

News story: Fighter jets join forces with British aircraft carrier to make history

Royal Navy Commander Nathan Gray and RAF Squadron Leader Andy Edgell were the first pilots to land their stealth F-35 Lightning fighter jets on board the carrier, demonstrating the formidable force HMS Queen Elizabeth and her fleet of jets will be.

The first landings and take-offs from HMS Queen Elizabeth are the culmination of a national endeavour lasting more than a decade to bring an aircraft carrier back to the UK's arsenal. Able to embark up to 36 of the supersonic jets, the carrier provides the Royal Navy with a capability possessed by few others.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The largest warship in British history is joining forces with the most advanced fighter jets on the planet. This marks a rebirth of our power to strike decisively from the seas anywhere in the world.

The historic first landing on the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth is a monumental moment in our country's proud military history. It is also a statement of Britain's determination to promote peace and prevent war.

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The landings mark the start of more than 500 take-offs and touch-downs set to take place from the mammoth warship during the next 11-weeks, with the jets being put through their paces in a range of weather conditions.

The return of 'Carrier Strike' to the UK comes eight years after a fighter jet last landed on a British carrier.

Commanding Officer, Capt Jerry Kyd, who was also the captain of HMS Ark Royal when the last Harrier took off from a carrier, said:

I am quite emotional to be here in HMS Queen Elizabeth seeing the return of fixed wing aviation, having been the captain of the aircraft carrier which launched the last Harrier at sea nearly eight years ago.

The regeneration of big deck carriers able to operate globally, as we are proving here on this deployment, is a major step forward for the United Kingdom's defence and our ability to match the

increasing pace of our adversaries. The first touch-downs of these impressive stealth jets shows how the United Kingdom will continue to be world leaders at sea for generations to come.

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Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, Cdre Andrew Betton added:

The Queen Elizabeth Class carriers have been specifically designed and built to operate the F-35 Lightning, offering an immensely flexible and potent combination to deliver military effect around the world. Conducting these trials is a critical and exciting step on this journey and I applaud the many thousands of civilian and military personnel who have played a part in bringing the strategic ambition to reality.

While the HMS Queen Elizabeth Class carriers will be able to project British military power across the globe for the next half-century, they can also provide humanitarian relief, deepen defence relationships with key allies and provide critical support to our forces as they are deployed across the world.

In recent operations, US aircraft carriers like the USS George HW Bush and USS Harry S. Truman have played a central role in the Gulf and the Mediterranean, conducting strikes against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

This week's historic flight trials come more than 100 years after the UK's HMS Argus became the world's first carrier capable of safely launching and recovering naval aircraft.

The ship will go on to continue her programme off the US east coast. The flight trials are expected to take around 11 weeks, during which time the ship is also expected to call into New York.

HMS Queen Elizabeth remains set to be deployed on global operations from 2021. Britain now has sixteen of a planned 138 F-35 Lightning jets as part of its world-leading fleet of military aircraft.

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[News story: Cadet Forces increase social mobility and help young people's self-belief, new report finds](#)

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has welcomed an independent report

highlighting the positive effects of Cadet Forces as dozens of new units across the UK are approved.

The University of Northampton's independent report, published today, finds that joining the cadets offers a range of benefits to individuals and the wider community. Following research across the entire cadet organisation, the report outlines the huge positive impact that Cadet Forces have on social inclusion, mobility and the mental wellbeing of young people.

Speaking today at Aston University Engineering Academy, a state school with an RAF Cadet Force, the Defence Secretary also announced the approval of 30 new cadet units in schools across the UK. Part of the Cadet Expansion Programme, these latest approvals bring the total of units up to 472, benefiting approximately 43,000 cadets.

Speaking at the academy, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Being a cadet offers students unrivalled opportunities to develop new skills, enjoy unforgettable life experiences, and be inspired by our world class Armed Forces.

This report confirms that joining the cadets gives people from all communities the confidence to succeed in life and I'm pleased these latest approvals for new units will give even more young people the opportunity to join the cadets.

The report concludes that being a member of the Cadet Forces:

- increased an individual's belief in their ability to complete specific tasks;
- improved their motivation;
- improved school attendance and led to better behaviour and attitudes; and
- may lead to greater academic success which can contribute to increasing social mobility.

Many respondents commented on how being a member of a Cadet Force had improved their confidence, teamwork skills and homework completion. The report also identified links with resilience, leadership, teamwork, attendance, behaviour and communication skills.

Professor Simon Denny, Executive Dean: Research, Impact and Enterprise, The University of Northampton said:

The evidence so far has been overwhelmingly positive and demonstrates that the Cadet Forces make a huge difference to improve school attendance, develop confidence and help young people become more successful.

The new cadet units, established under Cadet Expansion Programme, are backed by £50 million funding from LIBOR funds, which pays for set up costs, cadets uniforms, equipment and training.

