

News story: UK reaffirms African military commitments after five-nation visit

The reaffirmation was made by Mark Lancaster following a week-long visit to the continent that took in a wealth of projects in Rwanda, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

From tackling terrorist threats in Somalia, to the role we have played alongside our UN partners in South Sudan, I have been extremely proud to see the way Britain's global influence is being exerted to support our partners in east Africa.

At the start of the visit, in Rwanda, Mr Lancaster met with President Paul Kagame, to find out how UK aid – which has helped to lift almost two million people out of poverty since 2005 – can continue to support continued growth and prosperity.



The Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, meets the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Crown Copyright.

He also paid his respects at a genocide memorial event in Kigali, which marks the start of 100 days of mourning for the hundreds of thousands killed in the mass slaughter of 1994.

The Minister then travelled to Mogadishu to examine the work being done towards the African Union Mission in Somalia, to which the UK is the third-largest donor, tackling the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and rebuilding stability in the country.

During the next leg of the trip, to Kenya, the Minister held talks with Cabinet Secretary for Defence Raychelle Omamo and senior Kenya Defence Force Officers.

He also visited the British Army Training Unit Kenya, where he observed UK troops conduct training, and met the staff of Permanent Joint Headquarters' East Africa Support Node, which provides support to our troops in Somalia and South Sudan.

The Kenyan leg finished with a brief from the British Peace Support Team (BPST), who coordinate much of the UK's military training with African countries, including work to stop the illegal wildlife trade. The BPST also supports the Women, Peace and Security agenda and helps to counter sexual and gender-based violence on peacekeeping missions.

Whilst in Malakal, South Sudan, he met members of the UK Task Force who are building accommodation and helicopter landing sites for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), to which the UK has pledged continued assistance until at least April 2020.

In Bentiu, the Minister met personnel operating a UK-run field hospital for UN aid workers, where British medics deal with the complex range of injuries and illnesses that UN operations in this area might face.

After meeting Mr Lancaster, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General David Shearer said:

I admire the way UK troops in the UN mission in South Sudan have integrated themselves and that they are now fully part of the UNMISS team delivering excellent engineering and medical aid and supporting the UNMISS Headquarters too.

In Juba the Minister met with the South Sudanese Minister of Defence Kuol Manyang Juuk where they discussed how peace could be brought to South Sudan and where Mr Lancaster reaffirmed the UK commitment to bringing an end to the violence in the country.

The final leg of the visit, in Ethiopia, included a meeting with the Chief of The Defence Staff, General Samora Younis and a visit to The Ethiopian Peace Support Training Centre.

Each provided an opportunity to reinforce the UK's continued support to the

Ethiopian National Defence Forces with training for peacekeeping support operations.