

Up to 120 UK troops are to be made available to the EU-led peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Minister for International Security Strategy Gerald Howarth has announced.

The company of soldiers will be based in the UK, ready to deploy at short notice to the region if required as part of EUFOR Operation Althea.

Operation Althea has the backing of a UN Mandate and provides a military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help maintain a safe and secure environment in the country.

Minister for International Security Strategy Gerald Howarth said: "This contribution reflects the UK's strong political support for EUFOR Operation Althea and our determination to help maintain a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"While the security situation in the region remains calm and stable, it is essential that we provide the EUFOR force with the necessary resources to perform the mission's mandate in full.

"EUFOR provides an important safeguard underpinning stability and ensuring that Bosnia and Herzegovina can continue to make progress on its path towards EU and NATO accession."

The pledge of more troops in support of Operation Althea will not take place until December in order not to impact on the Armed Forces' commitment to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

EUFOR Operation Althea became the legal successor in December 2004 to NATO's SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EUFOR has the backing of a UN Chapter VII Mandate and its aim is to ensure continued compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and the continuance of a safe and secure environment.