
NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO FORMALISE EU DEFENCE FORCE PLAN

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Nine EU nations will on Monday (25 June) formalise a plan to create a European military intervention force, a French minister said, with Britain backing the measure as a way to maintain strong defence ties with the bloc after Brexit.

The force, known as the European Intervention Initiative and championed by French President Emmanuel Macron, is intended to be able to deploy rapidly to deal with crises.

A letter of intent is due to be signed in Luxembourg on Monday by France, Germany, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia, Spain and Portugal, French defence minister Florence Parly told the newspaper Le Figaro.

EU takes step towards closer defence cooperation

The EU took a major step towards building closer defence ties on Monday (13 November), with 23 member states signing a landmark agreement, promoted by France and Germany, to fund and boost cooperation following Britain's decision to leave the bloc.

The initiative involves joint planning work on crisis scenarios that could potentially threaten European security, according to a source close to the minister, including natural disasters, intervention in a crisis or evacuation of nationals.

It would be separate from other EU defence cooperation, meaning there would be no obstacle to Britain taking part after it leaves the bloc.

This is clearly an initiative that allows the association of some non-EU states, the French minister said.

The UK has been very keen because it wants to maintain cooperation with Europe beyond bilateral ties.

EU post-Brexit defences starting to take shape

A broad European military strategy involving Britain after Brexit has started to take shape with France at its centre, often in negotiations far from the Brussels spotlight and, in one top-level EU

meeting, without the UK defence minister.

Twenty-five EU countries signed a major defence pact in December, agreeing to cooperate on various military projects, but it is not clear whether Britain would be allowed to take part in any of them after it leaves the bloc.

The EU has had four multinational military battlegroups since 2007, but political disagreements have meant the troops have never been deployed.

Paris hopes that by focusing on a smaller group of countries, its new initiative will be able to act more decisively, freed from the burdens that sometimes hamper action by the 28-member EU and 29-member NATO.

Italy had originally shown interest in the proposal. The new government in Rome is considering the possibility of joining but has not made a final decision, Parly said.

EU leaders hail historic step in defence cooperation

EU leaders hailed as historic the decision taken at the Council summit on Thursday (22 June) to establish permanent European defence cooperation. French President Emmanuel Macron, for whom this is the first EU summit, praised Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker for his role as architect of the project.

Kaynak/Source: