

# News story: Defence Secretary wishes troops Merry Christmas while in Poland on NATO visit

Gavin Williamson said the UK personnel working in Poland as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) deployment reflected Britain's global outlook, unconditional commitment to collective Euro-Atlantic security and further highlighted NATO as the cornerstone of UK defence. These UK personnel are part of the US-led eFP battlegroup in Poland, while the UK continues to lead our own eFP battlegroup in Estonia.

The Defence Secretary travelled to Poland with the Prime Minister and other Cabinet members to sign a Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty at the Inter-Governmental Consultations in Warsaw, deepening the close UK-Polish relationship.

He then travelled on to Orzysz, also in Poland, meeting around 150 UK personnel from the Light Dragoon's, who have been working closely with forces from the US, Poland, Romania and Croatia.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We live in a world where the threats and dangers we face are constant, evolving and increasingly challenging. We have to be highly professional and deeply committed to counter the intensifying aggression aimed at Britain and our allies.

That is why I'm so grateful to our brave men and women in the Armed Forces, working around the clock to keep us safe while so many of us spend time with friends and family over the Christmas period.

The United Kingdom will always play a global and leading role in major alliances such as NATO. I'm proud to have met our inspirational personnel here in Poland making such an important difference alongside key friends and partners like Poland and the United States.

The Light Cavalry Squadron, who will be deployed over the festive season, are supporting Polish forces to enhance NATO's deterrence posture, while benefiting from training alongside US and Romanian allies, building a strong multi-national battlegroup.

Colonel Giles Harris DSO MBE, Commander CABRIT, said:

As we celebrate Christmas and New Year's, I hope everyone deployed on OP CABRIT in Estonia and Poland can reflect on how much has been

achieved this year in support of NATO and our partners.

Their efforts and commitment have been outstanding and I am extremely grateful for all they, and those back in the UK, have done in support of the mission. The positive impact of our presence here should not be underestimated.

I would also like to thank the families and friends at home too – as ever, they are hugely important in our success. So from all of us deployed on operations in the Baltic states and Poland, we wish you a happy Christmas and New Year.

While in Poland he also praised thousands of Armed Forces personnel working in many other operations around the globe over the Christmas period. More widely, more than 5,000 sailors, soldiers, airmen and marines will be working over the festive period, involved in 25 operations in more than 30 countries ranging from Iraq to the South Atlantic.

As well as around 150 UK personnel working in Poland around 800 British personnel are deployed on the UK led eFP deployment in Estonia. Further afield, currently around 1,000 people are working to fight Daesh and train the local security forces from locations in Iraq and the wider Middle East as well as from RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus. In the Caribbean, RFA Mounts Bay joins other Royal Navy warships also deployed over the festive period.

UK Air Component Commander, Air Commodore Roddy Dennis, based in the Middle East alongside NATO allies, had this message for everyone at home in the UK and across the globe:

On behalf of all the personnel from 83 EAG currently deployed on Op SHADER and Op KIPION in the Middle East, I would like to send season's greetings to everyone in the UK and abroad. Even though we are away from our homes, families and friends this festive season, we will all be celebrating Christmas in traditional Armed Forces' fashion together with personnel from across the Coalition.

I would like to thank everyone under my command for their service and everyone at home for the support they continue to give us, our mission would be impossible without it. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Since 1969 the UK has had a submarine on patrol for every minute of every day, providing the UK's nuclear deterrent and this Christmas is no different.

In the South Atlantic, over 1000 personnel are stationed in the Falkland Islands. In Afghanistan, troops from the Army and other Services are training Afghan National Security Forces.

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## **Press release: Rural crime crackdown in north east**

The Environment Agency has joined forces with Durham Constabulary in a Christmas crackdown on rural crime.

Fisheries enforcement officers supported police on patrols in the operation in Weardale on Wednesday night, 20 December.

It follows previous joint partnership operations in the north east to disrupt travelling criminals and gather intelligence about rural crime, including illegal fishing.

Also joining police and the Environment Agency was Weardale and Teesdale Mountain Rescue team and local Weardale farmers.

During the operation police used Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology to target vehicles suspected of being linked to crime, as well as checking vehicles in suspicious circumstances and focusing on key locations.

The operation resulted in a number of suspected lamping activities in relation to game poaching – where a light is used to hunt animals. And intelligence was passed between police and fisheries officers about suspicious activity and vehicles.

### **‘We always act on intelligence’**

Kevin Summerson, Fisheries Enforcement Specialist for the Environment Agency in the north east, said:

This operation is another example of the close relationship that has developed over a number of years with Durham Constabulary.

We work together every day to tackle many aspects of rural, environmental and wildlife crime. It’s a co-ordinated effort to disrupt potential illegal activity, identify offenders and gather intelligence.

Illegal fishing damages fish stocks and the environment and is unfair on anglers who abide by the law and buy their rod licences – the income from which is used to improve fisheries and habitats.

We always act on intelligence we receive and I’d urge anyone with information about suspected illegal fishing to contact us.

Sergeant Simon Rogers, from Durham Constabulary, added:

We regularly work with partners such as the Environment Agency on operations to tackle rural crime. Wednesday's operation was part of our ongoing commitment to tackle and disrupt those who choose to commit crime in rural areas.

Anyone who believes they have been a victim of crime should contact us on 101, or dial 999 in an emergency.

Anyone with information about illegal fishing is asked to contact the Environment Agency's 24-hour Incident Hotline on 0800 807060 or the police on 101. In an emergency or to report a crime ongoing always dial 999.

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## Catalan independence

I am of course neutral over the issue of whether Catalonia should be independent or remain part of Spain. It does not help for outsiders to express voting preferences before elections or referendums in other countries.

