

[News story: Thousands of troops from UK-led force begin milestone maritime training deployment](#)

A total of 3,000 military personnel and 17 vessels from nine nations will contribute to the first major maritime training deployment of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) in the coming weeks.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

From Denmark to Lithuania, from Sweden to Estonia, Baltic Protector will leave potential adversaries in no doubt of our collective resolve and ability to defend ourselves.

This force is a key component of European security, a force of friends that complements existing structures and demonstrates that we are stronger together.

Baltic Protector marks the first deployment of the UK-led JEF Maritime Task Group, with command of the group conducted by the Royal Navy's HMS Albion.

Today she joins forces with vessels and personnel from Denmark, Estonia, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and the Netherlands for the start of integration training in the western Baltic and eastern North Sea – the first of three phases making up the deployment.

In June, the JEF will then demonstrate its ability to not only operate independently but also support existing multinational organisations when the task group will join NATO Allies on the US-led Exercise Baltops, taking part off Germany and Sweden.

The third and final phase of the deployment will see the task group link up with land forces in the eastern Baltic – including the UK-led battlegroup in Estonia which makes up part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence– by conducting a series of shore landings and raids.

Established at the 2014 NATO Summit and launched a year later, the JEF became fully operational with the signing of a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding last year in London.

As an adaptable high-readiness force that can be stood up anywhere, at any time and in any environment, the JEF can cover a range of tasks, including combat operations, deterrence, or humanitarian support.

The joint force is a clear example of collective strength. This joint working

has been seen previously such as during the Ebola outbreak – as part of the response, the UK, the Netherlands and Norway combined resources on land, at sea and in the air. This demonstrates the type of integrated mission the JEF could be mobilised to support.

[Press release: UK Government Minister for Wales Welcomes Progress on Mid Wales Growth Deal](#)

UK Government Minister, Lord Bourne met with Ceredigion Council Leader, Cllr Ellen ap Gwyn and her Powys counterpart Cllr Rosemarie Harris in Welshpool to discuss the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

During his meeting, Lord Bourne praised the significant progress made in the region towards an ambitious economic vision for mid Wales. The new 'inter-authority agreement' will allow the councils to work together and pool resources, to produce a compelling proposal for key projects across both counties. Once the region agrees on those, discussions can begin on a formal 'Heads of Terms Agreement'.

The UK Government is continuing to engage with leading mid Wales businesses, to encourage private sector support for the deal. Following on from his meeting with the council leaders, Lord Bourne visited DAVLEC Ltd and Northern Industrial Battery Services, both of whom are based in Powys. During the visits, Lord Bourne discussed barriers to growth in the region and encouraged them to assist in the development of the deal. He also outlined the necessity of the private sector in driving forward the UK Government's vision for economic growth in mid Wales.

UK Government Minister for Wales, Lord Bourne said:

The approval of the inter-authority agreement demonstrates a necessary step forward in the progress towards a transformative Mid Wales Growth Deal.

It is encouraging to see that Council Leaders are coming together to look at the strengths and opportunities of the region's economy, gaining significant momentum in the process.

Empowering local areas to generate economic growth, create jobs and drive investment is vital in ensuring every part of the UK can prosper. The UK Government remains committed to supporting the deal and will continue to encourage private sector investment.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Davlec Ltd are a family owned electronics manufacturing company founded in 1983 based in Welshpool, Mid-Wales. The company designs and builds state of the art electronics at their Welshpool base for a variety of sectors.
- Northern Industrial Battery Services is a leading accredited specialist standby power company based in Welshpool. The company offers a range of products and services to provide expert independent technical advice, products and services to meet various industrial standby power requirements.

News story: Number of servicewomen on UN Peacekeeping operations to increase

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster commemorated the sacrifice and successes made by UN Peacekeepers around the world during a ceremony at the Cenotaph.

