's Maritime Domain Awareness Centre to improve sharing of non-classified information. An inaugural UK-India Maritime dialogue was also held in October 2021.
32. The UK and India have also committed to expanding cooperation under a Defence and International Security Partnership and to agree a new Defence Collaboration on Research, Innovation, Technology and Industry, including future combat air.

Indonesia

33. We are maximising opportunities to work together with Indonesia and pursue together Indo-Pacific tilt priorities across maritime security, cyber security and trade. The UK and Indonesia have agreed to develop and establish a Partnership Roadmap to strengthen further UK-Indonesia cooperation, including in technology and digital, investment and trade, and defence and maritime security. As part of CSG 21, the Royal Navy frigate HMS RICHMOND conducted a successful joint exercise with the Indonesian Navy in October 2021. Short Term Training Team (STTT) deployments are also a regular part of our capability building efforts.

Brunei

34. We have an important bilateral security relationship with Brunei. Since Brunei's independence in 1984, UK Armed Forces have been stationed there at the request of the HM The Sultan, in a renewable agreement lasting five years at a time. The British Armed Forces Garrison in Brunei is the lynchpin of UK-Brunei relations, providing unique training areas for the Armed Forces. This includes the British Army's jungle warfare school which runs a number of courses, ranging from Jungle Warfare Instructor Courses to the Operational Tracking Instructor Course. The UK's military presence in Brunei enables regional influence and draws regional partners into Brunei to join UK-led courses and seminars. Our relationship with Nepal is essential for the recruitment of

Gurkhas into the British Army, enabling us to staff the Gurkha Battalion which forms the bulk of the British Forces Brunei Garrison.

Singapore

35. As like-minded partners with shared historical ties and excellent economic relations, the UK and Singapore enjoy broad-based collaboration in defence and security, as well as in science, technology and sustainability. Alongside our CSG 21 engagement with FPDA nations, elements of the strike group also exercised with the Republic of Singapore Navy and Air Force.

Thailand

36. The UK is committed to bolstering our defence engagement with Thailand as a key Indo-Pacific partner, building on previous successful participation in land-based exercises such as Exercise PANTHER GOLD and maritime engagement, including a passage exercise by HMS RICHMOND with the Royal Thai Navy during CSG 21.

Japan

37. The UK has a strong defence partnership with Japan and, in line with our Indo-Pacific tilt, we are increasing engagement on security, including maritime and cyber. Security and defence is one of the key strategic areas where the UK and Japan are truly delivering a step-change in our relationship, underlined by our commencement of formal negotiations on a Reciprocal Access Agreement last year. During the 2+2 Japan-UK foreign and defence ministerial meeting in February 2021, Ministers confirmed their continued commitment to provide leadership in maintaining regional security and upholding the rules-based international order.

38. Japan welcomed the UK Carrier Strike Group deployment to the region. The UK and Japan signed a Maritime Security Arrangement in 2021 to further security cooperation between the Royal Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and we continue to support progress in other domains, including ground, air, cyber, and space. Additionally, the UK and Japan are exploring a wide-ranging partnership across next-generation combat air technologies. At the end of 2021, the two countries announced plans to develop a future fighter aircraft engine demonstrator and agreed a Memorandum of Commitment to enable further opportunities.

Republic of Korea (ROK)

39. The UK is committed to deepening and cementing our ties with ROK as a leading global economy, with a shared commitment to democratic principles. Cooperation on education and training opportunities continues and includes Korean candidates at the Royal College for Defence Studies and the Advanced Command and Staff Course. Since the visit of HMS Queen Elizabeth as part of CSG 21, we have strengthened the service-to-service relationships with Army and Air Force Staff Talks and we will soon hold the next Navy Staff talks in the UK. We are developing a stronger Marine Corps relationship through several UK Marine instructor visits in Q2 2022 and will use UK future deployments to the Indo-Pacific to increase interoperability and information sharing.

40. We have increased the UK's contribution to the UN Command-Korea, the organisation responsible for maintenance of the Korean War Armistice, from one to six officers by the end of 2022, including a rotation of the 3* Deputy Commander from February. This underlines the UK's support to peace on the peninsula and the security of ROK. Meanwhile, engagements in the space domain are increasing and revealing complimentary areas of expertise in the UK and ROK, with the Royal Air Force and Republic of Korea Air Force exploring areas for space co-operation.

41. Following the CSG 21 engagement the Royal Navy is supporting the ROK indigenous aircraft carrier programme which includes a number of mutual prosperity opportunities for UK industry. As it stands, UK industry actively supports ROK capability programmes across domains, with particular focus on sea and air. We will continue to promote industrial cooperation between our countries in defence, aspiring to increase joint innovation and responsible exporting. The UK remains committed to reducing barriers and creating the most favourable environment for industry-to-industry collaboration with ROK. In addition, recognising the important role played by the maritime sector both in underpinning international security and global trade, we will work together on a Maritime Partnership with cooperative capability-building measures in both the civil and military domains.

