

Defence Secretary presents Operation PITTING medals to personnel

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has presented medals to Armed Forces personnel who served on Operation PITTING to mark Armed Forces Week.

The ceremony at Permanent Joint Headquarters, North London, was one of the first medal presentations for those involved in one of the largest and fastest humanitarian evacuation operations in military history.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

As one of the largest humanitarian evacuations in history, Operation PITTING demonstrated the resilience and commitment of our Armed Forces.

Today I am honoured to award these courageous individuals their medals in recognition of putting the safety and lives of others above their own.

The ceremony today at Permanent Joint Headquarters will award 30 personnel who served on Operation PITTING. Personnel will receive the Afghanistan operational service medal with an Operation PITTING clasp. Hundreds more personnel will receive the medal in the coming weeks. Those who already have the Afghanistan operational service medal will receive the new Operation PITTING clasp.

Commanded from the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters, Operation PITTING began on 13 August 2021 and assisted those eligible for relocation to the UK. Operation PITTING was the largest humanitarian aid operation in over 70 years, evacuating thousands of Afghans and British nationals from Kabul.

Armed Forces personnel were deployed to Afghanistan and together with colleagues in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the UK Border Force, in just over sixteen days, evacuated over 15,000 people and brought them to safety in the UK.

Eligible UK Border Force and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office staff will also receive medals in due course.

The ceremony takes place in Armed Forces Week which is a chance for people to come together to thank our Armed Forces, who defend our way of life, protect British citizens around the world, and strengthen our relationships with our allies and partners.

Armed Forces Week will culminate in a national event, this year held in Scarborough, on 25 June, while other events take place around the country.

Consultation launched on proposed acquisition of Ultra Electronics Holdings plc by Cobham Ultra Acquisitions Limited

News story

A consultation on the proposed acquisition of Ultra Electronics Holdings plc, a UK defence company, by Cobham Ultra Acquisitions Limited has been launched today



A consultation on steps to address the national security concerns raised by the proposed acquisition of Ultra Electronics Holdings plc, a UK defence company, by Cobham Ultra Acquisitions Limited has been launched by the government today (23 June 2022).

Cobham Ultra Acquisitions Limited is a defence, aerospace and communications company that was acquired by US private equity firm Advent International Ltd (Advent) in January 2020.

The Business Secretary is minded to accept undertakings offered by Cobham Ultra Acquisitions Limited to address the concerns.

This decision follows advice from the Ministry of Defence.

The proposed undertakings are now out for public consultation until midnight at the end of 3 July 2022, in accordance with the process set out in the Enterprise Act 2002.

No decision will be taken by the Business Secretary until the consultation has concluded and the representations have been carefully considered.

The full text of the proposed undertakings can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). In summary

they would deliver:

- SecureCos: creating two new 'SecureCos', UK legal entities which encompass the UK Ultra facilities that deliver the sensitive capabilities to HM Government.
- Board Representation: placing an HM Government appointed non-executive director on the Board of each SecureCo to protect UK national security interests and provide oversight of any disinvestment or divestment of sensitive capability.
- Articles of Association: giving HM Government the right to approve the Articles of Association of each SecureCo and draft their strategic objectives which would transfer to any future owner, locking that protection in. Any changes would be subject to the HM Government Director's agreement.
- Step-In Rights: giving HM Government strong step-in rights (similar to a "special share"), enabling transfer of ownership of the SecureCos on national security grounds, either to a third- party or the Government.
- Access to Intellectual Property: giving HM Government the power to access Intellectual Property and/or to transfer knowledge or training necessary for HMG to exercise its step-in rights effectively.
- ITAR Protections: requiring Advent to institute an HM Government-approved control plan to prevent International Traffic in Arms Regulations controls applying to ITAR-free products designed and manufactured by Ultra.

This decision on the national security considerations is separate to any discussions on the economic implications of the proposed merger.

The Business Secretary's decision is made in a quasi-judicial capacity, which means that he must act, and be seen to act, in a scrupulously fair and impartial manner.

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UK signs up to global coalition on sustainable food production

News story

UK to join Sustainable Productivity Growth Coalition (SPG) to share knowledge of best practice on green agriculture and food production.



The UK has signed up to a global coalition which works to speed up the move towards more sustainable food production, Environment Secretary George Eustice announced today (Thursday 23 June).

He confirmed that the UK will join the [Sustainable Productivity Growth Coalition \(SPG\)](#) – an international group of countries, academic and research organisations and trade bodies that aims to improve agricultural productivity in an environmentally sustainable way.

The SPG Coalition was launched in 2021 at the United Nations' Food Systems Summit and members include the USA, European Union, Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. It is also supported by a raft of academic institutions and trade bodies representing industries including grain, dairy and livestock from all over the world.

Members of the Coalition share with each other information about best practice, lessons learned and innovative evidence-based way to boost productivity in a sustainable way, and promote them at public events and on public platforms.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

I am pleased to announce today that the UK will join the Sustainable Productivity Growth Coalition convened by the United States. I look forward to working with our international partners in this dialogue on innovation, science and sustainable agriculture.

