

News story: UK standing by for Storm Isaac in the Caribbean

As the storm makes its way towards the Caribbean Windward islands, an Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team has been deployed to work with the Governors and supporting agencies on the islands. A further 87 engineers, medics, maritime experts and other specialists have joined the regular crew of RFA Mounts Bay, which is the mobile hub of the British relief effort. Approximately 1,000 personnel are deployed or being held at high-readiness for if further storms head towards the region.

Homes were destroyed and infrastructure was decimated when Hurricane Irma and Maria, two of the most powerful hurricanes for decades, hit the region back-to-back in September 2017.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I want to assure everyone in our Overseas Territories that our Armed Forces have been pre-positioned in the region and are absolutely prepared to help. We will be there to support during this hurricane season while still helping those whose lives were devastated by Irma and Maria to rebuild their lives and homes.

As well as being able to carry vital aid and equipment, RFA Mounts Bay will use the Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter on board to provide aerial support. There is also a medical facility on board, with 10 patient beds.

The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) troop, consisting of Royal Engineers from the British Army and Royal Marines, have been training with their French counterparts in Martinique to ensure they are fully prepared. This training is part of a six-month deployment to the region for hurricane season, while RFA Mounts Bay also carried out a significant HADR exercise in July.

Commanding Officer of RFA Mounts Bay, Captain Peter Selby RFA said:

As proved during our Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief exercise in July, RFA Mounts Bay is prepared and ready to assist the Government and people of Montserrat. We are currently on route and undertaking the final stages of preparation for our response.

As well as preparing for this year, RFA Mounts Bay was in the region when Irma struck last year and will remain there until 2020 to provide support to the islands.

Captain Jonathan Cooke of 24 Commando Royal Engineers (24 Cdo RE) OC HADR

Troop said:

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Troop onboard RFA Mounts Bay is ready to assist residents on Montserrat. We have previously deployed to the island both in July and on Operation RUMAN last year and have gained a good understanding of the current status of the island and infrastructure in order to best support the island if required.

Montserrat Governor Andrew Pearce OBE said:

We are delighted to welcome this small team from the Armed Forces as we make our final preparations for the approaching storm. I am also particularly reassured that if we need her, RFA Mounts Bay is ready to respond.

[Press release: HS2 to support 15,000 jobs by 2020](#)

- Over 7,000 roles already supported by the project
- Over 2,000 business have already won work with HS2
- Over 100 apprentices already working on the project, with 2,000 expected over its lifetime
- 30,000 jobs supported by HS2 at peak construction

A whole generation of engineers, designers, architects and geologists will benefit from the construction of the new high speed railway as the project gears up to support 30,000 jobs and create opportunities for British businesses to upskill their workforce.

Today HS2 Ltd sets out its programme of skills, employment and education interventions that will ensure the UK not only has the skills to deliver the HS2 project, but to become a worldwide leader in high speed rail.

Over 7,000 roles are already supported by the project. With construction starting next year, many more jobs around the country will help build a skills base to export around the world.

Mark Thurston, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd, said:

Our [skills strategy](#), launched today, shows how we will create a sustainable pipeline of jobs and skills for companies across the

whole country, which boost regional economies and help Britain compete internationally.

Our programme will tackle the skills challenges faced by the wider transport infrastructure sector, and ensure the UK has the best skills to deliver HS2 as well as major infrastructure projects in the future.

HS2 Minister, Nusrat Ghani MP, said:

HS2 will provide the backbone of our future rail network and is already driving jobs and economic growth across the country. HS2 already supports over 7,000 jobs, forecast to reach around 15,000 by 2020, and is building the talented workforce of the future that this transformative project needs.

The ambitious programme of skills, employment and education set out today will see the economic benefits of HS2 fully realised across the UK, boosting productivity and sharing prosperity across the country.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister, Anne Milton, said:

Apprenticeships offer incredible opportunities for young people. Everyone studying an apprenticeship with HS2 will be able to look back and say they played a role creating our country's future. Not only that, the apprentices are also learning the skills that future employers are looking for, that's what apprenticeships are all about.

HS2 is creating 2,000 apprenticeships and is a fantastic example of a national project that is providing opportunities for everyone, whatever their background and wherever they come from. I look forward to meeting some of the apprentices that have been a part of making it happen.

