

News story: Hurricane Irma: UK military provides relief to the Caribbean

Named Operation Ruman, on Friday nearly 300 UK military personnel equipped with aid supplies left the UK to provide immediate relief to people who have seen their homes destroyed.

Departing from RAF Brize Norton, a C17, Voyager and A400M aircraft carried over 200 Royal Marines, as well as Engineers and specialist personnel from all three Services, medical supplies and aid including emergency shelter kits, rations and clean water. Amongst those deployed were the 40 Commando Royal Marines and 3 Commando Brigade.

The aircraft have now landed in Barbados, as part of the UK Joint Taskforce in Barbados. The taskforce will use Barbados as a hub to distribute aid. The C17 continued its journey onto the US Virgin Islands – the island with the only usable runway in the region – with 85 personnel on board.

On Saturday, another C17 left from Brize Norton carrying a Puma helicopter and the UK is planning to send another Puma to the Caribbean tomorrow.

In addition to the arrival of the aircraft, RFA Mounts Bay has also reached the British Virgin Islands, with a Wildcat Helicopter embarked conducting reconnaissance flights and a helicopter to help deliver supplies and aid. Her crew will help with structural repairs and restabilising communication.

The 16 Royal Engineer Commandos, deployed from Mounts Bay, are also providing key support to the British Virgin Islands including to the Governor who has made clear that his priority to restore law and order and to put vital communications are in place. They are also working hard to clear runway, making it serviceable and allowing for further aid to reach the islands.

In addition to the support offered by RFA Mounts Bay in the Caribbean, HMS Ocean was also diverted from her tasking in the Mediterranean to the Caribbean in order to bring the help the islanders get back up on their feet after the hurricanes have passed. HMS Ocean will embark equipment and aid at Gibraltar on passage to the Caribbean on Monday.

Aid has also been supplied from DFID's disaster response centre at Kemble Airfield in Gloucestershire, including 10,000 UK aid buckets and 5,000 UK solar lanterns. This aid is will reach those in need in the next few days by the quickest and most effective route possible.

Press release: UK matches public donations to Hurricane Irma British Red Cross Appeal

The UK government today (Saturday) pledges to double any public donations to the British Red Cross appeal for victims of Hurricane Irma.

For every £1 given towards the relief effort in the Caribbean, another £1 will be added through the Department for International Development's Aid Match scheme, up to £3 million.

Donations will support people through the region, including in the badly hit British Overseas Territories of Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos.

Secretary of State for International Development Priti Patel says:

Today we are announcing we will double any public donations which are made to the British Red Cross appeal through DFID's Aid Match scheme.

The overwhelming generosity of the UK public in times of crisis is one of the things that makes Britain truly great.

This will help get water, food, shelter and power to those left devastated by Hurricane Irma.

This donation is on top of the £32million already pledged by the UK government.□

Mike Adamson, chief executive, British Red Cross says:

We would like to thank DFID for supporting our Hurricane Irma appeal, raising urgent funds for those affected by this devastating disaster. The most powerful hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic has left major destruction in its wake. Red Cross teams are on the ground now supporting people in shelters, providing first aid and doing whatever they can to help.

Ms Patel's pledge came after she visited her department's disaster response centre in Kemble, Gloucestershire on Friday.

While there, she saw vital aid begin its journey to the disaster zone, including 10,000 UK aid buckets and 5,000 UK solar lanterns. This aid is will reach those in need in the next few days by the quickest and most effective

route possible.

Ms Patel also pledged on Friday to double the number of humanitarian experts in the region from four to eight, who are now working in the field across several islands to assess need. Further advisors are expected to arrive in the coming days.

□In addition to delivering emergency humanitarian relief, DFID is working with agencies across the Caribbean to plan how to rebuild and reconstruct areas damaged by the hurricane.

To donate to the British Red Cross Hurricane Irma appeal visit:

www.redcross.org.uk/HurricaneIrma or call 0300 456 4999.

Notes to editors

- UK Aid Match is funded from the International Development budget. The UK Government has agreed to match public donations up to £3million.
- Donations must be from people (not businesses) living in the UK.
- This funding is on top of the £32 million already announced by the UK Government.

[Press release: Minister for Europe celebrates National Day in Gibraltar](#)

Sir Alan Duncan's first official visit on 9 -10 September will re-iterate the UK's continued support for Gibraltar and its people.

The Minister for Europe is in Gibraltar to mark 50 years to the day since the people of Gibraltar voted to remain British. Sir Alan Duncan will join other local dignitaries to mark this anniversary, attend National Day celebrations, and celebrate the deep, shared history of the UK and Gibraltar.