As a demonstration of the commitment to UN Peacekeeping operations and the importance that they play in protecting communities, the Defence Secretary has announced a number of new measures to reaffirm the role of servicewomen on these important operations:

- Ensure enough UK women are deployed to the UN peacekeeping operation in Cyprus to enable mixed gender patrols and commit to a minimum of 6% of personnel being women who are available for patrols
- Conduct a MOD study to identify barriers to women joining peacekeeping operations and action the results of the study
- Reaffirm the commitment that women make up at least 15% of UK personnel on UN peacekeeping missions by 2028

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The protection of innocent civilians is some of the most valuable work that our Armed Forces undertake, and it is often done in the most dangerous places in the world.

Our armed forces already provide an invaluable contribution to peacekeeping operations both by protecting vulnerable women and empowering them to help bring about lasting peace. Having women in these roles is absolutely vital. On the day that we remember all those who have contributed to the successes of peacekeeping around the world, it is right that we redouble our efforts to engrain the role of women into our own operations.

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

It is important to pay tribute to the more than 3800 UN peacekeepers who have given their lives in the name of peace. We owe our peacekeepers a huge debt of gratitude, and we owe it to them to ensure they are the best they can be.

That is why the UK Government remains committed to supporting the UN Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping agenda, and promoting the "three Ps" approach including better Planning of missions; more Pledges of quality people and equipment; and better Performance.

It is right that our peacekeeping forces better reflect those they serve and protect and increasing the number of women in peacekeeping and promoting women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes is a fundamental part of the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The UK currently has around 600 personnel deployed on UN peacekeeping operations around the world, including approximately 270 in Cyprus and 300 in South Sudan.

British troops in South Sudan have recently begun work to build a new hospital in Malakal, their second for the UN mission, in a display of the diversity of capabilities provided by UK personnel. The Royal Engineers have been tasked to work with the Indian Army and build a new hospital, delivering vital medical support and allowing the UN to continue to deliver their mandate in Malakal, where there is a large Protection of Civilians camp.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

Across the globe we have hundreds of highly skilled servicemen and women who, in challenging conditions, put their lives on the line to protect innocent civilians and contribute to lasting peace in the places that need it the most.

In building this new hospital the Royal Engineers are allowing the UN mission in South Sudan to continue and ensure the safety of thousands of displaced people who otherwise would be vulnerable to dangers that many in the UK cannot comprehend.

Speech: Protecting civilians across the globe

Thank you Madam President.

A century ago when International Humanitarian Law was still in its infancy, civilians represented only 10 to 15% of total casualties in armed conflict. Today civilians account for more than 80% of all casualties. And as we sit here today, civilians are bearing the brunt of conflicts in Syria or South Sudan, in Yemen or Libya, in the Lake Chad Basin or the Democratic Republic of Congo. The international community's failure to prevent mass atrocities such as the Srebrenica massacre in 1995 or the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 remains a stain on our collective conscience. Anyone witnessing the bombing of schools and hospitals in Idlib or the plight of children starving to death in Yemen might be forgiven for wondering why we have not made more progress since those dark days.

So Madam President, we need to keep strengthening the normative framework- to support robust protection for the needs of specific groups who are particularly at risk in conflict situations. Much progress has been made in recent years on protections of groups such as women and girls, children, internally displaced persons, refugees, journalists and media professionals. But it is important that we continue to examine where further development can be made. And that's why we are very proud of working with Poland on a draft resolution on Persons with Disabilities in armed conflict in this Council. And I very much agree with what the Minister of Germany said on their need for us to be examining the use of high explosives in urban areas.

But our priority should be to redouble our efforts to ensure implementation of established International Humanitarian Law and this Council's resolutions on the Protection of Civilians and to combat impunity. Protection of Civilians should be integrated into this Council's approach to country situations. For example in monitoring the ceasefire around Hodeidah in Yemen. In some cases out of necessity we may need to carve out separate humanitarian tracks from wider conflict resolution efforts, such as cross-border authorisations in Syria. But we must be clear this cannot substitute for supporting efforts to find a viable long term political solution to conflict. Madam President, eight of the fourteen UN peacekeeping missions operational around the world are mandated to protect civilians. So we need to work to ensure that wider efforts to improve peacekeeping performance in general,

