

A 40-strong UK infantry training team and mortar and artillery training team is deploying to Mali to work with Malian armed forces currently fighting violent extremists in the African country as part of a European Union Training Mission.

The UK will not provide troops in a combat role or force protection for the mission - that role will be carried out by French and Czech personnel. The UK will provide headquarters staff and three civilians under the FCO's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative to provide human rights and gender awareness training within the mission.

There will be 21 troops from 1st Battalion Royal Irish Regiment to carry out infantry training, 12 personnel to carry out mortar and artillery training, four UK personnel in the headquarters and 3 civilians in the human rights and gender team.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: "British personnel will play an important role in the EU Training Mission, enabling the Malian authorities to restore order and deny a safe haven to terrorists."

"This mission is a further demonstration of our commitment to tackle violent extremism and the threat that it poses to our national interests."

The EU training mission is being launched in Brussels today and marks a significant partnership between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Ireland will contribute six infantry training personnel to augment the UK infantry training team.

Mr Hammond said: "We welcome the Irish contribution which will help develop further working relations between our two countries."

Last month two RAF C17 aircraft were deployed in a logistical role to support the French intervention, delivering troops and equipment, and a SENTINEL aircraft has been providing intelligence and surveillance support.

Since then the UK has offered the personnel confirmed by the EU mission launch today and offered up to 200 training personnel to English-speaking nations neighbouring Mali. While negotiations are ongoing a British RAF C17 aircraft has been used at Ghana's request to deliver around 120 Ghanaian engineering troops into the country to support African-led training.

An advanced party of the EU Training Mission has deployed and the main contingent is due to deploy later in the spring.

The EU Training Mission in Mali's objective is to enable the Malian authorities to restore democratic order, re-establish the state's authority and neutralise organised crime and the terrorist threat