Sir Alan will be hosted by Chief Minister Picardo and will attend the annual National Day rally. He will attend a number of other celebratory events, such as a concert by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and reinforce the UK's commitment to Gibraltar and its people.

Ahead of his trip, Sir Alan Duncan said:

I'm delighted to travel to Gibraltar on my first official visit. I was fortunate to spend some of my childhood in Gibraltar and am pleased to see how Gibraltar has flourished and grown into the successful and prosperous place it is today.

50 years ago Gibraltar voted to stay in the British family. The UK reaffirms its support for Gibraltar, its people and its economy, and will continue to do so as long as the people of Gibraltar wish to remain British.

Further information

[Press release: Broadband Boost for Wales](#)

- Up to £56m to become available to help take superfast speeds further across Wales
- Over 650,000 homes and businesses in Wales who would otherwise have been left behind have now been reached
- 95 percent of the UK will have access to superfast speeds by the end of the year

Up to £56 million is to be made available to help take superfast broadband to the most rural and hard to reach places in Wales, the UK Government has announced today (9 September).

The funding is part of a UK fund up to £645m announced today by Minister for Digital Matt Hancock.

Together with other planned delivery, it is estimated that this could see more than 900,000 extra UK homes and businesses gain access to superfast speeds after the end of this year, taking superfast coverage to 98 per cent of the nation over the next few years.

Minister for the UK Government in Wales Guto Bebb said:

Providing access to reliable, high speed broadband is probably the single most important thing we can do to ensure the sustainability of our rural communities and businesses. We know there is more to be done, but today's announcement of funding to take superfast feeds further than ever before, marks another significant leap forward in the UK Government's efforts to ensure Wales has a broadband network fit for the digital age.

Improved connectivity for homes and businesses is a cornerstone of this Government's efforts to create a stronger economy in Wales. Thanks to the investment made into Wales' digital infrastructure by the UK Government, we are well on our way to achieving a truly remarkable transformation in broadband provision across the nation. We are fully aware that this needs to be for all communities in Wales, regardless of how rural they are.

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

We have now brought superfast broadband to almost 94 per cent of UK homes and businesses, and we are reaching thousands more every week. We are on track to reach 95 per cent by the end of the year, but we know there's still more to do. The money that is now being returned to the programme for reinvestment will help us reach that final 5 per cent, and is all part of our commitment to make sure that 100 per cent of the UK can get affordable, fast and reliable broadband by 2020.

The Government subsidised rollout has now reached more than 4.5 million premises around the UK, and new figures show more than 2 million homes and businesses have now signed up for superfast connections in areas where the Government has invested in broadband.

A clause in the Government's contracts requires suppliers to recycle funding when people take up superfast connections installed as part of the programme. Research published today shows this take up has been higher than expected and as a result, the major supplier, BT, has set aside £465 million to extend coverage over the full lifetime of the contracts – up from £292m in December last year – in nations and regions around the UK.

Combined with project efficiencies of £180m resulting from successful management and delivery of the programme, there will be up to £645 million available for local authorities to re-invest and take superfast speeds to those homes and businesses not already covered by existing plans. Of this, over £200m has already been committed to projects to extend superfast broadband.

Superfast connections of 24Mbps and above allow families to watch TV on multiple devices at the same time, or let children do homework while parents do online banking and shopping. The technology is ideal for many small businesses too, allowing bosses to run websites and buy and sell online.

This latest announcement comes hot on the heels of recent Government action to improve broadband speeds in the most remote places in the UK. In July the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committed to introduce a Universal Service Obligation or agree a legally binding voluntary proposal by BT to help make sure that everyone in the UK has the connectivity they need for the digital age.

Note to Editors:

- Independent data from Thinkbroadband shows that currently over 93 per cent of UK premises are able to access superfast broadband and we expect this figure will reach 95 per cent by the end of this year. However, the latest Ofcom data available shows that only 31 per cent of premises have chosen to upgrade to a superfast connection.

[Press release: The Great British Broadband Boost](#)

The success of the Government's superfast broadband rollout programme means that a total of up to £645m is to be made available over the coming years to help take superfast broadband to the most remote and hard to reach places in the UK, it was announced today by Minister for Digital Matt Hancock.

Together with other planned delivery, it is estimated that this could see more than 900,000 extra UK homes and businesses gain access to superfast speeds after the end of this year, taking superfast coverage to 98 per cent of the nation over the next few years.

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

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