Australia

42. The UK's already close defence relationship with Australia continues to strengthen. Of note are the successful interactions between our Carrier Strike Group and Australia's Indo-Pacific Endeavour deployment in 2021, the deployment of 40 Commando and 14 Signals Regiment's to Australia's Exercise TALISMAN SABRE, the Gurkhas from Brunei who worked alongside Australian forces to deliver capacity building to Papua New Guinea's Defence Forces and the visit by HMS ASTUTE, the first visit to Australia by a Royal Navy Submarine in over 6 years.
43. On 21 January 2022, Defence and Foreign Ministers met in Sydney for the first Australia – UK Ministerial meeting (AUKMIN) since 2018. Ministers discussed ways to deepen and strengthen the bilateral relationship across a number of areas. On Defence matters, the UK and Australia agreed measures to enable closer cooperation in the Indo Pacific, including an Australian commitment to support the UK's two OPVs, whilst the UK will embed a liaison officer into Australia's Joint Operations Command. In addition to closer naval cooperation with Australia, we are also establishing a new British Defence Staff in Canberra to cover the Oceania region and work alongside the existing British Defence Staff in Singapore.

New Zealand

44. We have a longstanding and close partnership with New Zealand. New Zealand's Indo-Pacific approach aligns closely with the UK's Indo-Pacific tilt and we are strengthening collaboration across our trade, defence, and values agenda. The UK's Integrated Review and New Zealand's recent Defence Assessment identified similar trends and challenges in the region including strategic competition, climate fragility and challenges to the international rules-based system. In addition to providing UK humanitarian assistance to Tonga following the recent volcanic eruption and tsunami, we also supported New Zealand's humanitarian effort through the deployment of a UK RN exchange officer on HMNZS Wellington. The UK expects to continue to develop its naval cooperation with New Zealand both bilaterally and as part of our wider contribution to security in the Indo Pacific.

United States

45. The United States remains the UK's most important strategic ally. Our defence partnership with the US spans the full spectrum of defence activity and enables us to train and operate together across the globe. While we remain pragmatic that we are first and foremost a Euro-Atlantic power, our level of integration with the US, our reach across all theatres including our network of overseas bases around the globe and in new domains such as cyberspace make us a valuable partner to the US in the Indo-Pacific.

46. The UK welcomes the publication of the US Indo-Pacific strategy, including specific reference to partnership with the UK in the region. It confirms the closeness of our positions and the importance of the partnerships we both have across the Indo-Pacific.
47. The inaugural deployment of the CSG in 2021, with USMC F-35s and USS THE SULLIVANS, was a unique demonstration of our interoperability with the US. Beyond the deployment of physical assets, our relationship with the US is vital for partners to retain their collective technological edge in the new era of strategic competition. We saw this in the recent AUKUS announcement, where this historic agreement with the US illustrates our resolve to deepen integration on the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing as close allies. Similarly, we are working bilaterally with the US in developing next generation capabilities to maintain a technological edge over our adversaries. The UK's inclusion into the National Technology and Industrial Base (alongside Canada and Australia) seeks to optimise collaboration amongst the four participating nations.

The AUKUS Partnership

48. AUKUS is a concrete example of the commitment the UK made in the Integrated Review to deepen cooperation and engagement in the Indo-Pacific. It will build a broader partnership and strengthen our alliances for the long-term, bolstering regional and global security.
49. We are well on track to identify a pathway, through the 18-month consultation period, to bring the Australian nuclear-powered submarines into service as soon as possible. This consultation will define the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarine capability at the earliest possible date and consider a wide range of technical and practical issues. Trilateral Working Groups have been established and are working to finalise a program of work in relation to advanced capabilities. Trilateral Working Groups are examining in detail the critical actions necessary to establish an enduring program in Australia. This capability will help Australia to fulfil its defence and security responsibilities and promote stability and security in the region. Our work to deliver it reflects the unique level of trust and cooperation between the UK, US and Australia.
50. The AUKUS nations have brought into force the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement, underpinning full and effective consultation between the governments. Work is also underway to enhance our military and technology capabilities in a number of realms that will strengthen peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.
51. Success for the AUKUS security partnership will be measured by concrete demonstration of our three nations' shared commitment to deepen cooperation, partnerships and engagement in the Indo-Pacific. This includes fostering deeper integration on science and technology-led advanced defence capabilities. The initial focus of this work is on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and additional undersea capabilities.
52. Strengthening the non-proliferation regime is our highest priority. We continue to engage regularly, constructively, and transparently with the International Atomic Energy Agency, including at the Board of Governors meeting on 24 November, where we made a trilateral statement.

