

JOINT EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (JEF) – POLICY DIRECTION

Introduction

1. This Policy Direction builds on the 2014 JEF Letter of Intent, the 2015 Foundation MOU and the 2018 Comprehensive MOU. It sets the strategic policy and political context to enable the issuing of a detailed military JEF Directive that includes clear Military Strategic Objectives. It is designed to provide the overarching policy framework within which the JEF can evolve as a concept and operate as a force, across a broad spectrum of operational activity.

2. Furthermore, this Policy Direction aims to provide a coherent connection between the 2018 Comprehensive MOU and the current operating environment, and acknowledges the significant development of the JEF already achieved. It reflects the changing nature of the security challenges we face – changes that have become increasingly apparent since the JEF was first conceived almost a decade ago, in 2012. The world in which we live today is increasingly one of constant competition and confrontation, in which long-held assumptions – even the rules-based international order itself – are being challenged. The conventional distinctions between peace and war, home and abroad, state and non-state, the virtual world and reality are becoming blurred. It is this sub-threshold¹ space that our competitors are increasingly looking to exploit to their advantage; where conflict is prosecuted by unconventional and non-lethal means. The JEF too needs to adapt to meet the reality of that challenge and to be able to respond effectively to competitors operating in the space below the threshold of conventional conflict. While the JEF needs to be ready to undertake the full spectrum of military activity, the challenge of sub-threshold competition in particular may require bringing together the military instrument with other levers of government.

Key Principles

3. The JEF is a multinational force made up of like-minded, northern European nations coming together as a coalition of the willing: the UK – as Framework Nation – together with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

4. As befits its membership, the principal geographic area of interest for the JEF is the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea region. The military, security and political challenges we face across this region demand active management, across institutional boundaries, and in close cooperation. However, the JEF is also configured to respond further afield – for example, in response to a humanitarian crisis. It is, as its name makes clear, an expeditionary force.

5. The JEF Participants agree that we are stronger when working together. Together we are determined to make a key contribution to confronting regional security challenges, however they arise. The JEF is not directed towards any particular country or actor.

¹ Sub-threshold activity does not seek decisive conflict, but is a way that adversaries alter the balance of advantage in order to achieve their objectives without the material, financial and social cost of armed conflict. It is orchestrated by hostile state and non-state adversaries to undermine security, the integrity of democracies, public safety, reputation or economic prosperity.

6. The JEF builds on the strong relationships that have developed between the Participants through decades of working together on operations; through a shared understanding of the increasingly complex security challenges we face; and through our common values, including our belief in democracy, human rights and the rules-based international order. JEF Participants regularly consult, exchange views and coordinate positions on matters of common importance. These relationships will continue to be reinforced through a regular drumbeat of JEF exercises, table-top exercises, scenario-based discussions and other activities.

The JEF

7. The JEF is a coalition of like-minded nations who can be called upon to provide a range of credible military options to political decision-makers in order to be able to respond – rapidly when needed – to a wide range of contingencies both in peacetime and at times of crisis or conflict. At its fullest extent, the JEF can provide an agile, full-spectrum intervention capability at significant scale.

8. The JEF is designed with flexibility at its heart. It can be used across the full spectrum of military activity – from defence engagement to training and exercising; from humanitarian assistance to crisis management; from constant sub-threshold competition to combat operations.

9. The JEF is a rapid reaction force when the circumstances require it; but it also needs to be a force that is able to operate persistently below the threshold of crisis or conflict. It is not a standing force.

10. The JEF is designed to complement other international frameworks and avoid duplication; it is coherent with the NATO Framework Nations Concept and uses NATO standards and doctrine as its baseline. It could therefore be used to support UN, NATO or other multinational or coalition operations in peacetime or crisis.

JEF employment

11. The JEF is not a group that requires consensus to conduct operations and deploy forces; this is designed to add considerably to its responsiveness. Rather, the UK acts as Framework Nation; as such, following consultation, the UK may conduct a JEF activity with the participation of one or more JEF Participants. JEF Participants are not obliged to contribute forces to any given JEF activity or deployment; instead, it remains a sovereign national decision for Participants to contribute, within their respective legal frameworks.

