

Press release: New hurricane preparedness plans for British Overseas Territories in Caribbean

The Government has today (Wednesday 4 July) announced new measures to make sure British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean have the support they need in the event of a repeat of the devastating hurricanes which hit the region last year.

Government departments have been putting plans in place to bring together humanitarian, military support and diplomatic work under a joint unit coordinated by the Foreign Office.

These include:

- Royal Fleet Auxilliary (RFA) Mounts Bay, a Navy ship deployed to the region since 2017, will remain in the vicinity of the Caribbean throughout the hurricane season this year and also for 2019.
- Experts have been deployed to the region to lead negotiations on a number of commercial contracts, in advance of peak hurricane season, to deliver essential recovery needs.
- Military reconnaissance and analysis in the Overseas Territories, building links and familiarity with local and regional disaster management personnel, and conducting professional analysis of selected critical infrastructure.
- Plans for a multi-national coordination cell in the Caribbean to coordinate partner countries and organisations to make sure efforts aren't being duplicated across the region and to make immediate responses more efficient. The UK has coordinated meetings between representatives from the USA, Canada and the Netherlands and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to ensure a joined up approach to hurricane preparedness.
- Emergency humanitarian supplies in the form of over 1000 collapsible jerry cans, 1000 hygiene kits and up to 1000 shelter kits have been pre-loaded onto RFA Mounts Bay, which will remain in the region for the hurricane season and be on hand to provide life-saving emergency assistance as required.
- DFID has also fielded a preparedness mission to the region from 5 – 17 June to coordinate UK preparations with both national and regional institutions.
- DFID has well established programmes in the poorer Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean and, in addition to humanitarian assistance, is supporting reconstruction efforts in the hurricane-affected islands of Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda.
- The UK has also helped ensure all islands affected by the hurricanes last year are now insured under the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Fund (CCRIF). DFID helped establish the CCRIF which provided over \$50m of quick payouts to hurricane affected Caribbean countries and

territories in 2017. This year, the UK has supported BVI and Montserrat to join as new members. This means that all of the islands affected last year are now covered.

Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Last year's hurricanes hit Caribbean British Overseas Territories and the wider region with devastating effect, uprooting lives and damaging local economies. The UK has provided critical support and help with recovery efforts and I have seen for myself the huge impact that this has had already. The UK continues to work closely with the governments of the Overseas Territories in their recovery efforts and in helping to rebuild their economies.

Moreover, we have also been working hard with key partners across the region to ensure an even more effective and strategic response in the event we see a repeat of last year's hurricane season.

International Development Minister, Lord Bates said:

The scale of last year's hurricanes was unprecedented and the UK aid mission was huge, covering small islands stretching more than 1,000 miles apart, where buildings and roads had been destroyed.

Britain continues to stand by those people whose lives were devastated. Not only have we been working with the islands' governments to make sure they are more resilient to natural disasters but we are also well prepared to respond and provide humanitarian relief if a hurricane hits again.

Minister for Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

Our Armed Forces are committed to supporting our Overseas Territories, and we have worked alongside our colleagues across Government to ensure we are fully prepared in the event of a natural disaster or other crisis. RFA Mounts Bay, which played a vital role during the 2017 hurricane crisis, remains ready in the Caribbean and will be supported by specialist forces from the UK if required.

£72m was immediately committed in September to help the Overseas Territories Anguilla, BVI and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In November, the Prime Minister committed a further £70m for reconstruction efforts and £300m of UK loan guarantees.

Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

visited Anguilla, the Cayman Islands and Montserrat as part of a regional tour to discuss hurricane preparedness in May and will visit the region again later this month.

Hurricane preparedness was one of the key topics of discussion at the Joint Ministerial Council with the Overseas Territories in June.

Notes to editors:

A written ministerial statement on hurricane preparedness can be found [here](#).

Further information