

News story: UK Forces return home after successful NATO exercise

UK personnel from the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force will return as victors from Trident Juncture, the largest NATO exercise since the cold war, having successfully defeated an acting enemy force of Norwegian, German and Swedish forces.

The UK-led multinational brigade made up of mechanised infantry from the Royal Irish Regiment and Royal Lancashire Regiment, Danish tank units and Polish armoured vehicles completed the week-long final exercise in freezing conditions in Norway. The multinational brigade successfully completed a river crossing on the final day of the live exercise, demonstrating the ability of NATO allies to live, work, and operate effectively together.

Foxhounds from the 1st Battalion Royal Irish prepare to leave in the snowy conditions. Crown copyright.

The brigade conducted defensive operations in a harsh and austere environment in order to disrupt a peer opposition force's advance, before going on the offensive to regain control of lost land. The live exercise phase enabled troops to learn lessons about how to operate when faced with a highly capable and well-equipped enemy.

With Royal Navy ships and RAF aircraft also contributing to the large-scale exercise from the skies and the seas, the exercise demonstrated both the UK's leading role in the alliance and the ability of its armed forces to deploy at scale and integrate with other nations at speed.

HMS Enterprise in the Norwegian Fjords taking part in NATO's Exercise Trident Juncture 2018, the largest exercise of its size for decades. Crown copyright.

With around 50,000 participants from 31 nations, 250 aircraft, 65 ships and around 10,000 used during NATO Trident Juncture 2018, the alliance successfully demonstrated its ability to mount a collective defence response in an Article 5 scenario – when an attack on one is an attack on all.

News story: Chief Inspector publishes his report on Border Force operations at south coast seaports

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of Border Force

immigration and customs operations at the seaports of Dover, Newhaven, Portsmouth, Southampton, Poole and Plymouth, and looked at its coverage of smaller ports, harbours and marinas along the south coast between Dover and Falmouth. Evidence gathering took place between January and April, and my report was sent to the Home Secretary on 20 June 2018. Despite the delay, I have no reason to think that my findings and recommendations are not still valid.

The focus was on Border Force's strategy, capabilities, and understanding of and overall response to threats to the border, including its collection and use of intelligence and its collaborations with others, and on what changes or improvements had been made since my inspections of General Maritime (GM) in 2016 and east coast seaports in 2017.

I looked again for evidence of displacement of clandestine arrivals from Dover to other ports following the closure of migrant camps and improved security in northern France. The numbers discovered at Portsmouth and Poole had indeed increased, suggesting that irregular migrants looking to enter the UK were now targeting the ferry ports in Normandy and Spain. Meanwhile, efforts by European authorities, encouraged and supported by Border Force, appeared to have reduced the overall numbers successfully boarding UK-bound ferries.

The east coast inspection contrasted the broadly efficient and effective management of fixed immigration control points and freight arrivals at the major seaports with the poor coverage of smaller ports, harbours and marinas. The south coast inspection again showed the scale of Border Force's task. It was clear that it had put considerable effort into improving its coverage, through coastal patrols and more field intelligence work, and with some success.

But, this was a "work in progress", with much more to be done, particularly in freeing up officers to attend GM arrivals, and in effectively harnessing the "eyes and ears" of harbour masters, marina managers, the maritime and pleasure boating communities, and the general public to report unusual and suspicious activities along the south coast.

I made 7 recommendations for improvement, covering resourcing, equipment, the response to threats, clandestine arrivals, customers and stakeholders, GM, and the tracking of recommendations. Most have been "Partially accepted", although the accompanying responses, including to the "Accepted" recommendations, are heavily caveated.

I recognise that Border Force is dealing with many challenges, not just along the south coast, but nationally, and that its job is not made any easier by having to prepare for the UK's exit from the EU without clarity as yet about what exactly this will involve. However, it is difficult to escape the impression that Border Force believes it knows best and will make changes only on its own terms and at its own pace.

During 2019-20, I had planned to complete my series of seaport and coastline inspections with an inspection of the west coast. The responses to the south

coast seaports inspection, and the timescales quoted, suggest that I may need to rethink this.

