

# Minister Heapey: UK support for the Lebanese Army continues

The UK Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heapey MP, conducted a one-day visit to Lebanon yesterday. This was Minister Heapey's first visit to Lebanon where he saw first-hand how UK projects support the Lebanese Armed Forces in their mission to maintain stability across Lebanon.

The British Ambassador to Lebanon, Dr. Ian Collard, and the British Embassy's Defence Attaché, Lt. Col Lee Saunders, accompanied Minister Heapey.

The Minister met the caretaker Minister of Defence, Maurice Sleem, and the Lebanese Army Commander, General Joseph Aoun. They discussed military cooperation between the UK and Lebanon.

At the Third Land Border Regiment (LBR) on the border with Syria, Minister Heapey heard from senior Lebanese officers how the UK's work to enhance the capabilities of the LBRs has improved efforts to counter cross-border smuggling and terrorist activity. This has made the area safer for local communities. UK support has enabled deployment of four Land Border Regiments (LBRs), the construction of over 78 border towers, provision of 350 Land Rovers, 100 armoured patrol vehicles, and training of over 20,000 Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) personnel.

At the end of his visit, Minister Heapey said:

The UK and Lebanon are close friends and partners. I was proud to see first-hand the positive impact of the military cooperation between our two countries that has spanned more than a decade.

In times of need, the UK stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Lebanon and our partners around the world to tackle shared challenges. In the current context, it is more important than ever that we continue to work together to combat threats to global peace and security.

I have greatly enjoyed my first visit to this beautiful country and hope to return.

The British Ambassador to Lebanon, Dr. Ian Collard, said:

I am delighted to host the Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heapey, on his first visit to Lebanon. The Lebanese Armed Forces is crucial to ensuring Lebanon's stability and safeguarding the

Lebanese people during these challenging times. Since 2010, the UK has committed over £87 million to optimise the LAF's capabilities which underlines the UK's government commitment to a safe and stable Lebanon.