THE LUNNA HOUSE AGREEMENT

Rebuilding NATO's Undersea Deterrence in the GIUK Gap

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Date: December 2025
Domain: Maritime Security / NATO / Undersea Infrastructure
Project Type: Strategic Analysis Brief

KEY JUDGEMENTS

- The UK–Norway Lunna House Agreement strengthens long-term ASW capacity in the GIUK gap.
- CUI protection is becoming more complex as undersea infrastructure expands.
- Russia is likely to continue grey-zone seabed activity regardless of the outcome in Ukraine.
- Deterrence by presence alone is increasingly insufficient and may escalate tensions.
- Autonomous systems will be central to NATO's future undersea posture.

Overview

In December 2025 the UK and Norway signed the Lunna House Agreement, committing to operate a joint fleet of Type-26 anti-submarine frigates in the North Atlantic. The fleet will patrol the GIUK gap to track Russian naval activity and protect critical underwater infrastructure (CUI). The agreement also expands cooperation on uncrewed mine-hunting and undersea warfare systems.

Why Now?

Recent incidents targeting CUI have accelerated NATO's efforts to strengthen seabed security. The agreement follows:

- The creation of the Maritime Centre for Security of Critical Undersea Infrastructure (2024)
- The launch of Baltic Sentry (2025)
- The JEF's activation of Nordic Warden (2025)

A report by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy recently highlighted the Royal Navy's limited number of Type-26s as a barrier to effective deterrence. Combining the UK's eight Type-26s in production with Norway's planned five aims to close this gap — though Norway's ships are still to be built.

Operating jointly, sharing equipment and maintenance, also reflects NATO's broader push for force integration under the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) framework. With both navies assigned to the same region, interoperability will be strategically essential.

Going Forward

Growing undersea cable infrastructure will make CUI protection increasingly complex, requiring a mix of crewed and autonomous systems.

Even if the war in Ukraine ends on terms favourable to Moscow, sabotage attempts are unlikely to subside. Russia's grievances with the UK and NATO make grey-zone activity — including CUI interference — an attractive tool for disruption and capability development.

The Lunna House Agreement is a step toward future-proofing NATO's undersea posture. Its emphasis on autonomous systems aligns with emerging threats, including potential sabotage by uncrewed platforms. It also supports the Royal Navy's long-term ambition of achieving an "Atlantic Bastion."

Deterrence Challenges

There are growing doubts about the long-term effectiveness of deterrence by "presence and monitoring."

- In 2024, the suspected Russian spy ship *Yantar* loitered over CUI and was shadowed by UK forces — yet returned undeterred a month later, even aiming a laser at patrol aircraft.
- The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy report questioned whether monitoring alone can deter sabotage when attribution is the only consequence.

Presence-based deterrence may also escalate tensions. In 2025, the suspected shadow-fleet vessel *Jaguar* approached the EstLink cable, prompting an Estonian military response, a Russian SU-35 escort, and a brief airspace violation that triggered NATO to scramble jets.

The GIUK gap is strategically vital to both NATO and Russia. As Russian naval activity increases, so does the risk of confrontation and unintended escalation.

Key Takeaways

- The agreement strengthens NATO's long-term ASW and CUI protection capabilities.
- It reflects a broader shift toward integrated, multi-domain deterrence.
- Autonomous systems will be central to future undersea security.
- Deterrence by presence alone may be insufficient and carries escalation risks.