[News story: Army start biggest military robot exercise in British history, Defence Secretary announces](#)

The game-changing Autonomous Warrior experiment will last four weeks and test a range of prototype unmanned aerial and autonomous ground vehicles which aim to reduce the danger to troops during combat. The exercise will finish with a battlegroup experiment, where the best ideas and products will be tested in the toughest of simulated operational environments.

One of the key areas it is set to test is the autonomous last mile resupply. The 'last mile', which represents the extremely dangerous final approach to the combat zone, is crucial to ensuring soldiers have the food, fuel and ammunition to keep them alive.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our troops now have the chance to test out a huge range of robotic kit in what will be the biggest exercise of its kind in our history. We're always working with the brightest minds in Britain and across the world to see how they can support our military of the future, but now the frontrunners have the chance to prove what they can really do on a battlefield. This equipment could revolutionise our Armed Forces, keeping them safe and giving them the edge in an increasingly unstable world.

Army start biggest military robot exercise in British history, Defence Secretary announces. Crown copyright.

The exercise aims to test technologies in surveillance, long-range and precision targeting, enhanced mobility and the re-supply of forces, urban warfare and enhanced situational awareness.

The Royal Tank Regiment Battle Group from 1 Armoured Infantry Brigade are providing the bulk of exercising troops and taking responsibility of command and control. Overall there will be over 200 multi-national, cross-service personnel. The US Army, Royal Marines, RAF and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) will join industry partners and academia in working alongside them, experimenting with over 70 products and systems.

Autonomous Warrior will play an integral role within the £800 million Defence Innovation Fund which supports ground-breaking ideas aimed at transforming both defence and British industry.

The land-based exercise follows on from the hugely successful 'Unmanned Warrior' which the Royal Navy demonstrated autonomous systems diving, swimming and flying together to engage in surveillance, intelligence-gathering and mine countermeasures.

Press release: Explosive start for triple decker roundabout

Highways experts go back to the classroom.

Press release: Explosive start for triple decker roundabout

Highways experts aiming to transform journeys on a vital part of the road network in North Tyneside had to go back to the classroom and delve into their history books as they started work on the multi-million pound scheme, it was revealed today.

Work on the £75m scheme to improve the A19 Coast Road roundabout is just months away from completion but starting work on site was far from simple as engineers had to check out the region's war history.

As the region joins the nation in preparing to mark Armistice Day, Highways England has explained the meticulous work which had to be carried out before the project got off the ground.

Highways England's project manager Julie Alexander said:

Safety is our number one priority and so before we start any project we have to carry out various vital types of work to ensure the ultimate improvement will be safe for everyone using it.

Our work on the A19 involved detailed investigation into the bomb activity on the site. This showed that 2 high explosive bombs fell in the middle of the site during a raid on 30 April 1942 when six

were dropped by a single aircraft.

Thankfully no unexploded bombs remained on site so we could proceed. Armistice Day is a chance for us to remember the members of the armed forces who died in the line of duty and the impact it had on the people involved.

Over 70 years ago, long before the A19 Coast Road roundabout was built, the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force, started a sustained aerial attack on British cities targeting docks, industrial premises, power stations and airfields.

Strategic bombing during World War II saw the extensive use of both high explosive and incendiary bombs, although anti-personnel bombs and parachute mines were also used.

Tyneside in the North East was subjected to observation flights by the Luftwaffe in 1939 as they built up evidence of potential targets.

During WWII there were 250 air raid alerts in the region, with the first bombs falling in July 1940. The heaviest raids took place in 1941 and 1942.

In Tynemouth where Highways England is building the North East's first triple decker roundabout there were 31 air raids which destroyed 447 houses with a further 1,659 properties damaged.

Records show that 2 high explosive bombs fell on the central part of the A19 Coast Road site but both are recorded as having exploded.

An example of what a typical unexploded bomb would have looked like

The A19 Coast Road scheme will see an extra layer added to the junction and back in August 80,000 cubic metres of soil was finally removed, enough to fill 32 Olympic sized swimming pools.

There are just four months left on the £75m scheme with improvements to the 1,175 metres of cycleway and an extra 247 metres will be created, gantries to be installed and the roundabout completely resurfaced left to complete.

The new road which will reduce congestion, improve journey time reliability for the 35,400 vehicles expected to use it on average a day and expected to improve safety and reduce collisions.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.