include a specific focus on improving protection of civilians. Better mandating, as we've been asked by the Secretary-General in his Action for Peacekeeping agenda, is of course part of this. But ensuring that protection elements in mandates are translated into a clear task on the ground, will require mission leadership and personnel to understand the practical implementations and implications of their protection duties. There needs to be an integrated approach in our missions and across the United Nations if protection strategies are to come off the page and on to the ground. All troop and police contributing countries also need to ensure their uniform personnel are trained to the required core standards on Protection of Civilians. This is a key part of operational readiness. And peace enforcement operations – mandated or supported by the Council – such as AMISOM or the G5 Sahel must also have strong training and compliance frameworks. And it would be good to make sure that DPO is working with those troop contributing and police contributing countries to understand how such training can be most effective and report back on it, so that member states, both trainers and trainees can improve their performance.

This Council should receive regular reporting on mission performance in relation to Protection of Civilians as part of the wider performance reporting under 2436. Where serious protection failures arise within missions, we will continue to support the Secretariat in holding individuals, contingents and mission leadership accountable and to make sure we all learn lessons.

Now Madam President, I agree very much with you that protection is not only a matter for UN peacekeeping missions. The primary responsibility to protect all civilians on their territory, of course, rests with host states – with Member States of this United Nations. In order for peace to be enduring and sustainable, host state authorities and civil society actors all have a role to play.

And I agree very much with what Federica Borrello had to say on the need for national plans. The UK has a human security policy for our armed forces and we published a voluntary national review of the domestic implementation of International Humanitarian Law and we're very happy to work with anybody else interested in such an approach. So in this context, we welcome the focus on the role of local communities in this open debate, as they not only have an important voice in conflict resolution but are best placed to understand their own environments. And we need to hear more from them.

Madam President, turning to accountability. Whatever progress is made on implementation: strengthening protection of civilians over the next 20 years will also depend on how we collectively address the issue of accountability, including of course in this Council. Combating impunity is partly about establishing robust mechanisms for justice and accountability. And in some cases international mechanisms such as those tribunals set up for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Court of course, sanctions regimes or the UN investigative team for accountability of Daesh – as we've set up in Iraq – will be the best tools at our disposal. In other cases accountability can best be delivered through domestic or hybrid mechanisms such as the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic or the establishment

of a hybrid court as provided for in the South Sudan Peace Agreement. And we can also achieve accountability through national prosecution. I hope very much that those gathering evidence of crimes in Syria or against their Rohingya will one day see that evidence presented in effective tribunals in Syria and in Myanmar. But if not, those responsible should be held to account wherever national law permits. Accountability is about doing what is right by the victims and survivors of atrocities against civilians. But it is also a key condition for building sustainable peace. If post-conflict efforts to establish good governance, security and the Rule of Law – and crucially to maintain peace – are to succeed, then accountability is vital for the rebuilding of trust and confidence between civilian populations and the parties to the conflict.

Madam President, let me conclude by saying that this Council has an important role to play. When we receive reports of attacks on civilians, on schools, on hospitals and medical facilities, we need collectively and individually to be ready to say what we see and to say who is behind it. It can be uncomfortable to do so. It can cut across political priorities or international friendships. But for the sake of all, we must do so. After all Madam President, if we do not speak up for other countries' civilians when they are attacked who will speak for our own?

Thank you Madam President.

Mr President, I would like to take the floor in order to clarify the reference to Srebrenica in our statement to the Council this morning. The United Kingdom is clear that the Srebrenica massacre was an act of genocide, as confirmed by the judgements of the ICTY and the ICJ.

Press release: HS2 pop-up engagement space encourages communities to get involved

The roadshow will highlight to the public all the opportunities HS2 is offering, including jobs, skills and education prospects, as well as how to apply for funding as part of the £40 million earmarked for community and business projects along the route.

