Sunak to hold AI summit at Bletchley Park, home of Enigma codebreakers

Rishi Sunak's global summit on the safety of artificial intelligence this autumn will be hosted at Bletchley Park, the home of top-secret codebreakers during the second world war. The first major gathering on the technology will bring together governments, leading AI firms and experts to discuss how its risks can be mitigated through internationally coordinated action. Sunak announced the summit on a trip to Washington in June amid fears that the technology's rapid advancement could spin out of control and concerns that existing safeguards would soon be outdated. Safety concerns are mounting after breakthroughs in generative AI, which can produce convincing text, images and even voice on command, with tech executives such as Elon Musk among those expressing alarm. In recent months the prime minister has changed his tone on the technology. Having been overwhelmingly optimistic about the opportunities it creates, he now talks about its "existential" risk. However, he has rebuffed the idea that the UK is too minor a player to have such a pivotal role in shaping the future of AI, especially now it is no longer an EU member. Instead, he is trying to position Britain as the natural hub for efforts to regulate the industry on a global scale, one that can provide a bridge between the US and China and offer an alternative to what some consider to be the EU's heavy-handed approach. Bletchley Park, in Buckinghamshire, is a significant location in the history of computer science and was once home to codebreakers who decrypted German messages during the second world war, including Enigma messages. They were then able to feed crucial information to allied forces, which is believed to have shortened the conflict by two years, helping to save millions of lives. Sunak said: "The UK has long been home to the transformative technologies of the future, so there is no better place to host the first ever global AI safety summit than at Bletchley Park this November. "To fully embrace the extraordinary opportunities of artificial intelligence, we must grip and tackle the risks to ensure it develops safely in the years ahead. "With the combined strength of our international partners, thriving AI industry and expert academic community, we can secure the rapid international action we need for the safe and responsible development of AI around the world." The UK's AI white paper established a set of principles to which the industry should adhere, but offered little in the way of concrete rules to govern it. Ministers disappointed some experts by resisting the idea of creating a new regulator to focus exclusively on AI. The EU has already made significant strides in the area and is proposing legislation that will be seen a pacesetter internationally, confirming the bloc's status as a leading tech regulator. The G7 has agreed to create an intergovernmental forum called the "Hiroshima AI process" to debate issues around fast-growing tools.