

# Puma helicopter performs first island medical evacuation

An RAF Puma helicopter based at Kinloss has supported the NHS in Scotland with the first transfer of a critically ill patient from the Isle of Arran.

Three Pumas are currently based at Kinloss Barracks in Scotland as part of a new Aviation Task Force which was set up to support the government's response to coronavirus.

The crew were called at 0100 on Wednesday to support the transfer of a critically ill patient from the Isle of Arran to the University Hospital Crosshouse in Kilmarnock after the patient showed severe symptoms of coronavirus. The three-person helicopter crew flew to Arran, where they landed at Knockenkelly and met the emergency medical care team on site.

UK Government minister for Scotland Douglas Ross said:

"I would like to wish the patient a speedy recovery and thank the team from Kinloss Barracks who were involved in the airlift. This is another example of the fantastic effort the UK's Armed Forces are providing to support patients across the UK and help health professionals tackle coronavirus."

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

"Today's medical evacuation is a great example of the UK Armed Forces' ability to support our most remote communities across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. I am proud of the skill and professionalism of our personnel and their support to colleagues in the NHS and social care."

The Scottish Ambulance Service has significantly increased capacity for airlifting patients off the islands and to ensure that any patients from our island communities, including those with coronavirus symptoms, can be transported to receive the appropriate healthcare when they need it. This includes the use of SAS resources, ferries, maritime coastguard, Logan Air and the armed forces.

Squadron Leader Johnny Longland, Detachment Commander said:

"Just over 3 hours after the crew received the call, the patient had travelled 162 nautical miles and was in the Intensive Care Unit. The training that we conducted with the emergency medical teams across Scotland ensured that, when the time came, we were all ready for a quick and smooth transfer of a patient.

"We're extremely proud to be able to help the NHS in Scotland and it's rewarding to see the team pull together so quickly and effectively when they were needed. Our thoughts are with the patient and their family and we wish them a swift and full recovery."

On its arrival on the Isle of Arran, the aircraft temporarily shut down while the emergency medical team attended to the patient and prepared them for transfer.

The Scottish Ambulance Service Emergency Medical Retrieval team travelled on the aircraft with the patient and met their Special Operations Response Team and Divisional crew on landing for onward transfer to hospital.

Using procedures previously rehearsed with the emergency care teams, the patient was then swiftly loaded onto the aircraft and transported to the Intensive Care Unit in Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock. The patient is now receiving the enhanced care required to support their recovery.

The aircraft crew were wearing PPE for the duration of the flight and both the crew and aircraft underwent strict decontamination procedures on their return to Kinloss.

The COVID Aviation Task Force has helicopters on standby across the UK to support the government's response to coronavirus. The RAF Puma, Army Air Corps Wildcat, RAF Chinook and Royal Navy Merlin provide essential medical evacuation capabilities as well as the ability to swiftly deliver essential equipment and personnel to where they are needed across the nation.