The schools that will be setting up new cadet units are:

- Alton School – Hampshire
- Armadale Academy – West Lothian
- Arthur Mellows Village College – East Anglia
- Birkenhead High School Academy – Merseyside
- Blessed John Henry Newman Roman Catholic College – Greater Manchester
- Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College – Somerset
- Camborne Science and International Academy – Cornwall
- Cardiff and Vale College – Cardiff
- Chatham & Clarendon Grammar School – Kent
- Chatham Grammar School for Girls – Kent
- Dame Elizabeth Cadbury School – West Midlands
- East Norfolk Sixth Form College – East Anglia
- Gateacre School – Merseyside
- Harris Academy Chafford Hundred – Essex
- Ixworth Free School – East Anglia
- John Lyon School – Harrow
- La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School – London
- Liverpool Life Sciences UTC – Merseyside
- Llandarcy Academy of Sport – Glamorgan
- Millfield School – Somerset
- Reading UTC – Berkshire
- Stamford Welland Academy – East Midlands
- Streatham and Clapham High School – London
- The Boswells School – Essex
- The De La Salle Academy – Merseyside
- The Stockwood Park Academy – Bedfordshire
- Thistley Hough Academy – West Midlands
- Torquay Academy – Devon
- Walkden High School – Manchester
- Wellacre Technology Academy – Lancashire

[Press release: Northern Powerhouse](#)

attracts record visitor numbers

- Tourists flock to Northern counties to take in the sights and enjoy local attractions
- Overnight stays across the Northern Powerhouse rise by around 5%, while spending increases too
- North East region sees the highest increase in visitors with a 17% increase in the number of trips and a 14% increase in the number of overnight stays

All Northern Powerhouse regions have seen a jump in overnight stays according to new figures out today (28 September 2018).

Overall visitor numbers across the whole region have increased by around 5% in a year. The highest gains in number of trips however, has been witnessed by the North East with over 200,000 more visitors to the area than the year before – a remarkable 17% increase.

According to Visit England, in the 6 months to June 2018 the number of overnight stays in the Northern Powerhouse increased by 4.3% to 33.6 million compared to the same period last year.

People have spent more too – a total of £2.3 billion in fact, an increase on last year's figures.

The UK has enjoyed one of the hottest summers on record, while data recently published by Visit England shows that 8 out of the 10 most visited cities and towns in England were in the Northern Powerhouse.

Northern Powerhouse Minister, Jake Berry MP, said:

As a proud Northerner, I'm delighted to see that thousands more people are flocking to the North to share in the culture, natural beauty and entertainment attractions.

And it's quite easy to see why. There's lots going on for families thanks to investment in landmark seaside attractions like the Spanish City in Whitley Bay and the Blackpool Illuminations in Lancashire, supported by our Coastal Communities Fund.

As people visit the Northern Powerhouse they're spending billions of pounds too, which means more money for smaller businesses and this protects jobs. I'd encourage more people to visit the North and see for themselves why it's such a great place to enjoy and do business.

Press release: UK closing statement at 39th UN Human Rights Council

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon gave the following statement at the 39th session of the UN Human Rights Council on 28 September 2018:

The UN Human Rights Council concluded its 39th session today with important resolutions on Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Burma and a number of other pressing issues.

As I said during my [speech](#) at the Council on 17 September, human rights remain under threat around the world. The United Kingdom remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rules based international system, of which the Human Rights Council is such an important part. It is essential that we work together with other UN member states to ensure accountability for those who violate the rights of their citizens.

While visiting the Council I was delighted to meet High Commissioner Bachelet during her inaugural session. Her extraordinary wealth of knowledge as well as her professional and personal experience will be invaluable in her role – I wish her well.

Burma

I welcome the Council's establishment of a mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of the human rights atrocities carried out, primarily by the military, in Burma. This resolution, tabled jointly by the OIC and the EU, shows that the international community as a whole is united in its focus on Burma. The mechanism is an important stepping stone on the road to accountability and justice; Burma now needs to show it will cooperate with this mechanism. Burma's government and military must also show that its Commission of Inquiry will be an impartial, independent and credible process that leads to perpetrators of human rights violations being held to account.

Syria

Turning to Syria, the Council must continue to shine a light on the dire situation there and I welcome the resolution adopted by the Council. The Commission of Inquiry has exposed the ongoing violations of international law, including the regime's persistent use of chemical weapons, torture and forced displacement. Further steps to protect civilians are urgently needed, and so the agreement between Russia and Turkey to avoid a military offensive in Idlib is encouraging.

Yemen

I am pleased that the mandate of the Yemen Group of Eminent Experts has been renewed, though disappointed that a single consensus resolution was not possible. Given the gravity of the situation in Yemen it is important to give the Group of Eminent Experts more time to fully examine the conflict and to ensure that their conclusions accurately reflect the conduct of all parties in future reporting. It is clear that many incidents and alleged violations, committed by all parties, have not yet been fully documented, particularly those by Houthis in Hodeidah and the rest of Northern Yemen.

Venezuela

Elsewhere, I welcome the Lima Group's resolution on Venezuela which reflects the deep international concern at the sharply deteriorating social and economic conditions affecting the Venezuelan people.

Sudan, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Somalia and DRC

I am pleased that the Council renewed the Mandate of the Independent Expert on Sudan and note the Government of Sudan's commitment to open a fully mandated OHCHR office. I also welcome the renewal of mandates of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and the Independent Expert for Central Africa Republic, as well as the Council's continued focus on the human rights situations in Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo.

I welcome the work of the Office of the High Commissioner to bring attention to the issue of the safety of journalists, and the strong message sent by the resolution adopted by the Council. States which stifle free speech and prevent or restrict media freedom do not thrive; politically, socially or economically. I condemn the increasing pattern of threats and intimidation of journalists, media workers and all those who want to freely express their views.

The work of the Human Rights Council is vital in bringing states together to protect and promote universal human rights around the world.

The UK Government plays, and will continue to play, an active role at the Council and will continue to support its efforts to hold to account those who perpetrate violations and abuses of human rights.

Further information

[Press release: UK closing statement at](#)

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Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on Twitter [@tariqahmadbt](#)
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Media enquiries

For journalists

Email

newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

Newsdesk

020 7008 3100