

Racing legend Jenson Button wishes UK military happy new year

Former Formula One World Champion Jenson Button MBE has wished UK Armed Forces a happy New Year and thanked them for their continued service, whether at home or abroad.

He was speaking during the final race of the inaugural Extreme E season – an electric SUV competition staged on difficult terrain around the world – held at Bovington Training Area, Dorset.

Some of the biggest names in motorsport are involved with Extreme E, with teams owned by Sir Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg, and Jenson Button also owns and drives with his JBXE team.

The 2009 F1 World Champion also praised the Armed Forces' role in delivering the COVID-19 booster vaccine rollout, with over 950 personnel available to support the vaccine programme in Scotland, England and Wales.

Jenson Button MBE said:

“Happy New Year to all the service personnel around the world and especially the ones that are helping out with the booster jab”.

The Extreme E teams were put through their paces around Bovington's tank training course, as Dorset's Jurassic Coast was chosen for the final round of the 2021 series. Part of the Extreme E focus is to promote electric vehicles and clean technology solutions whilst highlighting climate change issues in the UK and around the globe.

As the event helps highlight the importance of electrification and sustainability, the British Army also has an ambitious programme to introduce hybrid electric drive into its fleet of vehicles. The Army has already invested £10 million in this sector, developing experimental hybrid-electric drive vehicles in a bid to create a more sustainable military operation.

Colonel Simon Ridgway OBE, Assistant Head Plans, Ground Manoeuvre Capability said:

“We have fitted hybrid-electric technology to a number of vehicles including the Jackal, Foxhound and MAN SV platforms which are currently in-service so we can understand the benefits, the opportunities, risks, and threats of this technology and how it can make us operate better and differently in the future. We are also looking at where other opportunities lie, for example, through sustainable fuels or synthetic fuels and how that might reduce our consumption of fossil fuels going forward.

“This has given us an exciting opportunity to see what is happening with the Extreme E series and see what that could mean for us as we look to apply

electrification technology to the British Army. We are looking at all the things that are happening in the civilian sector and seeing how we can apply that technology to capabilities in Defence so that we can enhance our operational effectiveness but also contribute to reducing carbon emissions.”

In the lead up to the Extreme E event, the Army held the Bovington Future Power Symposium at the Defence Battlelab in Dorset, which saw senior military leaders engaging with industry heads who are involved in new environmental and sustainable technology development. Topics discussed included the Army’s new sustainability and environmental strategy, military power generation on the battlefield and the role of Battlelab in the military.

Major General Simon Hutchings OBE, Director of Joint Support, Strategic Command said:

“With Extreme E’s support, we will continue to highlight the environmental importance of the area and demonstrate the ongoing work undertaken by the British Army with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) to ensure its longevity as both beautiful countryside and an effective training area. Combined with the Army’s investment in, and development of sustainable vehicles, this will allow us to continue to maintain our world-renowned operational edge.

“The opportunity to work alongside Extreme E who are world leaders in electrification of vehicles and sustainable energy production is very exciting. This will allow us to witness first-hand how a world leading global motorsport championship develops, inspires, and motivates its teams whilst operating in austere conditions – from the mechanics and vehicle designers, the chefs, logisticians, through to the drivers, motorsport is a Team effort.”