

MOD to develop cutting-edge laser and radio frequency weapons

The state-of-the-art weapons systems, known as Directed Energy Weapons (DEW), are powered solely by electricity and operate without ammunition.

The systems could be fuelled by a vehicle's engine or a generator, significantly reducing their operating costs and providing unprecedented flexibility on the frontline.

In a Prior Information Notice (PIN) published this week, the MOD announced it is seeking to develop three new DEW demonstrators to explore the potential of the technology and accelerate its introduction onto the battlefield.

The laser weapons systems deploy high energy light beams to target and destroy enemy drones and missiles. Radio Frequency weapons are designed to disrupt and disable enemy computers and electronics.

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Laser and Radio Frequency technologies have the potential to revolutionise the battlefield by offering powerful and cost-effective weapons systems to our Armed Forces.

This significant investment demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our Armed Forces operate at the forefront of military technology.

Computer Generated Image illustrating the use of DEW on a Wildcat helicopter. Crown copyright.

The new systems are expected to be trialled in 2023 on Royal Navy ships and Army vehicles but, once developed, both technologies could be operated by all three services. The Armed Forces will use these exercises to get a better understanding of DEW, test the systems to their limits and assess how they could be integrated with existing platforms.

The MOD aims to invest up to £130m in this package of Directed Energy Weapons, including the construction of the demonstrators, the creation of a new Joint Programme Office and the recruitment of personnel to manage the programme.

These demonstrators are part of the MOD's "Novel Weapons Programme" which is responsible for the trial and implementation of innovative weapons systems to ensure the UK remains a world leader in military technology. They are expected to reach the frontline within 10 years.

The MOD already has plans for initial trials of laser weapons systems, with the Dragonfire demonstrator commissioned by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory to be tested later this year.

The Dragonfire represents a world-first in laser weapons technology, combining multiple laser beams to produce a weapons system that is more powerful than its predecessors and resistant to the most challenging environmental conditions.

The MOD also has over 30 years' experience in Radio Frequency DEW, during which time the UK has become a world leader in developing new power generation technologies and a global hub for the performance testing and evaluation of these systems.

[UN Human Rights Council 41: Sudan](#)

Thank you, Madam Vice-President.

The Sudanese people have shown bravery and perseverance in their dignified demands for a better future, and an end to authoritarian rule. We support their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

The UK welcomes the important progress made in agreeing a transition to civilian led government in Sudan. We commend the efforts of all sides to reach an agreement, and the African Union and Ethiopia for their critical role in mediating the deal. However, there is a long road ahead.

Despite this important progress the UK condemns in the strongest terms the brutal attacks by Sudanese security forces against peaceful protesters on 3 June. Attacks, which resulted in the deaths of over one hundred and the injury of many more. Attacks that included sexual assaults and the targeting of hospitals and those providing medical treatment to injured protesters. We welcome the commitment made by the parties in Khartoum to an independent and transparent investigation.

Sudan has received significant attention at this Council for many years, and we must not lose sight of the wider human rights situation and the past abuses. After decades of brutal autocratic rule in Sudan, the UK remains hopeful that Sudan's political transition will result in a civilian administration that is committed to upholding the rights of the Sudanese people, and we stand ready to support.

We call on this council to work with the Sudanese authorities to provide technical assistance and support for the development of relevant human rights' mechanisms to help Sudan meet it's international commitments and responsibilities, including through the opening of an in country OHCHR office.

The UK will continue to monitor the situation, with an aim of working with the Sudanese authorities to consider potential further steps. How can the international community play its part in achieving peace and stability in Sudan?

Thank you, Madam Vice-President.

Development of new antibiotics encouraged with new pharmaceutical payment system

The new trial will be led by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and NHS England and NHS Improvement.

It will test a 'subscription' style model that pays pharmaceutical companies upfront for access to drugs based on their usefulness to the NHS.

This will make it more attractive for companies to invest the estimated £1 billion it costs to develop a new drug, as they can be reassured they will still be paid for the drug even though it may be stored for reserves.

Currently, drugs companies are paid by volume of antibiotics sold, while the NHS is trying to reduce their use to prevent antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Low returns on investment in development mean industry is reluctant to invest in the research and clinical trials necessary to bring new antibiotics to market.

