

Press release

Launch of new body to harness innovative tech for the UK's Armed Forces

Innovative technology will reach the hands of military personnel faster, as the work of the new UK Defence Innovation (UKDI) organisation kicks off today with its formal establishment.

From: **Ministry of Defence** (</government/organisations/ministry-of-defence>) and **The Rt Hon John Healey MP** (</government/people/john-healey>)

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- UK Defence Innovation begins work today to streamline delivery of innovative technology to Armed Forces personnel.
- £400 million annual budget will help create high-skilled jobs in the dual-use technology sector and turbocharge growth, as part of the government's Plan for Change.
- UK Strategic Command will be renamed Cyber & Specialist Operations Command

to reflect its evolved role and enhanced responsibilities following the SDR.

UKDI will be the focal point for innovation within the Ministry of Defence, backed by a ringfenced annual budget of at least £400 million – supporting the government's Plan for Change by driving defence as an engine for UK growth and creating high-skilled jobs in the dual-use technology sector.

It follows the government committing to the largest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War – hitting 2.6% by 2027, with an ambition to reach 3% in the next Parliament.

The new body will simplify and streamline the innovation system within MOD – as outlined in last month's Strategic Defence Review (SDR). It will take a new approach by moving quickly and decisively, using different ways of contracting, to enable UK companies to scale up innovative prototypes rapidly, by setting out a clear pathway, working with the rest of government, from initial production to manufacturing at scale.

UKDI will make the UK a defence innovation leader, funding and supporting firms of all sizes to take state-of-the-art technology from the drawing board to the production line, and into the hands of our Armed Forces. It will ensure cutting-edge innovations get into the hands of our Armed Forces faster, enhancing military capability while driving economic growth.

This announcement comes alongside another significant development, with UK Strategic Command being renamed as the Cyber & Specialist Operations Command (CSOC) from 1 September 2025. This change reflects the Command's evolved role and enhanced responsibilities following the SDR, particularly its leadership of the cyber domain, which the SDR demanded a greater focus on across defence and government as a whole. It also follows the MOD having to protect UK military networks against more than 90,000 'sub-threshold' attacks in the last two years.

Defence Secretary, John Healey MP said:

“Defence is only as strong as the industry that stands behind it and through UKDI we're putting innovation at the heart of our approach.

“This shift represents a crucial part of our commitment to change defence, backing the high-growth UK firms developing pioneering technology of the future to boost our national security and make defence an engine for growth - fundamental to our Plan for Change and delivering on the SDR.”

The new name firmly places leadership of this crucial domain for defence and the Armed Forces with the new Command. It also better represents CSOC's 'Lead Command' responsibilities for those specialist capabilities critical to operational success, including Intelligence, Special Forces, deployed medical capabilities, and Command and Control through the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ).

General Sir Jim Hockenhull, Commander, UK Strategic Command - soon to be Cyber & Specialist Operations Command, said:

“The transition to Cyber & Specialist Operations Command is far more than a change in name - it is a clear statement of purpose. It reflects our leadership in the cyber domain, the integration of specialist capabilities, and our commitment to delivering effects across Defence. This new identity captures the essence of who we are: a community of experts, united by mission, operating at the forefront of modern warfare.”

The defence sector is a major contributor to the UK economy, with the industry supporting over 430,000 jobs nationwide – equivalent to one in every 60 UK jobs.

As part of UKDI's launch, two key initiatives have been established:

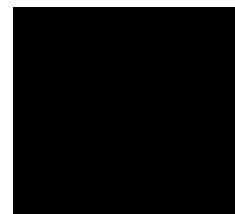
- A new Rapid Innovation Team (RIT) enabling innovation at 'wartime pace' by utilising commercially available dual-use technology to address the most urgent operational problems.
- Regional Engagement Teams across the UK to identify and support dual-use innovation from SMEs and academic spin-outs, delivering targeted outreach and business development support.

The SDR highlighted the rapidly evolving threat landscape and the critical need for the UK to maintain its technological edge. UKDI will play a pivotal role in implementing the SDR's recommendations by breaking down barriers between defence and commercial innovation, ensuring that game-changing technologies can be rapidly identified, developed, and deployed to the front line.

The organisation has been formally established today and will develop over the next 12 months, with further design, transition and implementation work, while determining the optimal workforce structure needed to achieve its long-term ambitions. UKDI will be fully operational by July 2026.



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