Developing Future Partnerships

53. We recognise the need to be flexible in building new partnerships in order to realise the opportunities and manage risks across the region. The AUKUS partnership is just one illustration of that approach.

54. The Indo-Pacific Quad is similarly increasingly important to four of the UK's closest partners in the region (Australia, India, Japan and the US), enabling them to work together more closely across a wide range of issues. The UK is looking at options for closer practical cooperation with Quad members on shared priorities, supplementing our important bilateral partnerships.
55. The UK has also recently agreed to lead the maritime security pillar of India's Indo Pacific Ocean Initiative (IPOI). IPOI is an open, non-treaty based, global initiative focused on collaborative effort to better manage, conserve, sustain and secure the maritime domain.

Regional Challenges and Tensions

56. The DPRK continues to destabilise the region. The UK is committed to securing peace and security on the Korean peninsula. As the most engaged non-regional partner on the DPRK's denuclearisation and on sanctions enforcement, the UK is at the forefront of an international effort to dismantle and verify the North Korea programme. The UK continues to work closely with the US and other partners on a "calibrated and practical" approach to achieve the goal of complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment of all of the DPRK's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes.
57. The UK also recognises that China's military modernisation and assertiveness within the Indo-Pacific poses an increasing challenge to UK interests. We continue to watch closely the growth in Chinese naval capabilities and their impact on the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. This has been enhanced by China's construction of fortified military bases on contested islands and enormous investment in anti-ship missiles.
58. The repeated incursions by the People's Liberation Army Air Force into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone are not conducive to regional peace. On Sunday 23 January 2022, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence reported the second-largest incursion of Chinese military aircraft in one day, representing the largest incursion since October 2021. The UK urges a peaceful resolution through constructive dialogue by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.
59. China has directed its assertive approach to maritime disputes with neighbours. In the East China Sea, the UK is aware of longer and more assertive patrols by the Chinese Coastguard into Japanese claimed territorial waters. In the South China Sea, we remain disturbed by militarisation and reports of coercion and intimidation. The UK does not take sides on sovereignty disputes. Our commitment is to international law, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and to freedom of navigation and overflight. The UK continues to work with partners to respond to the challenges China poses, including where we must defend our national security and values.
60. We were clear in the Integrated Review of the security threat that Russia poses and its role as a global systemic competitor. We are helping to building the capacity of like-minded nations around the world, including in the Indo-Pacific, to respond to a growing range of transnational state threats. By positioning ourselves as a preferred partner in the region for defence exports, capability building and training, as well as establishing a greater permanent presence, we seek to counter the influence of potentially harmful state actors.

Operational Considerations

Basing in the Region

61. As set out in the Defence Command Paper, we continue to guarantee our regional access through existing UK bases. The UK maintains a permanent military presence in Singapore: the British Defence Singapore Support Unit (BDSSU) as a commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements. In addition, on request, BDSSU supplies fuel to other nations' warships. In Brunei, the close security relationship between our countries is embodied by the Resident Infantry Battalion stationed there under the terms of the Garrison Agreement, ensuring a permanent regional deployable presence. The Jungle Warfare Division based in Brunei run courses for all members of the British Army.
62. Diego Garcia, the main island and military base in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) under UK sovereignty, remains an important base for the defence needs of the UK and US. In Oman, the UK Joint Logistics Support Base at Duqm, will help facilitate Royal Navy deployments to the Indian Ocean including the ability to support the UK's aircraft carriers.
63. We have a global network of operational and logistic support bases that enable the UK to play a leading role in delivering international security. We constantly review and improve the methods by which we deliver these effects and to ensure that the UK is always best placed and prepared to continue our commitments to global security and routinely consult with our allies and partners on matters related to basing.

Resourcing

64. The UK has invested in world leading capabilities which match its global responsibilities. In late 2020, ahead of the publication of the Integrated Review, the Prime Minister announced a multi-year settlement to the Ministry of Defence of £24 billion, the biggest programme of investment in British defence since the end of the Cold War.
65. As outlined in the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper, NATO, and our ability to contribute to it a high-end warfighting force useable against a peer opponent, will remain central to our policy. Along with our enduring relationship with the US, it will continue to be the bedrock of our security. But we are also looking to other alliances and partnerships – including in the Indo-Pacific - to increase further our interoperability and burden sharing across the world. We are planning to increase the defence contribution to diplomacy across the region through uplifting our attaché network and through the establishment of a new British Defence Staff in Canberra, based in the Defence Section, complementing that in Singapore.
66. This means that in parallel with our commitments to the Indo-Pacific, we remain anchored in NATO, in Five Eyes, a close US ally, a friend of the Gulf, a dependable European neighbour and partner and a committed member of the Commonwealth.

4th March 2022