

Armed Forces mark 50 years since the start of operations in Northern Ireland

The event, hosted by The Royal British Legion at the National Memorial Arboretum, commemorated the sacrifice of personnel from the Armed Forces and civilian services who helped bring peace and stability to Northern Ireland during the UK's longest continuous troop deployment in history.

Some 1,441 service personnel died while on deployment to Op Banner or in related incidents. At the Staffordshire Arboretum, their names are listed on the Armed Forces Memorial as a lasting record of their selfless sacrifice and many of their relatives were present at the commemoration.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, who deployed to Northern Ireland with the Scots Guards in the 1990s, attended the Arboretum today. After the service, the Defence Secretary laid a wreath at the Armed Forces Memorial beneath the names of his lost comrades, Guardsman Andrew Wason and Guardsman Damian Shackleton, who died on his tour in 1992.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Such a significant number of our Armed Forces community were involved in Op Banner across four decades. It was a challenging and complex operation, and their dedication and sacrifice must not be forgotten. The men and women of the armed services should be proud of what we achieved for Northern Ireland. The peace process and the vast majority of the population's rejection of terrorism and violence is testament to their efforts. We remain grateful for their service on the nation's behalf.

More than 300,000 members of the UK armed forces were deployed on Op Banner over 38 years.

The commemoration involved a fly-past by a Puma helicopter and music from The Band of the Royal Logistic Corps. Personnel from all three services provided support to guests at the event.

In 2017 the government awarded The Royal British Legion £1.5 million to host national commemorative events, including the Op Banner commemorations.

UK aid to provide vital food to hundreds of thousands of people living on the edge of famine in South Sudan

Minister for Africa, Andrew Stephenson announced an extra £18 million of UK aid on his first visit in his new role, which will be given to trusted partners to help vulnerable families in desperate need.

There are currently 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and nearly 2 million people on the brink of famine in South Sudan, where food insecurity is at its worst level in the past 8 years.

Minister Stephenson called on the Government of South Sudan and other parties involved in the conflict to stop obstructing the delivery of aid and step up efforts to help the millions of malnourished children, families and communities get access to vital supplies.

He also called on the Government to accelerate progress on the peace process, including security sector reform, establishing an open dialogue with opposition leader Riek Machar and delivering on the \$100 million they pledged to help achieve peace.

Minister for Africa, Andrew Stephenson said:

South Sudan is a humanitarian catastrophe and vulnerable people face the daily threat of starvation.

I have seen first-hand that UK aid is saving lives and today's step up in support will deliver urgently needed food, water and health services to hundreds of thousands of people.

We call on the Government of South Sudan to immediately lift all humanitarian access restrictions and to commit more resources to provide basic services such as health and education to give people hope for the future.

With just three months until the formation of the transitional government, time is running out. Significant effort and compromise are required to fully implement the peace agreement.

While in South Sudan, Minister Stephenson visited the World Food Programme's warehouse in Juba to see first-hand how UK aid is helping save the lives of people who have fled conflict.

He also visited the Juba Protection of Civilian's camp to learn about the key challenges of displacement in the country, as well as meeting with British soldiers deployed to the UN Peacekeeping mission there.

Notes to Editors

1. No DFID money is given directly to the Government of South Sudan.
2. Last year UK aid reached over 220,000 people with food assistance, over 100,000 children with nutrition support, over 142,000 people with emergency water, hygiene and sanitation, and over 83,000 families with emergency livelihoods kits.
3. The extra support announced will help deliver vital food, medicine and water to those who need it most. DFID will work in partnership with the World Food Programme, UNICEF, International Committee of the Red Cross and other NGOs to deliver this aid.
4. The UK has deployed around 300 troops to provide important engineering and medical assistance to the UN Mission in South Sudan which is supporting the protection of civilians, ensuring appropriate conditions for humanitarian access, monitoring and investigating human rights abuses, and supporting the peace agreement.
5. The £18 million announced today is allocated from DFID's central crisis reserve and is new money that would not have previously been spent in South Sudan.
6. DFID's total UK aid humanitarian support to South Sudan for 2019/20 is projected to be up to £91 million.
7. Today's announcement of UK aid support will help:
 - At least 160,000 people experiencing food insecurity with food assistance and small cash transfers to buy food for their families so desperately in need.
 - Provide 500,000 people with emergency livelihoods support which includes seed kits and fishing tools to help the poorest people continue to earn an income and feed themselves.
 - Support at least 32,000 severely acutely malnourished children with ready to use therapeutic food.
 - Provide health services in the most conflict affected and inaccessible parts of the country.

Autonomy in a dynamic world



Autonomy in challenging environments

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) is launching a new competition to seek ideas and innovations that could improve autonomous systems across defence. Funding of up to £4 million is available to fund multiple projects over multiple phases.

In society, we are becoming increasingly dependent and trusting of unmanned, autonomous and semi-autonomous systems to operate our machinery, cars and even our home deliveries. Similarly, in defence, autonomous systems are driving a revolutionary change in military operations, transforming the battlespace with improved intelligence and mobility.

Future conflicts and military operations are anticipated to be in ever more challenging environments. Autonomous systems will be required to continue operating effectively and efficiently regardless of the environment. The challenge for autonomy is to mature autonomous systems with the capability to operate on demand, under all conditions that may be encountered. This includes natural conditions such as rugged landscapes, dense vegetation, dynamic wind speeds or high sea states; and manmade conditions such as congested and contested electromagnetic spaces.