NICE and NHS England and NHS Improvement are calling for companies to identify products to be considered for the initial phase of the test.

The work will be evaluated from the start and findings will be shared with the rest of the world so that other healthcare systems can test similar models.

Antibiotics have started to fail, with resistant bacteria already causing more than 700,000 deaths globally every year, making it vital that antibiotics are used only when needed.

Today's announcements follows the government's [2040 AMR vision and 5-year national action plan](#), published in January, and the appointment of Professor Dame Sally Davies as the first UK Special Envoy on AMR.

The latest phase of the 'Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign' will launch at the beginning of coughs and colds season this October to help reduce inappropriate use of antibiotics.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, said:

There is no greater threat to global health than drug-resistant infections, yet there have been no major new antibiotic drug classes discovered since the 1980s.

Imagine a world in which a papercut can lead to infection that can't be controlled. We must stop that from happening. Tackling superbugs needs global leadership and peoples' lives depend on us finding a new way forward.

Our NHS is in a unique position to take a global lead in testing new payment models. We will take the lead but this is a global problem and we cannot succeed alone.

I am proud the UK is taking the first steps towards a solution and I am urging the rest of the world to join us in the fight against superbugs.

Health Minister Nicola Blackwood said:

Having a full pipeline of antimicrobials is critical in our efforts to address AMR, but currently not enough pharmaceutical companies are investing in the development of new drugs.

This project is an important step but it will only address global market failure if other countries do the same, which is why we want to involve as many countries as we can and share our learning from this work.

Today we are sending a strong signal to the rest of the world that there are workable models to stimulate investment in these vital medicines and that together we can tackle AMR.

British Embassy Bishkek announces call for bids: 2019-2020 projects

The programme provides small scale short term funding for projects that support activities directly connected with the UK's Foreign Policy priorities and the objectives of the British Embassy in Kyrgyz Republic. The UK places value on building and maintaining connections between the British and Kyrgyz people in a range of common areas.

The British Embassy in Kyrgyzstan works to develop and sustain the important bilateral relationship between the UK and the Kyrgyz Republic, supporting security, democratisation and prosperity. Our work includes efforts to deepen democracy and embed an international rules based system in Kyrgyz legislation; supporting defence and security cooperation, working to reduce conflict, encouraging sustainable economic growth, and providing modern and efficient services to British nationals.

The programme allocates funding through a competitive bidding process.

Bidding round

We expect project initiatives to contribute to the following objectives:

Human rights and civil society

We seek project bids on a range of subjects, including (but not in any priority order below):

- democracy
- civil society and rule of law
- environment
- freedom of expression and association
- equality and non-discrimination
- human rights
- media freedom
- public diplomacy

Building connections between the UK and Kyrgyzstan in areas of common interest

Bids could focus on fostering connections and exchange of expertise, or they could promote policy dialogue and debate, on a wide range of subjects, including (but not limited to, or in priority order):

Science

- science and innovation projects that enhance UK scientists' collaboration with Kyrgyzstan's leading scientists and share scientific excellence and research infrastructure
- researcher links in areas of UK and Kyrgyzstan excellence
- building the capacity of Kyrgyz science to internationalise
- engaging girls in STEM

Climate

- specialist education in sustainable development
- climate change impact reduction
- reducing the ecological footprint

Tourism and sport

- promoting engagement on tourism and sport

Trade

- the ease of doing business and economic diversification in Kyrgyzstan
- trade barriers
- entrepreneurship

Submission procedure

We invite proposals for projects of up to three months duration (May 2019 to mid March 2020). Proposals would need to identify a clear and complete set of objectives and relevant activities, with activity-based budget. Proposals for 2019/2020 financial year received after 29 February 2019 would be considered in the next financial year.

Project proposals must have a clear purpose supported by achievable and measurable outputs (e.g. events and reports) and outcomes (what the project aims to help address through its activity). The project costs must give the equivalent value in pounds sterling.

Project bids can be up to £10,000.

Applicants are requested to fill in the Project Proposal Form and Activity Based Budget in English and to send them electronically to the British Embassy in Bishkek at: UKin.KyrgyzRepublic@fco.gov.uk indicating 'IP: Project bid and name of your organisation' in the subject field.