New initiatives will be introduced over the next 12 months to stimulate interest in STEM subjects and encourage more young people into transport infrastructure related careers. Opportunities will be opened up through a new Job Brokerage Service to help people access the jobs created by the HS2 supply chain, and a new Secondary Education Engagement Programme will inspire the next generation to enter transport infrastructure careers.

Through HS2 contracts, there are already hundreds of businesses creating opportunities for their workforce. Explore Manufacturing, part of the Laing O'Rourke group, has won a contract with LM joint venture to supply major bridges as part of the early works on Phase One of the project.

The modular components will be manufactured at Explore Industrial Park in Workshop, North Nottinghamshire, and then brought to site in the West Midlands for assembly. The company recruits a minimum of 4 apprentices each year and when the HS2 related work commences in the factory it will create 35 new jobs.

Alan Clucas, Director of Explore Manufacturing, said:

We are proud to be working on the biggest rail infrastructure programmes in the country. For Explore Manufacturing it means a significant contribution in digital design and high quality off site manufacturing, which shortens time needed on site, and has big benefits in safety, efficiency and programme costs.

Richard Kirkham, LM Project Director, said:

By working on the HS2 project, and linking to the National College for High Speed Rail with 4 apprenticeships, as well as other schools and college liaison across the region, we're giving local people the opportunity to gain world class skills and knowledge, create a sustainable pipeline of jobs, and be in a great position to win future work with large-scale infrastructure projects.

Press release: Jail time to double for assaulting an emergency worker

- maximum sentence for assault against them to double from 6 to 12 months in prison
- courts must also consider the strongest penalties for other offences against emergency workers

Individuals who assault or attack emergency workers face longer jail terms as a new law backed by government receives Royal Assent today..

A new offence will double the maximum sentence from 6 to 12 months in prison for assaulting an emergency worker. This covers police, prison officers, custody officers, fire service personnel, search and rescue services and paramedics.

The new law will also mean that judges must consider tougher sentences for a range of other offences – including GBH and sexual assault – if the victim is an emergency worker.

Ministers have acted to recognise the debt of gratitude the public feels towards our emergency services, and for the courage, commitment and dedication they show every day in carrying out their duties.

Justice Minister Rory Stewart said:

Assaulting prison officers or any emergency worker is not just an isolated attack – it represents violence against the public as a whole.

Every day these public servants do extraordinary work on our behalf, and they must be able to do it without the fear of being assaulted.

Our message is clear – we will protect our emergency services and violence towards them will not be tolerated.

I'd like to thank Chris Bryant MP, and other colleagues from across the House for their tireless work introducing this important law.

Recent years have seen an increase in assaults on emergency workers, with 26,000 assaults on police officers in the past year and over 17,000 on NHS staff. Assaults on prison officers rose by 70% in the 3 years to 2017, with an 18% increase experienced by firefighters in the past 2 years too.

There is already a specific offence for assaulting a police officer, but for the first time similar protection will be extended to anyone carrying out the work of an emergency service. The law also provides extra protection to unpaid volunteers who support the delivery of emergency services.

The government worked closely with Chris Bryant MP, who introduced the Bill, to draft the legislation and ensure its successful passage through Parliament. Following its Royal Assent today, the measures will come into force in November.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

Being attacked should never be part of the job for our courageous emergency services workers, who put themselves in harm's way to protect us.

This law will ensure judges can properly punish those despicable individuals who think it's acceptable to assault these hard-working men and women.

Unfortunately I hear about cowardly attacks on police officers and firefighters all too often – they serve as a constant reminder of the threats that these public servants have to face, and this government will always stand with our emergency services.

Chris Bryant MP, who laid the Private Members Bill, said:

The growing tide of attacks on emergency workers – including ambulance workers, NHS staff, fire officers, prison officers and police – is a national scandal. All too often attackers get away with little more than a slap on the wrist.

I hope this new law will help put a stop to that attitude. An attack on an emergency worker is an attack on all of us and attackers should face the full force of the law. Now it is for the prosecuting authorities and the courts to play their part in putting a stop to the violence, so that emergency workers can get on doing their job in peace.