Starting from Saturday 25 May, HS2 will be heading to Birmingham Pride then making several stops including:

- Quanton on Sunday 26 May at Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
- Staffordshire County Show on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 May
- Solihull on Saturday 8 June at Solihull Carnival
- Silverstone on Sunday 9 June at the British GT Championship

- Camden on Thursday 13 June at Swiss College Market Place
- Ealing on Friday 21 June at Ealing Green
- Rickmansworth on Saturday 22 June at Croxley Revels Festival
- Coventry on Friday 28 June at Broadgate

Mark Thurston, CEO of HS2 Ltd, said:

HS2 is more than a railway and there are many opportunities for those who live along the line of route and beyond. As a transformative project for the country, we aim to be creative in our approach to engagement and want to interact with as many different communities as possible.

Our new mobile engagement roadshow is just one of the ways we are reaching out to people, and ensuring the opportunities HS2 offers are available to everyone. As part of our drive to be a leading project in our approach to engagement, our teams are working closely with the local communities they serve, and someone from each area will be on hand to speak with visitors at all of our roadshow events.

Communities, Conversations & Connections

The engagement roadshow – entitled Communities, Conversations & Connections – will also highlight the HS2 Helpdesk, as well as email, freephone and minicom service which is available to the public all day, every day of the year for all queries relating to the new railway.

Mark Thurston added:

At the peak of construction we will need 30,000 people to deliver the new high speed railway, and HS2 is investing in young people now to get our future workforce ready. They are the people who will help us deliver HS2 as it extends from London to the Midlands and then on to the North. Our roadshow will also give visitors more information on how they can play their part in Britain's new high speed railway.

Supply chain opportunities

HS2 Ltd is also encouraging businesses to attend the roadshow, as specialist staff will be on hand to discuss supply chain opportunities. They will explain how SMEs in particular can bid for contracts on the project.

Julie King, Community and Stakeholder Engagement Director, HS2 Ltd, said:

Last year we engaged with more than 36,000 people at over 2,000 engagement events across the whole HS2 route. Our new community engagement roadshow allows us to showcase the opportunities provided by HS2 in more areas than ever before.

Experts from all areas of the project will be on hand, along with a wealth of resources to experience on the trailer or take away, ensuring that people can get the most out of this crucial investment in the UK's national transport system.

The mobile engagement will be taking place throughout May and June at 14 locations along the Phase One (Birmingham to London) and Phase 2a (Birmingham to Crewe) sections of the route.

Roadshow show dates and locations

May 2019

- Saturday 25 May – Birmingham at Birmingham Pride (Rotunda Square), 10am-8pm
- Sunday 26 May – Quainton at Buckinghamshire Railway Centre's Spring Steam Gala, 10.30am-5pm
- Wednesday 29 May – Staffordshire at Staffordshire County Show (day one), 8am-8pm
- Thursday 30 May – Staffordshire at Staffordshire County Show (day two), 8am-6pm

June 2019

- Sunday 2 June – Brackley on the Piazza, 10am-5pm
- Wednesday 5 June – Lichfield at Market Square, 10am-7pm
- Thursday 6 June – Leamington Spa at Town Hall, 10am-7pm
- Saturday 8 June – Solihull at Solihull Carnival, 11am-6.30pm
- Sunday 9 June – Silverstone at British GT Championship – Silverstone 500 including Supercar Sunday, 8.30am-6pm
- Tuesday 11 June – Amersham at King George V Playing Fields, 10am-7pm
- Thursday 13 June – Camden at Swiss College Market Place, 10am-7pm
- Wednesday 19 June – Uxbridge at High Street (intu Uxbridge Shopping Centre), 10am-6pm
- Friday 21 June – Ealing at Ealing Green, 10am-6pm
- Saturday 22 June – Rickmansworth at Croxley Revels Festival, 12.30-5.30pm
- Friday 28 June – Coventry at Broadgate by the Lady Godiva statue, 10am-7pm

Press and media enquiries

For enquiries during office working hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm 020 7944 6149

For enquiries outside of these hours and at the weekend 020 7944 0550

The press and media enquiries line is for accredited journalists only