[Project proposal form](#) (ODT, 29.3KB) [ABB template](#) (ODS, 10.4KB) [INT Concept Note](#) (ODT, 1.11MB)

Incomplete submissions will NOT be accepted.

Please note that bidding is competitive and only selected projects will receive funding. The Embassy reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without incurring any obligation to inform the affected applicant/s of the grounds of such acceptance or rejection. Due to the volume of bids expected we will not be able to provide feedback on unsuccessful bids.

[Government to launch new modern slavery research centre](#)

Efforts to uncover the true scale of modern slavery, expose more trafficking networks and better inform our action to stamp out these crimes have been

boosted today following the government's investment of £10 million to create a cutting-edge Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery and Human Rights.

The new research centre, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Strategic Priorities Fund and led by UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), will bring together academics, businesses and charities to drive forward new studies, share knowledge, and improve collaboration both at home and overseas, to further strengthen our response.

The announcement comes as the government publishes its [response to the Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act](#) and launches a [consultation on strengthening and improving transparency in supply chains legislation](#). The independent review, which was published on 22 May, praised the "ground-breaking" Modern Slavery Act and made a number of recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the act.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

More than a 100 years ago the world condemned slavery to the history books, but the stark reality for around 40 million men, women and children is that they are still trapped in modern slavery.

As both Home Secretary and Prime Minister I have endeavoured to shine a light on this hidden crime, to speak out for victims and put modern slavery firmly on the domestic and international agenda.

There is much we can be proud of in our progress so far, but we need to accelerate our efforts, better share knowledge and build on our expertise.

That is why we commissioned an Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act to ensure our laws are keeping pace with the rapidly evolving nature of these crimes, and why I am pleased to support new, innovative research to inform global efforts to end this barbaric crime by 2030.

Representing UKRI, Professor Andrew Thompson, Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, said:

The Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre will for the first time bring together researchers, policy makers, NGOs (non-governmental organisations), businesses, and victims on a scale not seen before.

The centre will seek out solutions to this dehumanising and abhorrent crime by mobilising world-class research from the arts, humanities, social sciences and beyond. The centre will provide new independent, impartial insight and analysis into the causes and

consequences of modern slavery – speaking to questions of prevention, enforcement, supply chains, victims’ recovery and survivor needs.

Following the Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act, the Home Office will now consult on proposals to enhance transparency and drive compliance with the legislation, which requires businesses to publish a statement setting out what they are doing to tackle modern slavery and forced labour in their supply chains here in the UK and overseas. The consultation also seeks views on proposals to expand the law to cover the public sector and its vast purchasing power.

As part of this work the Home Office has written directly to 17,000 organisations in scope of the legislation, and it is estimated that, to date, 60% of in-scope organisations have published a statement. Those that do not comply risk being publicly named following an audit of companies and the new consultation will consider further enforcement of the act, including the possibility of a new civil penalty scheme.

It comes days after the UK’s largest modern slavery prosecution, which saw traffickers jailed for between four-and-a-half years and 11 years.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Modern slavery is a sickening form of inhumane exploitation that has absolutely no place in society.

Our world-leading Modern Slavery Act is tackling this hidden crime head-on and we are now taking decisive steps to strengthen it further – ensuring victims are protected and perpetrators are brought to justice.

Later today the Prime Minister will host a dinner in Downing Street on modern slavery, bringing together leaders in the field including Cindy McCain, Chair of the McCain Institute for International Leadership, which works to combat modern slavery.

This follows the Prime Minister’s award from the McCain Institute in October 2018 for her international leadership on modern slavery. Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, will also attend the discussions designed to strengthen and prioritise our response.

Commenting ahead of the event Cindy McCain, Chair of the McCain Institute for International Leadership said:

Prime Minister May has been an advocate for change and a force for good in the global fight against trafficking. We are lucky to have her on our side and count her as a partner in our efforts.

She was vital in the passage of the Modern Slavery Act and has been a leading voice in signalling to all that governments, together with their non-profit partners, can and must take the lead on combatting this heinous global crime. I look forward to continuing to tackle the scourge of trafficking with her.