

News story: Defence Ministers reaffirm Scotland's central role in UK defence

Defence Ministers Tobias Ellwood and Stuart Andrew toured Scotland this week, visiting some of the UK's most important military bases that have had billions of pounds of investment in recent months.

Minister for Defence People & Veterans, Tobias Ellwood, visited RAF Lossiemouth where he saw progress being made on the £132 million invested in the site ahead of the arrival of the 9 new P-8A Poseidon aircraft. The new Lossiemouth facility will be completed by 2020, to coincide with initial operating capability of the Poseidon aircraft being available in the UK.

These state-of-the-art submarine hunters will help keep Scotland and the rest of the UK safe and secure from intensifying threats, protecting the new aircraft carrier and nuclear deterrent.

The aircraft will work alongside eight cutting-edge new Type 26 warfare frigates, which also have their roots firmly in Scotland.

Minister for Defence Procurement Stuart Andrew met with BAE business leaders as he visited BAE Systems' yard in Govan, which is producing the frigates.

The Type 26 frigate programme will sustain 1,700 BAE Systems jobs in Scotland and safeguard 4,000 jobs across the wider UK supply chain until 2035.

Stuart Andrew's visit comes just after a year since the first steel was cut on HMS Glasgow, marking the beginning on the build of Britain's first Type 26 frigates.

The importance of this programme was also emphasised when Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visited the site alongside his Australian counterpart Marise Payne last month.

Gavin Williamson outlined how Australia's decision to choose BAE Systems to build nine British warships could be worth £20 billion hailed as the biggest Naval ship deal for a decade.

Tobias Ellwood and Stuart Andrew also visited HMNB Clyde that has recently had £1.3 billion invested in the infrastructure that will see it become the home of all the Royal Navy's submarines by 2020.

The Ministers capped off their visit in Scotland at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. This year the Tattoo will celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the RAF with the 'Sky's the limit' theme.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

From the Scottish shipyards building our cutting-edge new Type 26 Royal Navy fleet, to our brave servicemen and women tirelessly working to protect our national security, Scotland is crucial to defence.

We invest £1.6 billion every year in the Scottish economy, supporting thousands of jobs and hundreds of businesses, as our industry partners pioneer world-leading technology to ensure our forces remain a step ahead of our adversaries.

This is my first visit to Scotland as Minister of Defence Procurement and I am extremely proud of the work going on in every corner of the nation to ensure our country remains safe in a climate of intensifying threats.

The visit comes at an important time for defence's footprint in Scotland. Under the Better Defence Estate strategy, the department is reducing the Scottish estate to 14 key sites.

Reducing the number of estates will allow for greater investment in the key sites such as HMNB Clyde, RAF Lossiemouth, as well as building the new radar facility Saxa Vord in Shetland.

It will also benefit local economies as the Department will work closely with Local Authorities and the Scottish Government to make the best use of the released land.

[News story: RAF helicopters ready to support French in Mali](#)

The helicopters, from RAF Odiham, are providing niche logistical support to French combat forces conducting counter-terrorism operations as part of Operation Barkhane. UK forces have built three temporary aircraft hangers on the ground, enabling the Chinooks to fly multiple missions each week.

Armed Forces minister Mark Lancaster said:

This deployment demonstrates the vital role our Armed Forces play, working alongside our French allies to tackle terrorism and reduce threats to European and UK security.

The deployment is in addition to the UK's long-standing support of UN, EU and G5 Sahel Joint Force operations in Mali aimed at preventing extremists from using the ungoverned space in the Sahel to plan and launch attacks on Europe, as well as countering the illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and

wildlife.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

This helicopter deployment demonstrates the UK's commitment to do more in the Sahel, alongside £50m of UK Aid providing lifesaving humanitarian support, and a bigger diplomatic network.

[News story: Medical team train in Oman for Exercise Saif Sareea 3](#)

SS3 will take place across Oman in October and November. It is the UK armed forces' lead exercise this year and the largest in 17 years. It is also the third UK-Oman joint exercise, with the previous two taking place in 1986 and 2001.

SS3 will showcase the UK and Oman's ability to operate together in austere conditions through the deployment of a Coalition Joint Task Force.



Members of the Joint Medical Group prepare to transfer a simulated casualty to a waiting ambulance © MOD Crown Copyright

Joint Forces Command's (JFC) unique role in the exercise is in planning and enabling, demonstrating its world-leading ability to deploy internationally in challenging environments and run the vital functions of a successful exercise, such as logistics, command and control, and medical.

The Joint Medical Group will play a fundamental role in the safe delivery of the exercise. This week, as part of preparations for SS3, a Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) were put to the test in the 40-degree heat of the Omani desert.

As part of this week's training, a doctor, nurse and two paramedics from MERT field tested a new method to transport life-saving blood.

They experimented with transporting blood for up to 72 hours, vastly increasing their capability to successfully treat casualties in the field.

Captain Murphy said:

We now store the blood from its arrival in theatre and maintain the cold chain throughout. We then prepare the Golden Hour Box in order to transport blood to a casualty.

The Golden Hour Box refers to the 72-hour cold storage that maintains the blood between 2-6°C.

Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Boylan, the MERT Consultant, added:

It has to stay in a very specific temperature range, which is challenging in this sort of environment.

The Medics, who are part of 5 Medical Regiment, are based in Duqm, Oman in preparation for SS3. Located in such an isolated part of the country, they must be prepared to treat a wide range of casualties. The nearest trauma hospital is many hours drive and up to four hours flight from Duqm.



Members of the Joint Medical Group pose by their ambulance © MOD Crown Copyright

Medical training and preparation will continue in the lead up to the exercise, including the testing of equipment and processes to confirm that the medical chain can deal with challenges before the bulk of UK forces arrive.

