

News story: £93 million missile project secures over 100 Belfast jobs

The £93 million Future Air Defence Availability Project (F-ADAPT) was awarded to Thales UK during Minister Andrew's visit to Belfast today. The contract will secure over 100 jobs in the city and provide the UK Armed Forces with a potent defensive ability.

The project will enhance the High Velocity and Lightweight Multi-role Missile systems which are designed to intercept a wide range of air and surface threats such as enemy drones, helicopters and armoured vehicles. The upgrades include thermal imaging which ensures the High Velocity Missile system can be used 24 hours a day and 'Friend or Foe' identification, which will maximise intelligence on potential threats and targets.

The F-ADAPT, secured by the MOD's procurement agency Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), will ensure that this critical capability is maintained during peacetime training but can also be rapidly deployed for operations into the 2020s.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Defence investment benefits every corner of our United Kingdom and Northern Ireland is no exception. This £93 million deal will secure over 100 local jobs and demonstrates the ingenuity and skill of Northern Irish industry.

In these uncertain times, it is crucial we protect ourselves from the rapidly evolving spectrum of global threats. These cutting-edge missile systems will fortify our military advantage over adversaries and help protect UK Armed Forces across the world and into the next decade.

DE&S Director Weapons, Richard Smart said:

The F-ADAPT is crucial in safeguarding our Very Short-Range Air Defence capability and the team at DE&S has worked collaboratively with industry to deliver the enhancements needed to ensure this project continues to support our troops for years to come.

Thales has a long and illustrious presence in Belfast dating back to 1952. Thales in Belfast is a world leader in the design and development of light weight weapon systems for tactical air, land and sea platforms. The company has over 500 local employees and has secured contracts worth hundreds of millions from the Ministry of Defence in recent years. The Belfast office contributed to Thales UK's record exports in 2017 which were worth over £500

million. The local economy also benefitted from a £6 million investment from Thales Alenia Space in 2016 which transformed the capital city into a global centre for excellence in electric propulsion systems.



Defence Minister Stuart Andrew at Thales Belfast. Crown copyright.

Northern Ireland plays an important role in UK defence, providing over 4,000 regulars and reserves to the Armed Forces, supporting over 600 industry jobs and is renowned for its defence manufacturing industry. Industry has committed to more than double its revenue from the aerospace, defence, security and space activities in the region to over £2 billion a year. Northern Ireland companies are part of the overall Ministry of Defence equipment and support plan to spend £180 billion over the decade to 2026-27 which will enhance prosperity across the UK.

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Defence Minister Stuart Andrew has announced a multi-million-pound deal to modernise and boost the British Army and Royal Marines' very short-range air defence capability.

News story: Contract awarded to resurface RAF Northolt runway

The contract, worth £23 million, will upgrade the existing runway, improve drainage and install new arrestor beds to improve safety. The resurfacing work will extend the life of the runway by 10 to 15 years.

RAF Northolt is the RAF's strategic site in London, home to 33 supported units from all 3 armed services and wider government. 32 (The Royal) Squadron are the resident flying squadron at the unit, who provide air transport to UK government and military leaders on official business.

Clement Adekoyejo, DIO's Project Manager for the work said:

We are pleased to have successfully awarded the contract for this vital project for military capability to Lagan Aviation & Infrastructure as the main contractor, and Mott MacDonald as our Principal Support Provider. DIO plays a crucial role in maintaining infrastructure to allow the armed forces to live, work and train. We appreciate the public support for the station and will endeavour to keep disruption to a minimum.

RAF Northolt's Station Commander, Group Captain Mike Carver said:

RAF Northolt is home to the last remaining military airfield within the M25 and the flying operations that take place here provide a vital contribution for defence, wider government and the United Kingdom. The runway resurfacing works will assure those flying operations for decades to come.



RAF Northolt from the air. Photo: Crown Copyright/MOD2017.

James Aikman, Operations Director, Lagan Aviation & Infrastructure said:

Having successfully recently completed RAF Gibraltar, RAF Akrotiri and now nearing completion at RAF Marham. Lagan Aviation and Infrastructure are delighted to have been awarded the runway refurbishment contract at RAF Northolt. We are pleased to be afforded the opportunity to continue our collaborative working relationship with the DIO, which has proven to be successful over the years. Our experienced and dedicated team look forward to delivering yet another interesting project safely, on time and within budget.

