News story: Multi-million-pound competition to destroy battlefield chemical weapons launched by UK and US

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), part of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and UK Ministry of Defence, has launched the ‘Don’t Blow It!’ competition, the first joint UK-US industry competition run by DASA and funded by the MOD and US Department of Defense.

Competitors have been asked to identify innovative concepts or adapt current technologies to access, disable and destroy chemical and biological devices. This includes chemical and biological munitions, improvised explosive devices containing lethal agents or containers of bulk quantities of chemical or biological agents discovered on the battlefield or in other austere and resource-limited environments.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

> Horrific incidents stretching from Salisbury to Syria this year have shown us that chemical weapons are sadly still very much a reality – but a reality that we are determined to deal with. Destroying these deadly weapons is a complicated process and not doing it properly could mean devastating collateral damage. These are challenges that we share with our allies like the US. Competitions like this help us to tackle them head on with some of the best and brightest minds across both our countries.

Although it is over 100 years since the first large-scale use of chemical weapons, the threat from both chemical and biological weapons persists. This has been demonstrated by the recent rise in the use of such deadly weapons on the battlefield and in targeted attacks.

Much progress has been made to destroy state-declared global stockpiles of chemical weapons through very successful large scale destruction programmes, utilising techniques such as incineration, explosive destruction or neutralisation. However, to meet emerging and future challenges, such as the destruction of smaller caches produced by terrorists in resource-limited or hostile environments such as Iraq or Syria, there needs to be a focus on developing more robust elimination capabilities that are less labour intensive.

The competition has an initial £500,000 to fund multiple proof-of-concept proposals at low Technology Readiness Levels. Based on the outcome of the initial funding phase, an additional £1.5 million of funding could be released.

‘Don’t Blow It!’ will see innovative concepts developed to access, disable and destroy chemical and biological devices. Crown copyright.

The competition is seeking innovative ideas from non-traditional supply sectors and is looking for ‘outside-the-box’ proposals that will:

- Enable rapid and flexible destruction
- Reduce logistical support requirements
- Maximise ease of operation and transportability
- Address a greater breadth of threats

MOD Chief Scientific Advisor, Dr Simon Cholerton said:

> As the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the Novichok attack in Salisbury demonstrate, the risk from chemical weapons still remains and the issue of safely eliminating them from an austere tactical environment remains an enduring technical challenge. I am delighted therefore that we are working with our closest ally to launch a new industry competition to help us develop effective and safe elimination capabilities. Our collaboration is the first time we have launched a truly joint UK-US competition through the UK Ministry of Defence’s Defence and Security Accelerator, which is charged with enabling us to innovate by rapidly transforming the ideas of today into the capabilities of tomorrow.

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs, US DOD, The Hon. Guy Roberts said:

> The expanding proliferation of chemical weapons use, from state and non-state actors, portends the greatest threat of their use on the battlefield since World War I. My responsibility is to ensure our forces are protected from, and can fight through, any such threats. To that end, we must continually innovate our capabilities, and it is especially important to do so in collaboration with those who fight alongside us. This competition does just that. It allows us to jointly invest in research and development with our closest ally as well as seek innovative ideas from a broader set of brilliant minds who I am confident will lead us to creative solutions.

The competition will be launched at an event in London on the afternoon of 26th September. Potential suppliers will be provided with context on the challenge by both UK and US speakers, as well as information on how to apply to the competition by DASA. The submission deadline for proposals is 5 pm GMT (midday EST) on 7 November 2018.

Follow this link for more information on the competition

or contact DASA directly on accelerator@dstl.gov.uk

News story: Minister calls for women to be included in peacebuilding process

In the margins of the UN General Assembly, the Minister for Human Rights and the UN Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon co-chaired a roundtable event with Afghanistan and Norway to discuss how to increase the participation of women in peace building and conflict resolution, how to connect formal peace processes to women tirelessly working to build peace on the ground.

Research shows that peace agreements that result from negotiations involving women are 35 percent more likely to last for at least fifteen years. The meeting looked at how the international community could promote, support and champion the role of women in decision making and conflict resolution to help ensure lasting and sustainable peace.

Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for Human Rights and the UN said:

> When women are denied a seat at the table, when the hopes, fears, needs and interests of half of the population are not represented evidence shows that an enduring peace and stability impossible.

