

# News story: Armed Forces Muslim Personnel Complete Hajj

Led by Islamic Religious Advisor to the Chief of Defence Staff Imam Asim Hafiz, the Hajj was a chance for British Muslim Armed Forces personnel to reflect on the role of their religion as part of their service. Hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Armed Forces (KSA AF), the Hajj took place over the first weekend of September, around Eid celebrations.

Hajj, meaning 'to intend to journey', is the fifth pillar of Islam and requires all Muslims who are able to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and locations of historical significance related to the Prophet Abraham. The group, which consisted of personnel from the Army and Royal Air Force, visited the Holy Mosque in Mecca, Arafat, Muzdalifah, and Mina. In addition they visited the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

Captain Tim Rudkin, from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) said:

We have learnt a lot about ourselves and confirmed that Islam is not only compatible with military life, but supports the Armed Forces' values we strive to embody.

This journey has no rival to anything I have done before, with representatives of almost every country it is the largest gathering of people in the world, sharing common goals and values, coexisting peacefully.

During the group's visit to Medina, the pilgrims visited the Prophet's Mosque and toured the site of the Battle of Uhud. Afterwards they travelled to Mina where they stayed in a tent city and performed the daily stoning of the jamarat against three pillars where the devil appeared to the Prophet Abraham. The UK personnel also met with the KSA AF's Head of Religious Affairs Major Muhammed Al Sadan, who spoke of the importance of Hajj and Islam's compatibility of serving in the Armed Forces.

Sergeant Ahmed Dhalai, from MOD, said:

The military gives me the strength to become a better Muslim. My chain of command not only understand the significance of this journey, they actively encourage it as an opportunity to reflect and aim to be a better person, both in and out of the military.

The group also met with the Malaysian Chief of Defence Force General Tan Sri Raja Mohamed Affandi Bin Raja Mohamed Noor, Sudanese Major General (Pilot) Hussein Muhammed Othman, and Senior Bangladeshi officers who offered words of

encouragement on religious tolerance and explained the importance of Hajj, not only as a religious obligation for Muslims but as an experience to reflect on as ambassadors to develop greater understanding of faith in our militaries.

Corporal Ceesay Ali, from 1 Medical Regiment, said:

Without doubt this journey I have made is going to make me a better Muslim, a better person, and a better soldier. It has provided me with personal and professional development, as well as allowing me to meet my religious obligation

The Armed Forces personnel entered a raffle across the three services to join the 25,000 pilgrims from the UK travelling to Mecca this year.

A diverse and inclusive force is a stronger force, and the MOD encourages and celebrates diversity, promoting an inclusive working environment. To achieve this a wide range of initiatives under a Defence-wide Diversity and Inclusion Programme have been established. While recruitment is an important element, the wider Defence Diversity and Inclusion Programme (DDIP) takes a much broader view of diversity and inclusion and is driving real change by embedding D&I within the leadership and culture and taking steps to increase the retention and progression of people from underrepresented groups.

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## [News story: NHS improvements to help fight sepsis](#)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced new measures to help combat sepsis.

Thousands of nurses, care home staff and pharmacists will be told how to check for signs and symptoms of sepsis, as part of a new NHS plan to improve treatment of the condition.

Known as a 'silent killer' because it is difficult to spot, sepsis kills around 37,000 people in England every year. Triggered by an infection, sepsis causes the body's immune system to go into overdrive, setting off a series of reactions that can lead to organ failure and, in some cases, death.

In 2015 the NHS launched the first national action plan to tackle sepsis across England. It focused on hospitals and GP surgeries.

Today's announcement directs help at the wider health system. It aims to reduce the number of people affected by the condition while also improving how sepsis is tracked and recorded.

The new measures include:

- a clear definition of adult sepsis for clinicians, so sepsis is identified and recorded more quickly
- educational materials to ensure awareness among all primary care, pharmacists and health care professionals
- targeting care homes, pharmacists and other areas of the NHS which deal with frail and older people to prevent sepsis

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health said:

We want the NHS to be the safest healthcare system in the world, and our ability to diagnose and treat sepsis effectively is a key litmus test of progress. While the NHS has taken major steps in recent years to improve how it responds to sepsis – actions that have saved nearly 1,000 lives – there is still more work to do to protect the many thousands who develop this dangerous condition each year.

We need every part of our health system on the highest possible alert for sepsis, and this new plan will ensure more health professionals get the training, advice and targeted support to tackle this silent killer.