Kim Sunley, National Officer at the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), said:

Physical assaults remain a fact of life for many healthcare workers, from A&E to community services. This bill is the first step towards changing that for good. From now on, anyone who wilfully assaults a healthcare worker will feel the full force of the law and can expect a tougher sentence if found guilty.

The RCN has campaigned tirelessly for this law. Our negotiations have ensured it covers as many healthcare workers as possible, including community and district nurses, and alongside other emergency workers' representatives we successfully expanded the scope of the bill to include sexual assault.

Notes to editors

- The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Bill will create a new offence of assault against an emergency worker in the exercise of their functions with a penalty that is increased from 6 months to 12 months.
- The Bill also creates a statutory aggravating factor. This means that when a person is convicted of a range of offences including sexual assault, ABH, GBH and manslaughter, the judge must consider the fact that the offence was committed against an emergency worker as an aggravating factor meriting an increase in the sentence within the maximum allowed for the particular offence.
- The Bill will cover emergency workers, this includes police, prison officers, custody officers, fire service personnel, search and rescue services and certain healthcare workers including ambulance personnel.
- Whereas attacking an emergency worker could previously see a charge of common assault and maximum sentence of 6 months in jail, this will be increased to 12 months.
- Attacking a person serving the public is already an aggravating factor in sentencing guidelines but this Bill will put that position on a statutory basis for emergency workers.
- The Justice Secretary is also bringing through a range of measures to

protect prison officers, including rolling out body worn cameras, 'police-style' handcuffs and restraints, and trialling PAVA incapacitant spray.

Press release: UK first: Parents who lose a child entitled to bereavement leave

- a new workplace right to leave for bereaved parents has been given the royal stamp of approval
- employed parents who lose a child under 18 will receive 2 weeks' leave under the Act, which is expected to come into force in 2020

A new workplace right to paid leave for bereaved parents has been officially enshrined in law today (Thursday 13 September) as the Parental Leave and Pay Bill achieves Royal Assent.

The first law of its kind in the UK will support those affected by the tragedy of childhood mortality and is expected to come into force in 2020.

The new Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Act will give all employed parents a day-one right to 2 weeks' leave if they lose a child under the age of 18, or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy. Employed parents will also be able to claim pay for this period, subject to meeting eligibility criteria.

This new law honours the manifesto commitment to introduce a new entitlement to parental bereavement leave.

Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst, said:

This law makes Parental Bereavement Leave a legal right for the first time in the UK's history.

Losing a child is an unimaginable trauma. I am delighted we have reached this important milestone which so many have campaigned for.

I'd like to thank all the people who have helped make this law a reality, including the brave parent campaigners who have spoken out about their own experiences.

Lucy Herd from Jack's Rainbow said:

When I started the campaign 8 years ago after the death of my son Jack, I always hoped that a change would happen in his memory.

Knowing that 8 years of campaigning has helped create legislation to ensure bereaved parents are protected in the future is such a wonderful feeling and I am so grateful to all those involved.

The government-backed bill was introduced to parliament in July 2017 as a private member's bill by Kevin Hollinrake, MP for Thirsk and Malton.

Kevin Hollinrake MP, Bill sponsor, said:

Losing a child is the most dreadful and unimaginable experience that any parent could suffer and it is right that grieving parents will now be given time to start to come to terms with their loss.

I am grateful to Will Quince MP, who first brought this issue to the fore in a 'Ten-Minute Rule Motion' on statutory entitlement during the previous parliamentary session. I am also grateful to Lord Knight and fellow MPs, on both sides of the House, some of whom have shared their own personal stories of losing a beloved child, who have assisted in bringing forward this legislation so quickly.

Will Quince MP said:

There can be few worse life experiences than the loss of a child and while most employers treat their staff with dignity and compassion when this tragedy occurs, all too often we have heard stories of grieving parents being forced back to work too early.

I am delighted that parents in this awful situation will now have the protection of paid leave enshrined in law, and we should be very proud that the UK now has one of the best worker's rights in this area in the world.

Francine Bates, Chief Executive of The Lullaby Trust said:

At The Lullaby Trust we know how devastating the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or a child is for parents.

This new law is a big step forward in recognising the needs of bereaved families in our society and will help to ensure that parents are not unduly pressurised to return to work immediately following the death of their child.