> Today’s meeting is about how we can not only prevent, but ensure that women are empowered and encouraged to help broker peace, because we know that when women are part of the picture, peace agreements are much more likely to last.

The UK is a world leader on women, peace and security. Since November 2016, all UK troops on overseas missions have received training on women, peace and security and preventing sexual violence and UK personnel have trained over 10,000 African peacekeepers on sexual violence. In Afghanistan, UK personnel have mentored the trainers of future female leaders at the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy, which has seen over 100 female cadets now pass out.

Further Information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon @tariqahmadbt
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter @foreignoffice and Facebook
- Follow the Foreign Office on Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn

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News story: Streets ahead: British AI eyes scan future frontline in multinational urban experiment

The game-changing technology developed by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and UK industry partners, known as SAPIENT, saw British sensors making autonomous decisions, like what and how to monitor activities, as they searched a mock urban battlefield in the Canadian city and flagged

dangers to soldiers taking part in the experiment.

With current in-service technology, troops have to man live feeds from systems similar to CCTV cameras to monitor enemy movement during urban operations on complex city streets. The SAPIENT tech takes that load off the soldier and reduces the risk of human error, as well as reducing troops in the operations room – freeing them up for other military activity.

The British system was featured alongside a whole host of experimental tech from a range of nations, including robotic exoskeleton suits to help soldiers with the burden of heavy loads, night vision and surveillance systems. British troops are also expected to test the tech in the UK in the future.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

> This British system can act as autonomous eyes in the urban battlefield. This technology can scan streets for enemy movements so troops can be ready for combat with quicker, more reliable information on attackers hiding around the corner.
>
> Investing millions in advanced technology like this will give us the edge in future battles. It also puts us in a really strong position to benefit from similar projects run by our allies as we all strive for a more secure world.

The tech was put to the test in the Contested Urban Environment experiment (or CUE 18) – the biggest experiment of its kind in recent years, which is also set to come to the streets of Britain. It brings together Five Eyes allied nations of the Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and USA to put the very latest cutting-edge technology in the hands of soldiers on the ground.

Over 150 government and industry scientists and over 80 Canadian troops have been working in the city for three weeks, culminating in a complex exercise on the streets and other locations around the city, including an industrial location known as Silo 5, a huge abandoned grain store close to the historic Old Town area.

The Contested Urban Environment experiment took place this month over three weeks in Montreal, Canada. Crown copyright.

In addition to SAPIENT, a range of unmanned aerial and ground vehicles and soldier technologies were also used to relay information to an operations centre for analysis by the scientists and military personnel. Planes above the city sent autonomously refined information back to human operators down below. Combining all of these technologies from across the different nations, it was possible to generate information that could be fed to soldiers and military commanders – significantly enhancing their situational awareness.

The UK's SAPIENT technology is the result of multi-million-pound research which has taken just five years to develop. It was jointly funded initially with Dstl and InnovateUK, and from 2016, exclusively by Dstl. Standing for Sensors for Asset Protection using Integrated Electronic Network Technology, SAPIENT uses automation and artificial intelligence to ensure that the military user is presented with the information they need at the time they need it, including unusual activity – like people near a checkpoint or changes in behaviour.

Some of the sensors were actually carried by the soldiers, whilst others were placed on the ground.

Lt Col Nat Haden, SO1 Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Capability, Army Headquarters, said:

> We need to develop the practical solutions to a lot of the aspirations that we want. It brings together our requirements as a

> user and Dstl as scientific advisers for the expert view. The strength of CUE is that we're developing things with our key allies in the five-eyes community.

Dstl's Chief Executive Gary Aitkenhead, said:

> This is a fantastic example of our world-leading expertise at its best; our scientists working with our partner nations to develop the very best technology for our military personal now and in the future.

The first Contested Urban Environment experiment took place in November 2017 in Adelaide, Australia. Two additional experiments are being planned for 2019 in the US and again 2020 in the UK. Technology tested during this time could mean availability to military personnel by 2025.

News story: A visual guide to Exercise Saif Sareea logistics

Updated: This article has been reformatted to fit with the GOV.UK style guide

The UK's lead exercise of 2018, Exercise Saif Sareea 3 (SS3), is taking place this autumn in Oman. It has been years in the making, with Joint Forces Command at the very centre of the planning and organisational work. Delivering an expeditionary exercise on this scale brings a host of complex challenges for Joint Forces Command and the wider Ministry of Defence, from ensuring 24/7 medical cover to making sure drinking water never runs out.