Sir Bruce Keogh, National Medical Director for NHS England said:

Since the publication of our first plan in 2015 a lot has been done and this additional set of proposed actions reflects the desire of health professionals to tackle this dangerous condition.

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## **Press release: Dragonfire: Laser Directed Energy Weapons**

In January of this year, 2017, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), awarded a contract to the Dragonfire consortium, worth £30million to UK industry, to demonstrate the potential of Laser Directed Energy Weapons (LDEW).

Dstl supplies high-impact science and technology for the defence and security of the UK. Scientists from Dstl, working with industry partners under contract to Dstl, have been working on laser technology since the 1970s, with the intent of realising the benefit of an affordable and precise weapon for the UK military.

Testing of the demonstrator will begin on UK ranges in 2018, culminating in a major demonstration in 2019. The Dragonfire solution is based on unique technical approaches developed in the UK under MOD and industry funding centred on high energy lasers and will address the challenges associated with engaging aerial targets safely. It represents the major element of the Dstl led LDEW project, which draws on expertise across Dstl and contributes to internal collaborative programmes.

UK Dragonfire, led by MBDA in the UK under contract to Dstl, has brought together the best of relevant UK industry expertise to deliver the highly challenging and complex programme. The team capitalises on the strengths of the individual companies involved, which include QinetiQ, Leonardo, GKN, Arke, BAE Systems and Marshall Land Systems.

The LDEW technology provides operational advantage to the UK military and the potential to export such systems in support of the Prosperity agenda, as advocated in the UK's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, by developing on-shore industrial capability.

Peter Cooper, Dstl's Project Technical Authority for Dragonfire, said:

Dragonfire is the culmination of many years of work in the area of laser directed energy weapons. We are looking forward to the 2019 demonstration and, working with our industry colleagues, we aim provide the UK Armed Forces with innovative, effective and affordable solutions to the emerging threats they face.

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## **Press release: Rod licensing blitz identifies 23 offenders**

Environment Agency Officers led a series of rod licence enforcement patrols around various sites in Essex and Norfolk, on the back of intelligence received. They were joined by colleagues from Essex and Norfolk Police forces, the Broads Authority and volunteer bailiffs from the Angling Trust.

Over a total of three days (6, 9 and 10 September 2017), eight Essex fisheries were checked, and one river stretch patrolled in Norfolk (the River Bure).

Officers checked dozens of anglers, stressing the importance of buying a rod licence and explaining how the income is reinvested in fisheries. A total of 224 rod licences were checked and 23 offenders identified (a 10.26% evasion rate).

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

These checks were badged under the name Operation Springfield II. The Operation focused on rod licence evasion and raising awareness of the need for anglers to purchase and renew their rod licences.

Our Officers patrol the watercourses all year round, including holidays and weekends. Those who avoid buying a rod licence and are found fishing illegally may face prosecution and a hefty fine. Anglers should ensure they are properly licensed before going out to enjoy this worthwhile hobby.

Essex Police Rural and Heritage Crime Officer, PC Andrew Long, said:

Like other forces across the UK, Essex Police have joined with the Environment Agency and Angling Trust to work together and tackle criminality surrounding theft of fish and unlawful fishing.

This has an impact on one of the country's most popular pastimes, with more than 1.5 million people buying rod licences every year.

Taking part in unlawful fishing can have a detrimental effect on the environment so it's important for us to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and ensure everyone has the correct licence to do this.

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## **Press release: Employment reaches another record high**

Official employment figures released today (13 September 2017) show that there are now a record number of people in work, the highest level since records began in 1971.

The figures, released by the Office of National Statistics, also show that unemployment is at 4.3%, the lowest since 1975.

The increase is due to people of all ages finding work, with employment levels of those over 50 in work reaching a record high, youth unemployment falling by over 40% since 2010 and the proportion of young people who are unemployed and not in full time education dropping below 5% for the first time.

These record figures have been driven by increases in full-time and permanent

work. In the last year there has been a shift from part-time to full-time employment, 20,000 fewer people relying on zero hour contracts and full-time and permanent employment are both at a record high.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds said:

The strength of the economy is helping people of all ages find work, from someone starting their first job after leaving education, to those who might be starting a new career later in life.

Britain's employment success is largely about a growth in full-time and permanent work, as employers invest in Britain and offer quality job opportunities that put more money into people's pockets.

But there is more to do, and we will continue to build on our achievements through our employment programmes and the work of Jobcentre Plus.

Today's figures also show:

Separate figures show [1.4 million claims have been made to Universal Credit](#). Of the 590,000 people now on Universal Credit, 39% are in work.

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