A series of Mutual Medical Drills Training packages will also run at Shafa, where Omani field medical unit personnel will join UK Joint Medical Group counterparts inside the deployed British facilities to work through a series of clinical scenarios.

[News story: RFA Tideforce docks in Falmouth ahead of entering service](#)

The 39,000 tonne vessel, which will deliver fuel and water to Royal Navy ships on operations all over the world, follows her sister ships Tidespring, Tiderace and Tidesurge into the A&P Falmouth yard, where work to customise the fleet ahead of operational service is sustaining 300 jobs.

With the homecoming voyage complete, all four of the tankers have now arrived

safely in the UK, marking the end of a crucial phase of the fleet's delivery programme.

Minister for Defence Procurement Stuart Andrew said:

Tideforce's arrival completes our new tanker fleet, ensuring our warships can continue their essential work across the globe. Hundreds of Cornwall workers will now install state-of-the-art systems before she joins her sister ships on operations next year.

Providing everything from a floating helipad, to a refuelling vessel for our brand-new aircraft carriers, we are delivering the equipment our Armed Forces need to combat illegal trade, safeguard our waters and promote peace throughout the world.

Each of the Tide class ships is as long as three jumbo jets and has a flight deck large enough for a Chinook helicopter to land on. Like the rest of the fleet, Tideforce is perfectly equipped to refuel Royal Navy warships, including the two new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, in hostile environments and challenging sea conditions.

Customisation work, including the installation of communications equipment and defensive systems, is sustaining hundreds of jobs in A&P Falmouth, while the wider Tide class programme is sustaining further jobs at 26 other companies throughout the UK.

CEO of Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement agency Sir Simon Bollom said:

Defence Equipment and Support personnel will continue to work closely with industry to ensure Tideforce and her sister ships are fully supported once they come into service.

The delivery of the fleet within budget and to a challenging schedule has been a significant undertaking which has been expertly delivered by the dedicated team at DE&S.

RFA Tidespring is already in service, with RFA Tiderace due to join her in September, while RFA Tidesurge has now completed her customisation programme and is about to embark on Capability Assessment Trials.

Head of Service for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Commodore Duncan Lamb RFA, said:

The arrival of RFA Tideforce, the fourth ship of the class, into the UK is a significant and tangible milestone towards reaching full operating capability.

These four new versatile state-of-the-art Tide class ships will

enable the RFA to continue to provide first class global support to a first class Royal Navy for the foreseeable future.

David McGinley, Managing Director Atlantic and Peninsular Marine Services for A&P Group said:

The arrival of RFA Tideforce into Falmouth is a significant milestone for the A&P team. RFA Tideforce is the final vessel of her class and this is the fourth time we have supported a Tide class vessel during their arrival voyage. We will now complete the customisation, fit-out and capability assessment trials to the same high standards, on time and to budget, as we have for the rest of the fleet.

A&P Group is delighted to have played such an integral role in bringing this new fleet of tankers into service to support Royal Navy vessels around the world and are especially proud of our team and supply chain for their hard work and dedication.

Work to customise Tideforce is expected to take several months, with the ship then due to enter service in 2019.

[News story: UK Government helps train Park Rangers in Malawi to combat the illegal wildlife trade](#)

After a successful pilot operation and with training now across two sites, Nkhotakota and Majete Wildlife Reserves, both are managed by African Parks in partnership with Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW). The troops long-term goal will ensure the rangers are better skilled and able to respond appropriately to the threat of poaching.

Poaching and the illegal wildlife trade are responsible for the loss of countless species and are driving the decline of many African animals including elephants, rhinos and lions.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We can be incredibly proud of the important work our Armed Forces are doing to help protect the magnificent animals of Malawi and to bring about the end of the cruel practice of illegal wildlife trading. By passing on their world-class, tried and tested skills,

we can be sure that UK troops are aiding a highly skilled and professional network of park rangers, one that can effectively combat the threat poachers pose to the African wildlife.

While British soldiers are working with rangers to support the protection of wildlife, the Department for International Development is working with poorer communities who live close to wildlife reserves to create job opportunities and improve vital services.

Foreign Office Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin visited communities living on the edge of Majete Wildlife Reserve where she announced an additional £1 million of UK aid support to improve the lives of people living next to national parks.

Minster for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

The UK is acting now to stamp out the illegal wildlife trade, which not only threatens the existence of some of our most precious species, but also inflicts damage on local communities and fuels corruption and crime which hold back development for some of the world's poorest countries.

By bringing together our diplomatic, military and development support we're helping countries like Malawi combat this crime, and also helping local people to benefit from living alongside these beautiful species, which is boosting economic growth and stability.

The increase in the UK Armed Forces' support to Malawi has been funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) as part of a three-year plan agreed by the Ministry of Defence and DEFRA.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Wildlife crime does not respect borders so we must share skills and expertise worldwide. The Malawi enforcement project demonstrates the global leadership we set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. We are introducing one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales and will host the next international Illegal Wildlife Trade conference in London later this year.

The Government of Malawi has taken an effective and proactive approach to combating the illegal wildlife trade in their country, enhancing penalties for wildlife crime and partnering with African Parks and the UK Government to drastically reduce poaching activity and secure its parks for the benefit of

future generations.

The CEO of African Parks, Peter Fearnhead said:

The Malawian Government has shown great leadership and commitment in conserving its parks, where together we've recruited, trained and outfitted rangers to establish robust law enforcement teams utilising technology and community engagement to secure the landscapes.

Effective park management, including law enforcement and community development, is essential in protecting the last of the wild and combatting the illegal wildlife trade at its source. The partnership with the UK Government importantly advances our ability to ensure that these increasingly threatened areas continue to function as critical sanctuaries benefitting millions of people and animals across Africa.