

Defence chiefs acquire chips factory after closure fears



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UK defence chiefs have taken on a semiconductor factory near [Darlington](#) after fears its closure could leave projects in the lurch.

[Defence](#) Secretary [John Healey](#) visited the site on Friday, which the [Ministry of Defence](#) has said is the only secure facility with the capability to produce gallium arsenide chips, used in electronic devices.

The Telegraph reported in August that Italian aerospace company Leonardo was among the previous firm Coherent's customers, alongside [Apple](#), which had ceased orders with the business and left the plant's future in doubt.

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Defence Secretary John Healey

Coherent was not thought to have any outstanding orders with Leonardo, according to the newspaper, but its sources suggested the plant may still be needed for future, unspecified programmes.

“Semiconductors are at the forefront of the technology we rely upon today, and will be crucial in securing our military’s capabilities for tomorrow,” Mr Healey said.

“This acquisition is a clear signal that our Government will back British defence production.

“We’ll protect and grow our UK Defence supply chain, supporting North East jobs, safeguarding crucial tech for our Armed Forces and boosting our national security.”

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed it would name the factory, at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham, Oetric Semiconductors UK, and that the acquisition would secure up to 100 roles.