These videos help to explain this monumental effort, outlining who is responsible for these kind of military exercises abroad, and how they are delivered safely and effectively.

'Saif Sareea 3' means 'Swift Sword' in Arabic. It is the name for the UK-Omani military exercise taking place in Oman from October to November 2018. The previous Saif Sareea exercises took place in 1986 and 2001.

What is Exercise Saif Sareea 3?

The Joint Force Logistics Component oversee and deliver the logistics for SS3. They are responsible for setting up the exercise, delivering support during it, and also responsible for returning equipment to the UK after the exercise has finished.

Who runs the logistics for Exercise Saif Sareea 3?

The Joint Force Logistics Component is made up of resources across the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force. Using these combined resources the Joint Force Logistics Component are able to deliver the UK's logistics capability for SS3 in Oman.

What do Exercise Saif Sareea 3 logistics look like on the ground?

SS3 will test the UK and Oman's ability to deploy a 'Coalition Joint Task Force' to the Gulf region and operate in austere and challenging conditions together. Throughout the exercise there is a need to ensure the health and safety of the 5,000 deployed personnel. To achieve this the Joint Force Logistics Component coordinate the deployment of Defence Medical Service units during the exercise.

How do you keep 5,500 UK troops safe whilst on exercise in Oman?

For more SS3 news, search:

ComdJFC_UK, @DefenceOps, @DefenceHQ, @UKinOman

News story: Commendations awarded to outstanding JFC staff

The awards were presented to the recipients by Commander Joint Forces Command (JFC), General Sir Chris Deverell, who also took time to meet with the recipients and their families. Offering his congratulations, he said:

> Joint Forces Command is a major enterprise which strives to harness the talent and energy of all its people. The commitment of the workforce is a fundamental element of JFC success and I am delighted to be able to recognise people and celebrate their achievements.
>
> The individuals and teams I have met today, and those who were unable to attend the ceremony due to operational commitments are an inspiration and have gone above and beyond their normal role to provide great support to defence, and we thank them for this

Teams and individuals from a number of different areas received awards in recognition for their work. This included work supporting ongoing operations at home and abroad, working in the local community and also recognition for individual acts of courage in the line of duty.

Commander Kearsley, who received a commendation for his work in J9 Maritime, said:

> It is one of the proudest moments of my career to date and it was an honour to be presented the award at Admiralty House by General Deverell

Flight Lieutenant Lindsay was recognised for his work with Information Systems and Services, had the following to say:

> It is a proud day and realising that someone has put a lot of effort into recognising his work and nominating him, and receiving the award was a shock

The Commander JFC Commendations can be awarded to service personnel, civil servants and contracted staff from across the organisation. Those awarded the Commander Joint Forces Command Commendations are:

- Major Martin Ness, Standing Joint Force Headquarters
- Mrs Mandy Diane Childs, Civil Servant
- Major Alexander Daniel Whitaker, Joint Force Development
- Major Paul Morris, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Joint Force Command C41SR
- Corporal Michael Andrew Jenkins, Royal Air Force. Royal Air Force Wyton
- Corporal Mark David Latimer-Jenkins, Royal Air Force, Joint Service Signal Unit (Digby)
- Corporal Thomas Routledge, Royal Air Force, Royal Air Force Waddington
- Major Robert Leasing John Monger, Corps of Royal Engineers, Permanent Joint Headquarters, Northwood
- Squadron Leader Graeme Richard Watkin Jones, Royal Air Force, Chairman of the Royal Air Force Martial Arts
- Team Award Op CARBRIT Team, Permanent Joint Headquarters, Northwood Headquarters
- Flight Lieutenant George Jack Lindsay, Royal Air Force, ISS Blandord
- Mr Paul Turton, Civil Servant, Senior Trainer at Training Delivery Division
- Commander David Christopher Moody, Royal Navy, Strategic Command and Control Networks
- Mr Alexander Jacques part of the CROSSBOW Team, Royal Air Force Wyton
- Lieutenant Commander Iain Peter Kearsley, Royal Navy, J4 Maritime
- Lieutenant Commander Charles Richard Keith, Royal Navy, Permanent Joint Headquarters
- Corporal Brendon Grant Bale, Royal Air Force, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
- Lieutenant Colonel Mark Edward Johnson-Ferguson, Corps of Royal Engineers, Headquarters British Forces Cyprus