

# News story: Britain, coalition and Iraqi forces to maintain momentum in campaign against Daesh, Defence Secretary says

Speaking in Iraq, where local Iraqi and Coalition forces recently scored a major victory in the fight against Daesh in eastern Mosul, Sir Michael welcomed the progress made in defeating Daesh in Iraq.

Sir Michael saw how Britain's commitment to training Iraqi forces, which was stepped up last year is having an effect in the fight against Daesh. Numbers of Iraqi Security Forces trained by UK and Coalition personnel has increased threefold since October 2016, with around 3,000 Iraqi forces now being trained every month, 10,000 troops have been trained since the end of October 2016, increasing the Iraqi force's skills and ability to defeat Daesh.

With operations to clear the western approaches to Mosul already underway, Sir Michael met with the Prime Minister, President and Defence Minister of Iraq, and the Prime Minister and other representatives of the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, to take review campaign progress and planning

During his visit, Sir Michael also met with UK personnel training Iraqi security forces. Britain leads the Coalition's training programme in Iraq, and so far has helped to train nearly 40,000 troops. The training in countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is proving to be vital, as Daesh have booby trapped many parts of eastern Mosul during its occupation. Iraqi forces have been using their training to dispose of these crude devices, allowing their forces to advance and civilians to safely return to their homes. This training will also prove essential when forces move into the heavily mined and densely populated neighbourhoods of western Mosul.

The liberation of eastern Mosul marked a major victory for Iraqi forces, who Sir Michael praised for their patient and deliberate operation, taking care to minimise the risk to civilians. The RAF also played an important role in the Iraqi victory, providing sustained close air support to Iraqi troops. RAF Reaper aircraft played a particularly vital role, delivering precision attacks on Daesh extremists engaged in street fighting, while also using its advanced sensors to alert Iraqi ground forces to the presence of civilians.

Residents in eastern Mosul are already returning to their homes, with over 29,000 having done so in recent weeks. The liberation has also enabled more than 23,000 children to return to school and continue their education.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Iraqi forces, supported by Britain and the Coalition, have made

strong progress in the fight against Daesh. We're keeping up the momentum with operations to liberate western Mosul due to start shortly.

This will be a more complex fight in a densely populated urban environment. Britain will continue playing its part providing precision strikes, vital intelligence, and training Iraqi forces to deal with explosive devices planted by Daesh.

Sir Michael also announced that Britain will send a UK military officer to help lead NATO's newly established training mission in Iraq, from July this year. The new NATO training and capacity building team will help the Iraqis in dealing with the threats they face, including to counter Daesh improvised explosive devices. The UK has already contributed £1 million to help establish NATO's presence in Baghdad, which will provide expert advice on defence issues to the Iraqi Government.

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## [Survey finds 'Jurassic Park' in E. China](#)



As many as 82 dinosaur fossil sites were confirmed by experts from Zhejiang Province between 2006 and 2013. [Photo: zjww.gov.cn]

East China's Zhejiang Province was a "Jurassic Park" with a wide variety of

dinosaurs during the Cretaceous period, according to findings of a six-year survey.

A total 82 dinosaur fossil sites, with at least six dinosaur species and 25 types of fossil dinosaur eggs, were confirmed during the survey by a joint team of experts from the Zhejiang Institute of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology and Zhejiang Museum of Natural History, between 2006 and 2013.

The research recently won a second-class award from the Ministry of Land and Resources.

Scientists identified eight new species among the fossils.

The survey covered an area of 11,000 square kilometers in Zhejiang,

Scientists have used various research techniques ranging from geology, paleobiology to chronostratigraphy, combined with site inspections and excavations in their study, making it the most comprehensive research on dinosaur fossils in the province to date.

“It has been proved that a large quantity of dinosaurs lived in Zhejiang during the Cretaceous period, about 65 million to 145 million years ago,” said Jin Xingsheng, deputy curator of Zhejiang Museum of Natural History. “Compare with other southeastern provinces, Zhejiang has the largest amount of dinosaur fossils.”

Their discoveries also give evidence to the general thought that a comet or asteroid impact caused the mass extinction of dinosaurs.

Scientists found that sedimentary rocks, where most dinosaur fossils were unearthed, were sandwiched between two layers of volcanic rocks, indicating vegetation was lush and suitable for dinosaurs in the early and middle Cretaceous period.