JEF capability

12. Having highly capable and interoperable forces is a critical capability for the success of the JEF; this capability underpins credible deterrence; and provides our joint contribution when we need to respond. As the security challenges we face evolve, so must we, as JEF Participants, continue to evolve our own capabilities and how we employ them; this detail will be developed through the JEF military Directive and Operational Studies. Adapting our approach will enable us to maintain the necessary strategic advantage. Accordingly, the JEF approach needs to be:

- **Multi-domain**. The 2018 Comprehensive MOU declared that the JEF would have a balanced range of capabilities and capacities within the principal environments of Maritime, Land, Air, Space and Cyber, which could then be tailored to a specific deployment or mission. That continues to be the case. Nonetheless, the requirement to operate more effectively sub-threshold demands that we further improve the JEF's integration across all five domains.
- **Interoperable**. JEF Participant forces need to be increasingly interoperable in order to be able to operate in a wide range of scenarios. This will be achieved through more regular joint activity, increased coordination at the operational level, and an improved understanding of the availability of JEF Participant capabilities.
- **Coordinated**. To successfully deliver in a world of constant competition, we need to focus more on the exploitation of data and information and strategic communications to achieve Information Advantage. This requires a much broader analysis of relevant actors, followed by the integration of both soft- and hard-power to achieve a single 'core message' that will have a decisive effect.
- **Agile**. The new challenges we face require JEF Participants to operate with increased agility. This requires JEF Participants both to exploit existing structures and activities, and to be prepared to support new opportunities that present themselves. The Framework Nation will seek to cohere these opportunities in consultation with JEF Participants.
- **Integrated**. To succeed in an era of constant sub-threshold competition, we need more effectively to integrate our military capabilities and activities with those of other partners across Government. We need to work towards such integration to the extent possible, as a whole-of-government approach brings to bear all the levers of national power to generate an effect that is greater than the military can achieve in isolation.
- **Innovative**. As we operate in a changing environment, so we need to remain committed to innovation, experimentation, and learning from each other. The JEF can be a test bed for operational, doctrinal, and technical innovation. Across the JEF nations exists a wealth of experience, including in sub-threshold competition, whole-of-government integration, and whole-society resilience. We need to learn from this experience and use it to further exploit our already strong culture of exercising.


JEF coherence

13. As with all successful cooperation frameworks, the JEF's key strength is its unity and cohesion. Without it, our competitors will exploit political divergence, set conditions for strategic advantage, and reduce our response options. It is essential, therefore, that the JEF continues to facilitate regular senior political, policy and military meetings in order to maintain a shared understanding and develop a coordinated and synchronised response to evolving challenges. This requires a greater political and policy input into JEF governance mechanisms than has previously been the case:


- We will formalise the current ad hoc nature of JEF Defence Ministers' meetings so that they now meet at least annually. This will give greater political direction to the JEF's development.
- We will maintain the existing biannual JEF CHODS' meeting as the engine for driving the development, operationalisation and employment of the JEF.
- We will build on the recent inaugural JEF Permanent Secretaries' meeting and develop it into an annual forum for wider geo-strategic consultations and horizon-scanning. This meeting could itself lead to policy recommendations for consideration by Defence Ministers and CHODS.
- We will ensure that JEF defence policy and military Directors (2*) continue to meet routinely to ensure pol/mil alignment; and
- We will develop cross-Government and inter-Agency ties to maximise JEF integrated effect, taking into account the JEF Participants' respective national approaches and frameworks.

[This Policy Direction has been approved by the JEF Participants on 30 Jun 2021]


Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Denmark

Signed: 
Date: 30.6.2021

Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania

Signed: 
Date: 30/06/2021

Minister of Defence of the Republic of Estonia

Signed: 
Date: 30.06.2021


Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Signed: 
Date: 30/6/21

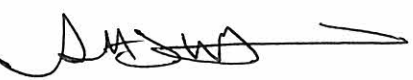
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland

Signed: 
Date: 30.06.2021

Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway

Signed: 
Date: 30/6-21

For the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Finland

Signed: 
Date: 30.6.2021


Minister for Defence of the Kingdom of Sweden

Signed: 
Date: 30.6.2021

Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia

Signed: 
Date: 30.06.2021

Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Signed: 
Date: 30. vii. 21