

[News story: Top industry group pledges to support veteran entrepreneurs](#)

The Institute of Directors (IoD) became the latest organisation to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant yesterday at their annual conference in London.

The IoD's Covenant pledges also include allowing veterans to access their organisation's expert network of advice and resources for entrepreneurs, joining with the MOD on forging stronger links between business and the military, and encouraging businesses to help the small number of veterans who struggle with mental health issues.

Earl Howe and Stephen Martin sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

The signing comes as National Express, the first business to sign the Covenant in 2013, renewed their commitment to the military community at an event on Horse Guards Parade.

The signings demonstrate how the support for the Armed Forces Covenant has grown across the UK since it was first introduced as part of the Armed Forces Act 2011, with over 2,200 organisations having pledged their support.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly.

Institute of Directors

Defence Minister Earl Howe attended the annual Institute of Directors Open House conference in Pall Mall yesterday to countersign the Armed Forces Covenant with Director General Stephen Martin.

Defence Minister for the House of Lords Earl Howe said:

The Institute of Directors signing the Armed Forces Covenant sends a powerful message to its members and those in the wider economy that they are a Forces-friendly organisation, helping to attract high-quality Service leavers who bring with them a wide range of skills and experience.

Stephen Martin, Director General of the Institute of Directors, said:

I'm extremely proud to signing the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Institute of Directors, and I look forward to the IoD's continued engagement with the Ministry of Defence. In signing the Covenant, the IoD will help to ensure that the immense contribution the armed forces make to our society and to business does not go unrecognised. Not only do service personnel provide the security

and freedom that underpins our lives, but they also have the potential to become great assets to the UK economy, bringing the wide array of skills and experience they have gained to businesses activity the country.

In becoming a signatory to the covenant, we will use the tools at our disposal to highlight the many benefits of employing those coming out of the armed forces. In keeping with our Royal Charter, we will also look to help budding ex-services entrepreneurs to establish the networks, confidence, and skills they need to start and scale their own businesses.

The IOD will open its 2,500 members strong IoD99 networking and social events to ex-service entrepreneurs and champion stronger links between the business community and the Armed Forces, showcasing those that highlight the benefits to employers of taking on ex-Service personnel.

National Express

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood countersigned National Express' Covenant renewal alongside their Group Chief Executive Dean Finch during a networking event at Horse Guards Parade in central London yesterday. A Covenant branded National Express coach, which will be navigating the London airport routes, was parked on Horse Guards for a photoshoot with the Queen's Guard to mark the occasion.

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood at the National Express re-signing on Horse Guards Parade.

National Express Group Chief Executive Dean Finch said:

We're very proud to have been the first company to sign the Covenant and I am delighted we are signing an even greater commitment today. Armed Forces personnel and their families do a great service to this country and it is right that companies like ours do what we can to support them.

We employ many ex-services members and current reservists and also want to recognise their significant contribution to our company and the country. Our extended commitments demonstrate both the success of our first covenant and our commitment to growing this important partnership with the Ministry of Defence. I would like to thank all involved in this great initiative.

National Express will offer guaranteed interviews to service leavers and their families for all National Express roles across Coach and Bus, provide ten days extra leave for staff in the Reserve Forces, and offer free bus travel to families visiting soldiers at the Military Hospital at the QE in Birmingham and to volunteers on Remembrance Sunday.

The company already employs over 40 former forces personnel and reservists in a variety of roles including: drivers, health and safety officers, bus engineers, and customer service advisors from all over the Armed Forces, ranking from Private all the way up to Major.

[News story: Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government response](#)

On Sunday 4 March Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

Latest update

Prime Minister Theresa May gave a [statement to Parliament on 14 March](#). Russia has provided no explanation as to how this agent came to be used in the UK, and there is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian State was culpable for the attempted murder of Mr Skripal and his daughter. This represents an unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister stated that the UK government will:

- expel 23 Russian diplomats who have been identified as undeclared intelligence officers
- develop proposals for new legislative powers to harden our defences against all forms of Hostile State Activity
- make full use of existing powers to enhance our efforts to monitor and track the intentions of those travelling to the UK who could be engaged in activity that threatens the security of the UK and of our allies

Earlier statements

On 8 March the Home Secretary Amber Rudd gave an [initial statement on the investigation](#) into events in Salisbury. This followed Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's [response to an Urgent Question](#) in Parliament on 6 March.