All these factors affect the military effectiveness of current autonomous technologies.

We are seeking proposals for novel and innovative technologies to improve the capability of autonomous military systems in such challenging environments.

Full details are available in the [competition document](#).

Due to popular demand, an additional date has been added for the dial in event and 1-1 slots. Please register using the Eventbrite links in the [competition document](#).

The competition closes on Thursday 10 October 2019 at midday (BST).

Queries should be sent to accelerator@dstl.gov.uk.

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1. 30 August 2019 An additional date has been opened for the dial in event and 1-1 slots.
2. 14 August 2019 First published.

Directors found guilty of waste crimes

The Environment Agency has successfully brought those responsible to account for abandoning nearly 2,000 tonnes of waste at Shaw Road, Dudley in 2016.

On Tuesday 13 August, HHJ Kershaw sentenced Kevin Allan and Brian McIntosh to suspended sentences of imprisonment in addition to unpaid work. Randle Hawkins was ordered to complete unpaid work under the supervision of the Probation Service.

In June, jurors at Wolverhampton Crown Court convicted the directors of Rowanoak Waste Services Limited for their failure to comply with permit conditions and enforcement notices at the site known as Rowanoak. The Environment Agency used various enforcement tools to try and bring the site back into compliance, but those operating the site failed to act on the advice and guidance provided.

The site was then abandoned in 2016 with a significant amount of waste left in situ. Environment Agency officers worked with the new landowners and the waste was removed in March 2018.

Rowanoak Waste Services Limited and director Kevin Allan were found guilty on all counts relating to the illegal waste activities at Shaw Road. The company was fined £25,000 and Kevin Allan, who showed no remorse for his actions during the trial, received 12 months' imprisonment suspended for 12 months and was ordered to complete 100 hours' unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £40,000 towards the prosecution costs and disqualified from acting as a company director for three years. The court took into consideration Mr Allan's age, 60 years old, and his previous good character.

The court heard that operations at the site led to complaints of smells and dust. Employees of nearby businesses described the smell as 'stomach churning' and felt physically ill as a result. The smell was described as rotting vegetables and resembled that of sewage. The dust had an impact on neighbouring businesses, covering customers' cars and business vehicles. Debris from the waste piles blocked guttering and affected air conditioning at nearby factory units.

Mak Waste Ltd and its director Brian McIntosh, had previously admitted their part in the failure to comply with the conditions of the permit on the site and the continual failure to action requests for compliance made by

Environment Agency officers. Mak Waste was fined £18,000 and Mr McIntosh was found to have been allowed the breaches to occur and witnessed the site getting worse and worse, while making empty promises to Environment Officers. HHJ Kershaw took into account Mr McIntosh's good behaviour since the offences were committed and that he has two children, but passed a sentence of 10 months' imprisonment suspended for 12 months and ordered Mr McIntosh to complete 150 hours' unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £1,200 towards the prosecution costs and disqualified from being a director for five years.

Randle Hawkins was found guilty of deliberately failing to comply with a revocation notice. He was ordered to complete 100 hours' unpaid work and pay £1,000 towards prosecution costs. He was earlier cleared of four other charges relating to the breach of permit conditions and enforcement notice.

Edward Venables (formerly Boulton), also a director of Mak Waste Ltd, was found not guilty of all three charges against him.

Speaking after the case, the Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

Waste crime is a serious offence with tough penalties. It can damage the environment, blight local communities and undermine those who operate legally. We aim to disrupt, prevent and investigate illegal waste activity and take enforcement action where we can. In this case, those found guilty, by being in breach of their permit, continued to operate their site illegally and continually ignored the Environment Agency's efforts to reduce the waste.

The Environment Agency use all enforcement powers available where we believe environmental offences have been committed.

Allan, McIntosh and Hawkins have shown a complete disregard for the local community, subjecting local businesses to months of misery by illegally and inappropriately storing large quantities of waste on the site.

Everyone who handles waste has a duty of care to ensure their waste is handled correctly. Whether you are a business, local authority or householder you must make sure you know where your waste goes so it doesn't end up in the hands of illegal operators.

You can help disrupt and prevent waste crime activity by reporting it. The Environment Agency urge people to report waste crime on our Incident Hotline 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Going the extra historical mile

The milestones, two on the A616 at Midhopstones in South Yorkshire and four on the A64 near Scampston Hall and East Heselton in North Yorkshire, are restored thanks to Highways England's environment designated fund.

Back in the 19th century, the road network was developed for the use of horse and cart and milestones were installed to tell people how far they were from particular places.

Over the years many of these mileposts have been damaged or were removed during the world wars. Widening of the roads in the 20th century for vehicle use also removed many of these features. It is thought around 1,300 still exist on Yorkshire roads.

Highways England project manager Chris Dunn said:

Milestones were the sat navs of their day and they are recognised for their historical significance so it is important that we preserve them for the future.

We were able to restore these six milestones by repainting them to reduce rust so they won't deteriorate further. We have also cleared the excess vegetation that has grown around them so they can be easily spotted and appreciated.

Highways England's £300 million environment fund creates environmental opportunities alongside the road network and addresses historical environmental issues. The work was carried out in accordance with the English Heritage guidance.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.