

Armed Forces recognised for outstanding achievements in the New Year Honours list

The military division of the list has been published today, granting state honours to personnel serving in the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force. Personnel have been recognised for extraordinary contributions to their Service and country, from support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to fundraising for injured and ill personnel and veterans.

Secretary of State for Defence Ben Wallace said:

I would like to congratulate the brilliant service men and women who have been granted state honours in the New Year Honours list.

These individuals are an inspiration to us all and their phenomenal achievements are testament to the exceptional work that our Armed Forces carry out, at home and abroad, every single day. The breadth of the awards also reflects our efforts to foster greater diversity and inclusion, and I am pleased to note the award of a Damehood to Air Marshal Susan Gray, which recognises her achievement as the first woman to be promoted to 3-star rank in any of the Services.

I am extremely proud of our people who continue to serve our country with great honour and distinction.

Air Marshal Susan Gray of the RAF has been awarded a DBE, cited as being one of the Service's most senior and celebrated engineering officers, and an inspirational ambassador for women in defence.

Also among the personnel granted state honours is Senior Aircraftwoman Shona Brownlee, who has been awarded an MBE. She was nominated while serving as a musician in the Central Band of the RAF.

Cited as an exemplary ambassador for the RAF, Shona became involved in the Armed Forces Para Snowsport Team through the Government's Battle Back programme after suffering a serious injury during a military exercise, resulting in a below-the-knee amputation. She later became the number one ranked female mono-skier in Great Britain and is now ranked ninth in the world.

In 2019, Shona's contribution to the Armed Forces Para Snowsport Team raised approximately £50,000 to support wounded, injured and sick serving personnel and veterans.

Senior Aircraftwoman Shona Brownlee said:

I'm incredibly honoured and humbled to have been named in the New Year Honours list. To say the phone call came as a bit of a shock would be a massive understatement but it is an incredible way to end what has been an amazing year and to kick off what is already looking to be a very exciting 2022.

Also included in the list is Lieutenant Colonel Keith Spiers, awarded an OBE as a Staff Officer in the Army. Keith has pioneered effective ways for the Army to engage with tens of thousands of young people, particularly girls and those within black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, as well as primary school children. This includes understanding how the Army's transferable skills can be used to complement teaching and design fun enrichment activities that support the curriculum, while busting any negative myths.

Keith's work has been instrumental in enabling young people to better understand the Army and its values.

Lieutenant Colonel Keith Spiers said:

I am deeply honoured to have been awarded the OBE and feel absolutely overwhelmed. This award reflects the work of the whole team, a team that fully supports the concept and is a privilege to lead.

We have worked with young people for the past four years, challenging their perceptions of the Army while delivering fun and challenging activities, which hopefully inspires them and gives them the confidence to reach their career aspirations and goals, whatever they may be.

To be honoured in this way leaves me without words.

Medical assistant Petty Officer Jessica Metcalfe from the Royal Navy is also made an MBE for stepping in to serve at sea on three occasions in support of fellow medics who were supporting the domestic COVID-19 efforts ashore. Whilst at sea during a pandemic, Jessica supported personnel through arranging mental health training and advice if they were struggling and ensured morale on board was kept high.

Petty Officer Jessica Metcalfe said:

I was absolutely gobsmacked when I got told. I never saw it coming. It was such a heart-warming feeling to be recognised.

What you think is just doing your job, for someone else to think it's more than that – I have not really got to grips with that thought.

Being away is very difficult and can be very challenging,

especially during COVID people were struggling. It was very important to ensure the crew had the support they needed.

Other serving personnel have been recognised for a broad range of efforts including supporting MACA requests for Storm Dennis in Northern England, Op TORAL and drawdown efforts in Afghanistan, and vital support in the fight against COVID-19.

The full military division of the New Year Honours list will be published on GOV.UK at 2230 hours.