I did, however, find the BBC coverage of the Catalan election amusingly inaccurate. Before the poll they were running the Spanish government line that people were switching to parties that wanted Catalonia to stay in Spain, in response to the economic Project Fear campaign that the Spanish government were pursuing. Now we know the result, nothing of the sort was happening. I loved the irony. The BBC was busily giving credence to the views of the Partido Popular (a right of centre party it is alleged) that leads the Madrid government and has followed a thuggish policy of trying to suppress enthusiasm for devolved government and independence within Catalonia. That self same Partido Popular itself slumped from 11 seats to just 3 seats in the 135 seat Parliament"!

The one view I do hold is these matters of identity and democratic accountability are best settled by democratic means. If Spain had let Catalonia have a referendum to decide the issue the public may well have voted to stay with Spain, as Scotland did when we rightly offered them the choice. Instead, the unpleasant ways used to try to extinguish nationalist feeling has ensured the independence parties won this latest election. The EU, which used to encourage regional identity and regional political movements now seems ashamed of what it has helped unleash and will not speak out for a democratic way of resolving the tensions.

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# The paradox of how the EU destroys traditional major political parties

Numerous commentators are interested in so called populist parties. These are challenger parties of the right and left ranging from Syriza to the Austrian Freedom party, including Podemos and Ciudadanos in Spain, and Five Star in Italy. No-one apart from me seems very interested in why the traditional Centre right main party in each country, often Christian Democrat, and the traditional centre left party, often Social democrat, have collapsed or shrunk badly in so many places.

Just look at what has happened. Two main parties used to alternate in government in continental countries like Labour and Conservative in the UK, depending on how well they did with their domestic economic policy primarily. Today few of them are left in power and none has a majority. In Spain the PP leads a minority coalition which can scarcely govern. In Germany and the Netherlands no majority coalition has formed. In Greece the two main parties were swept away by Syriza. New Democracy (centre right) has recovered to second place whilst Pasok (centre left) remains on 6.3% of the vote. In France both main parties were demolished by Macron's new movement in Parliamentary elections. Mr Macron beat the National Front to take the Presidency. Neither former main party had a candidate in the second round.

It is true many of these places have systems of proportional representation making it more difficult for a main party to get a majority. It is also true that Greece and Italy have systems with offsets that give extra blocs of seats to first placed parties to try to create majorities. The French two round system allows a main party to get a majority through ballot by exhaustion.

The underlying problem seems to be EU and Euro economic policy. The traditional parties in each country are wedded to EU and Euro requirements. The policies often do not work out well economically for many people, so frustrated voters decide to challenge the orthodoxy by voting for a challenger party. Many of the challenger parties are explicitly Eurosceptic. Wilders in the Netherlands, Le Pen in France and Grillo in Italy are hostile to the Euro scheme. The Austrian Freedom party is hostile to EU migration policies, as is the National front in France, the Freedom party in Austria and the Freedom movement in the Netherlands. The AFD in Germany began with opposition to the Euro and has moved on to be in favour of more restrictive immigration policies.

Meanwhile in the UK the opposite movement has happened. In the 2017 election the Conservative vote share rose by 5.6% and the Labour share by 9.6%, taking the two main traditional parties to a combined 82.4%. In Germany the equivalent was 47.3% combined share for the CDU and SPD, in the Netherlands 30.4% combined, and Greece 34.4%. Why did this happen?

There were two main reasons. The first is both UK parties decided to accept

the verdict of the referendum and became Eurosceptic. The UKIP vote collapsed as a result. The second is Labour cut loose from the austerity policies of the EU budgetary system and offered to spend and borrow much more money. This proved very attractive to young voters who were told they would get all their large student debts paid off, a promise which Labour only admitted was impossible after the election.

By offering to take back control, and by having a genuine difference of economic policy and approach, the two main parties in the UK re captured most of the vote. On the continent the refusal of main parties to criticise any aspect of the EU approach left voters looking around for ways to change a consensus that does not work for them.

It is the oddest situation I have ever seen in politics. Normally old well established and successful political parties adapt and change, altering policy when the electorate want change. Instead on the continent party after party is being slimmed or demolished by sticking with Euro austerity policies. As the member states governments get weaker, so the Commission gets stronger. More powers will inevitably gravitate to the centre, making the task of national pro EU parties ever more difficult.

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## **Consultation on the draft of the limited revision of the TSI relating the subsystem rolling stock – Noise (TSI Noise)**

Consultation on the draft of the limited revision of the TSI relating the subsystem rolling stock – Noise (TSI Noise) Reference: 006REC1072 Publication Date : 22/12/2017 Published by: Interoperability Document Types: Consultations Keywords: Noise;NOI;TSI;Consultation Description: This draft of the limited revision of the TSI Noise is deemed to impact the freight traffic and the social environment. Therefore, associations and bodies representing users on matters having a direct impact on freight customers as well as social partners shall be consulted in accordance with articles 6 and 7 of Regulation (EU) 2016/796 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Railways and to article 5 (7) of Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the interoperability of the rail system within the European Union. Status: New Closing Date : 22/03/2018 Related documents:

### **Documents for consultation:**

– Draft of the limited revision of the TSI relating rolling stock subsystem – Noise (TSI Noise) ([EN](#)).

This draft document is a recommendation amending the TSI Noise in order to make it applicable to the existing freight wagons.

**Other reference documents:**

The document for consultation is a recommendation to amend to the Commission Regulation (EU) No 1304/2014 of 26 November 2014 concerning the technical specification for interoperability relating to the subsystem rolling stock – noise, which is available here:

Received comments (sent to “006REC1072” followed by “@era.europa.eu”)