Steven Wibberley, Chief Executive of Cruse Bereavement Care said:

We are delighted that this bill has been approved as it will make a huge difference to bereaved parents whose lives have been shattered by the death of a child.

It is important that parents are given time to grieve in the aftermath of a child's death and this new law recognises this.

[Speech: UK endorses Declaration of Shared Commitments as part of Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping Initiative](#)

Madam President, thank you for holding this important debate today and thank you to the Under-Secretary-General and Ms Blakemore for the briefing.

I think there's been huge amounts of progress on the peacekeeping agenda in the last ten years and there have been some important successes. At the same time, Sarah Blakemore's testimony reminds us that there is a long way to go. But I think it would be right to start by joining my Swedish colleague in commending the 100,000 UN uniformed peacekeepers and the 14,000 civilian peacekeepers and their commitment to delivering international peace and security. The vast majority of these men and women are courageous and they operate in incredibly challenging conditions. As the Undersecretary-General mentioned, 138 lost their lives last year, and we pay tribute to their sacrifice and we thank their families for allowing them to do the very difficult jobs that they do.

We the Council are responsible for their deployment. We need to do our utmost to improve the safety and security of all peacekeepers and make sure that peacekeeping is as effective and efficient as possible. We need to get the best possible impact from the \$7 billion dollars we spend annually on UN peacekeeping. But I also want to say that we need to have multi-dimensional peacekeeping. I don't agree that missions should not look at human rights and humanitarian – these are conflict drivers. They are root causes. They need to be fixed and we cannot turn the clock back on that so we need military, political and development solutions.

The Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping Initiative provides the basis for making a reality of getting more impact for our money. We're proud to have endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN peacekeeping and we encourage other member states to join.

I'd like to highlight, if I may, four particular areas where I think we

should concentrate our efforts to have peacekeeping be more effective.

Firstly, getting it right from the start which is about planning. The Council has an important role to play in improving performance. That starts with the mandates we authorize; these need to be realistic, achievable and developed on the basis of frank advice from the Secretariat but also robust debate by the Council. In turn, we look to the Secretariat to use our peacekeeping resources effectively and to match capabilities to requirements. We often talk about the UN breaking down silos. I would just recall that in Darfur, there are some 27 different UN entities on the ground so this requires coordination, it requires planning, it requires a comparative advantage approach, and it requires a UN-wide approach.

Secondly, making sure it works. A number of speakers this morning have drawn attention to the critical importance of performance. Peacekeepers on the ground need to be equipped, capable and willing to do the job we ask of them. This means we need to strengthen training both before deployment and as troops are in the field. We need a light coordination mechanism on training to be made operational as quickly as possible and this mechanism needs to enable better matching up of those that can provide capacity building and equipment and those that need support.

As the Under-Secretary-General mentioned we need to do more than pay lip service to the role of women. We should make this a priority. Madam President, at the London Defence Ministerial, some 63 countries, including many in this room, called for a doubling of the number of women in military and police contingents by 2020. I hope we can all play a part in making this a reality. For the UK's part, we have launched WPS Chiefs of Defence Staff Network and we hope that this will promote ways to integrate gender perspectives into military planning and operations and hence improve numbers.

Thirdly is the feedback loop, checking that we know what works and continuous improvement. This means Madam President, a robust and objective evaluation of mission performance. As you said, processes must be transparent and we need better accountability. Between us, we have huge amounts of knowledge to draw on and I hope the Secretariat will be able to speed up the development of a comprehensive performance policy.

Fourthly, when we get it wrong. The failure to be transparent to maintain a culture of accountability can lead to shocking abuses, as Ms. Blakemore was able to outline today. We strongly support the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy and we look to its implementation. United Kingdom has provided about \$3 million to support the Secretary-General's efforts and our voluntary funding has improved system-wide coordination, enabled robust vetting and mandatory pre-deployment training. It's also important that we have good communications so that we can focus on providing redress to victims.

In conclusion Madam President, we need to be confident that our peacekeeping missions are fulfilling their mandates to protect civilians and we must be equally confident that they are fulfilling their duty to protect our own mission personnel. So we need to fulfil our own duty to ensure that these

missions are supported and given the necessary resources so they can do their jobs. Thank you very much.