The evidence showed a catastrophe in the late Cretaceous period might have ended the age of prehistoric creatures. Scientists believed the hit of an asteroid was the most likely reason as it can result in a series of sudden climate changes such as volcanic eruptions, crustal faults and generate radioactive substances that cause the dinosaurs to die out.

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## [Beijing, neighboring regions to see heavy air pollution](#)

A new round of air pollution is expected to hit Beijing and parts of northern and eastern China due to unfavorable weather conditions, the China National Environmental Monitoring Center has warned.

Apart from the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, which is expected to see heavy pollution from Feb. 12 to 15, air quality in more than 20 cities in provinces such as Shandong and Henan is forecast to deteriorate from Feb. 14 to 15 due to unfavorable weather conditions.

A cold front is expected to help disperse the pollution on Feb. 16.

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## [Taiwan reports more H5N6 bird flu cases](#)

Taiwan has reported three H5N6 bird flu cases this week, and authorities are reinforcing measures to prevent further infections.

The latest case was reported Sunday when turkeys from a farm in Tainan city were confirmed as infected with the virus, according to Taiwan's animal and plant inspection authority.

More than 3,000 turkeys on the farm died in an unusually short space of time before the authority conducted tests to confirm the virus.

The first H5N6 case was confirmed Feb. 5 in a dead goose found on a farm road in eastern Hualien county. On Feb. 11, samples from 3,789 slaughtered ducks, from a farm near where the gosling was found, also tested positive for the virus.

The authority said that the virus' DNA sequence was 99 percent the same as a similar virus found in the Republic of Korea and Japan, where more than 35 million fowl have been culled in three months.

Taiwan is a common destination for migrating birds to spend the winter. Its farms have reported 13 avian flu cases this year, though mainly caused by the H5N2 or H5N8 virus.

The island has urged farms to reinforce safety checks and speedily report the unusual death of animals, threatening heavy fines for farms that attempt to cover-up any outbreaks.

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## [Press release: Search underway for](#)

# UK's first Small Business Commissioner

- Commissioner appointment an important measure in tackling late payment issues
- Expected to be based in Birmingham, the Commissioner will be a national champion for small businesses

Applications are open to become the UK's first Small Business Commissioner – a high profile role supporting small businesses in payment disputes with their larger customers.

The successful candidate will provide general advice and information, handle complaints about payment issues and direct small businesses to existing dispute resolution services. Recent findings from the payment processor Bacs report that nearly half of the UK's small-to-medium sized businesses experience late payment, with £26.3 billion owed to them in total.

Applications open today (12 February 2017) and run until Monday 13 March 2017. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking for candidates who have credibility with both small and large businesses; can advise parties in resolving disputes; and who have an appetite to become a national spokesperson for small businesses affected by payment issues.

The final appointment decision will be made by the Secretary of State, supported by a panel which will include Mike Cherry, the National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

We all rely on the UK's 5.5 million small and medium sized businesses for jobs, goods and services, and an unfair payment culture that hurts these firms has no place in an economy that works for all. This is why we are looking for an exceptional individual to help smaller firms resolve payment disputes and champion a culture change in how businesses work together.

Addressing the barriers businesses face when scaling up and growing is an important part of a modern Industrial Strategy, and this appointment will play an integral role in ensuring small businesses have the support they need to thrive and grow.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

I am delighted to be invited by the Secretary of State to be part of the selection process for the Small Business Commissioner. There is simply no excuse for a business culture where supply chain bullying or poor payment practice are acceptable. FSB research shows that poor payment practice is on the rise, causing 50,000

business deaths each year.

Small firms need a Commissioner who will make a meaningful difference to the £26bn currently stuck in bank accounts as payments outstanding to SMEs. He or she must be given the powers and resources to tackle this, to step in to save small firms whose livelihoods are under threat, and to promote a prompt payment culture right across the economy.

The Small Business Commissioner, expected to be based in Birmingham, is just one part of a package of measures designed to tackle this and drive a real change in the UK's payment culture. Regulations coming into force in April 2017 will require big businesses to publically report on the time taken to pay their suppliers, and guidance to help large businesses comply with these changes was published last month. This will shine a light on poor payment practices and allow suppliers, including small businesses, to make informed decisions about who they do business with.