Report by the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan: UK response, June 2022

Thank you, Mister Chair. I would like to join other speakers in welcoming you Ambassador Frobarth back to the Permanent Council.

Kazakhstan is an important partner for the United Kingdom: our bilateral cooperation spans various fields including trade, energy, education, and security. As we celebrate the strength of our bilateral ties during this 30th anniversary year, we look forward to expanding our cooperation, working to fulfil OSCE commitments.

Ambassador Frobarth, I was pleased to read in your report of the frequent engagement you have had with other international organisations and civil society; as well as your facilitation of separate visits by ODIHR Director, Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the OSCE's Chair-in-Office. We encourage active engagement with civil society and involving a broad range of stakeholders in your work.

Mister Chair, I would like to draw attention to three areas of the report that I think deserve special attention.

First, we particularly support the work of the Programme Office on anti-money laundering, combatting terrorist financing, and anti-corruption. We welcome the OSCE-supported development of an action plan on measures to enhance legislation, develop information systems, and strengthen capacity. We look forward to hearing at a later date about the plan's implementation.

As your report recognises, anti-corruption compliance is a main tool in the prevention and the detection of corruption in government institutions. Societies with less corruption are more equitable, prosperous and so more secure.

Second, we thank the Programme Office for their work in supporting the National Human Rights Commissioner. Now that this office has constitutional status, this will be an important area to focus efforts. Also, work on strengthening the constitutional court will be key now that it has been re-established, if there is an opportunity to do so.

Third, strengthening the rule of law, including improving access to justice, discussing challenges faced by legal practitioners and judges, and sharing best practice of guaranteeing accountability and transparency in court

rulings. Again, we look forward to hearing about the implementation of the resultant recommendations on how to further strengthen access to justice.

Related, we note that the report references the constitutional amendments, describing them as advancing the most important institutional and human rights principles of the reform agenda. We hope that these amendments, along with the President's ambition for further political, judicial and economic reforms, will constitute a positive step forward in strengthening political pluralism, democracy, and human rights in Kazakhstan.

We look forward to the assessment of the referendum's assessment mission, and encourage Kazakhstan to implement any recommendations it may make.

And finally on gender equality. I was pleased to read about activity on the promotion of women's economic empowerment, women's participation in politics and decision-making, gender equality, and gender mainstreaming in the security sector. I would encourage the Programme Office to find ways to promote gender mainstreaming in every project the office undertakes.

I would like to finish by again thanking you Dr Frobarth for your presentation today. I know that my colleagues in the British Embassy in Nur Sultan are eager to partner with your Office and stand ready to support Kazakhstan in continuing its reform policies, meeting the aspirations of its people, and building security and prosperity.

DIO awards £117m worth of contracts to support US Visiting Forces

The contracts, awarded by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), will provide hard facilities management services to United States (US) Air Force bases at; RAF Lakenheath, RAF Mildenhall, RAF Croughton, RAF Molesworth, RAF Alconbury, RAF Fairford and RAF Menwith Hill.

The contracts will support current and future operational requirements by providing property maintenance, repairs, servicing, and hard facilities management to buildings used by the US Forces, as well as housing at Lakenheath.

They were awarded to; VIVO Defence for RAF Lakenheath, RAF Alconbury, RAF Molesworth, RAF Croughton, RAF Fairford and RAF Menwith Hill, and to Mitie for RAF Mildenhall.

The contracts, which also include the provision for a further £46m in additional works, have been developed in close collaboration with the US Air Force to ensure that the needs of the users on each base have been fully considered.

Lessons learned from the delivery of previous FM services have helped shape the new contracts, which incorporate best practice and recognised industry standards.

Tender evaluations were weighted to quality rather than price with the contracts designed to deliver an improved service through more effective and collaborative contract management.

David Brewer, DIO's Chief Operating Officer said:

We are proud of our relationship with the US Air Force and want to ensure we are providing them with the best possible service.

These contracts represent a step-change in how we deliver facilities management services to the US Visiting Forces and we have worked closely with our US colleagues to design these new contracts to ensure they reflect their needs.

Brigadier General George Dietrich, Director of Logistics, Engineering, and Force Protection for US Air Forces in Europe and Africa, said:

The award of these new base maintenance contracts are a very welcome and important step for US Forces in the United Kingdom. We are looking forward to continuing our relationship with DIO over the life of this contract and beyond.

Jerry Moloney, Managing Director of VIVO Defence Services, said

We are delighted that VIVO has been awarded these contracts. This important award reinforces our position as a key supplier to DIO and Defence. We are grateful to the MOD and DIO for the trust they are placing in us and look forward to continuing to build on our parent companies' existing relationships with the United States Visiting Forces.

Brian Talbot, Managing Director, Central Government & Defence, for Mitie, said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this new contract by DIO and are proud to support the United States Air Force 100th Air Refueling Wing based at RAF Mildenhall. We look forward to improving these important services by empowering our exceptional colleagues on the ground and deploying our industry-leading technology.

The contracts are for three years, with the potential to extend by a further

two, based on performance, and are expected to come into service in December 2022.