On 12 March [Prime Minister Theresa May gave a statement](#) in Parliament. Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others. The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the BBC](#) and reiterated the Prime Minister's message.

Find out more about Russian state aggression in the past few

years

[Pattern of Russian state aggression](#)

International response

The Prime Minister spoke with world leaders about the ongoing investigation. Each expressed their solidarity with the UK:

The Foreign Secretary also [called for a united response](#) with our international counterparts.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office also raised this issue in international forums:

Advice and guidance

[News story: DVLA opening hours: Easter 2018](#)

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[News story: New storage facility is ready for waste](#)



The Interim Storage Facility is ready to go and help us empty the ponds.

The Interim Storage Facility is paving the way for intermediate level waste to be removed from one of the sites priority high hazard retrieval facilities.

The completion of the waste store was marked by a special event attended by the project teams, the ISF supply chain and representatives from Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

Sellafield Ltd's Waste Retrievals Director John Oliver said:

We talk about moving legacy waste to a safer place; well, this is one of those safer places – a modern, fit-for-purpose storage facility which has been built using a design template already successfully proven within the NDA estate.

Along with the other stores currently under construction, the Interim Storage Facility will be a vital part of our waste retrievals mission in the future.

Duncan Thompson, NDA Sellafield Programme Director added:

The completion of the ISF project is a fantastic example of the progress Sellafield has made in developing and implementing a fit-for-purpose facility that is helping to accelerate the mission of decommissioning and reducing the hazards of the UK's civil nuclear legacy.

Developing and implementing innovative approaches to the challenges of nuclear decommissioning and clean-up is what we do and this is a great example of success at Sellafield, delivered safely, early and well below the estimated cost.

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Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Iran in April 2018

Mr Rob Macaire CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr Rob Macaire CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran in succession to Mr Nicholas Hopton who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Macaire will take up his appointment in April 2018.

Commenting on the appointment, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Iran has an important role to play in the Middle East region, but it is essential that it does so in a constructive way – something I made clear during my visit to Tehran in December last year. The Iran deal, signed in 2015, was a huge diplomatic success. The product of years of patient and persistent diplomacy that extinguished the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran.

In that vein, I am pleased that Rob will be applying his wealth of international experience to the leading HMG's engagement in Tehran. We face challenges – including the ongoing cases of British dual-nationals detained in Iran – and areas for potential collaboration. I look forward to working with him across these areas.

Mr Macaire said:

I am honoured to be appointed the new British Ambassador to Iran. The UK's continued engagement with Iran is vital to our goal of making the Middle East region a safer and more stable place. I look forward to working with the Government of Iran and with international partners to preserve the nuclear deal and deepen our bilateral relationship, through constructive engagement on human rights, trade, and seeking political solutions to the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Robert Macaire CMG

Married to: Alice Macaire

Children: Two

2016 – present Language Training

2011 – 2016 BG Group plc. Director of Government/Public Affairs and Political Risk

2008 – 2011 Nairobi, British High Commissioner

2006 – 2008 FC0, Director, Consular Services

2004 – 2006 New Delhi, Political Counsellor

2002 – 2004 FC0, Head, Counter Terrorism Policy Department

1998 – 2002 Washington, First Secretary, Middle East and Counter-terrorism

1998 FC0, Head of Sierra Leone Unit, Africa Directorate

1997 –1998 FC0, Head of Southern Africa Section, Africa Directorate

1996 – 1997 FC0, Head of MEPP Section, Near East and North Africa Department

1995 – 1996 FC0, Head of Levant Section, Near East and North Africa Department

1991 – 1995 Bucharest, Second Secretary (Know How Fund)

1990 FC0, Falkland Islands Department

Further information