

News story: British Military steps up Women, Peace and Security efforts

During his visit Gavin Williamson thanked troops for their work, which ranges from delivering infantry training for partner militaries tackling terrorism, to teaching soldiers how to prevent and respond to sexual violence against women.

In positive meetings with defence ministers across East Africa he said the UK is a trusted partner, committed to promoting prosperity and helping improve the security of people in vulnerable situations by increasing the participation of women and other non-traditional security actors.

He opened a Security Sector and Gender training course at the British Peace and Security Training centre outside Nairobi, where hundreds of personnel from a dozen partner nations will be trained in techniques aimed at preventing and responding to sexual violence against women, men and children in conflict areas.

As well as confirming that a small training team would deploy to East Africa specifically to help tackle sexual violence, he also agreed an extension to the British Army's infantry training in Kenya, which thousands of personnel benefit from.

He discussed the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) – where the UK has built a field hospital for peacekeepers – and how British Aid is helping support voter education, women's participation and local conflict resolution.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

A prosperous and secure Africa is firmly in our national interest and our Armed Forces are playing a vital role on the continent.

Whether fighting for women's rights through our training teams or suppressing terrorist threats, the UK is a nation with a big heart and we are determined to help our partners when they need us.

The incredible work our service personnel are doing from Somalia to South Sudan will help build a more secure and united continent. This will help to set the conditions for trading partnerships across Africa, supporting British and African businesses to create opportunities for everyone.

In Somalia, British troops gave a demonstration of the work being done to

train Somali forces against the threat from the insurgent group Al-Shabaab, as well as explaining their contribution to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) which aims to maintain peace within the country.

The Defence Secretary met the President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo, to discuss the UK's continued training to tackle gender-based violence and suppressing the Al-Shabaab threat.

Later in Ethiopia Mr Williamson met UK personnel and representatives of agencies working to combat violence against women, as well as making progress on UK-Ethiopian areas of co-operation in talks with Ethiopia's Defence Minister Motuma Mekassa.