The airfield works are expected to take around six months with the runway being closed for renovation from spring to autumn 2019. During this time, military aircraft will operate from RAF Benson in South Oxfordshire and civilian aircraft will operate from other civilian airports.

News story: Contract awarded to resurface RAF Northolt runway

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has awarded a contract to Lagan Aviation & Infrastructure to resurface the runway at RAF Northolt.

News story: Brave World War 2 Halifax crew buried in dignified ceremony in Albania

Seven crew members of the 148 (special duties) squadron RAF who were onboard the RAF Halifax JP244 aircraft have been laid to rest almost 75 years after they were killed carrying out a supply mission over Albania. A burial service to honour the crewmen was held earlier today (Wednesday 24 October) at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Tirana Park Memorial Cemetery, Albania and was attended by Her Majesty's Ambassador, His excellency Mr Duncan Norman MBE, family members and local dignitaries.



Members of the RAF Queen's Colour Squadron prepare to carry the coffin, Crown Copyright, all rights reserved



The coffin passes the Albanian Guard of Honour, Crown Copyright, all rights reserved

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by the Reverend (Flight Lieutenant) Jonathan Stewart Station Chaplain RAFC Cranwell and supported by members of The Queen's Colour Squadron RAF.

Tracey Bowers, JCCC said:

It has been a privilege to organise this service today and to reflect on the bravery of these 7 young men. All were killed carrying out a mission supporting members of the special operations executive, the crew were from different backgrounds but flew together as a professional tight knit team with one common aim.

Today we respect their commitment to duty and join with their families in honouring their sacrifice.



The Queen's Colour Squadron prepare to raise the coffin, Crown Copyright, all rights reserved

The Defence Attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Melotte, MBE said:

The ceremony today not only brings closure to the families but demonstrates the continual and ever strengthening bi-lateral relationship between the United Kingdom and Albanian Armed Forces.



Lt Col Edward Melotte, MBE, Defence Attaché, conducts a reading during the service, Crown Copyright, all rights reserved

The 7 crew members remembered were:

Flying Officer Edwin John Stubley RAFVR Pilot

Born 11 June 1921 in Bromley, Kent

Enlisted 8 January 1942, Commissioned on 11 June 1943, Trained as a pilot in Canada, Occupation prior to service: Maintenance Hand.

Sergeant Charles Mabbs RAFVR Navigator

Born 21 July 1913 in Liverpool

Enlisted 23 May 1942, Married Helena Maud Hughes on 25 June 1938, Two daughters Angela and Kath, Occupation prior to service: Pharmacist.

Sergeant Alfred Coote RAFVR Engineer

Born 20 December 1905 in Battersea, London

Enlisted on 30 April 1943, Married Lilian Catherine on 25 June 1931, Occupation prior to enlistment: HGV Driver.

Flight Sergeant John Thompson RAF Gunner

Born 18 September 1921 in Matlock, Derbyshire

Enlisted 4 May 1939, Married Ruby Joyce on 17 June 1944, Occupation prior to enlistment: Railway Porter.

Flight Sergeant Ernest Logan Brown RAFVR Despatcher/Bomber

Born 18 December 1916 in Edinburgh

Enlisted 6 November 1941, Previously served with Grenadier Guards, Occupation prior to enlistment: Police Constable.

Flight Sergeant Austin Donnelly RAFVR Gunner
Born 27 February 1920 in St Helens, Lancashire
Enlisted 16 December 1939, Occupation prior to enlistment: Glass Carrier.

Sergeant Richard Charles Knee RAFVR Wireless Operator
Born 1 December 1922 in Ranchi, India
Enlisted 15 January 1941, Occupation prior to enlistment: Clerk.

The daughter of Sergeant Charles Mabbs, Kath Gammie who travelled with her daughter Fiona Fisher to the ceremony, said:

I found the ceremony very moving and felt that it would have made so much difference to my mother, who died never knowing what happened to her beloved husband. She spent years trying to find out and at last, as a family, we have closure.



Flight Sergeant Thompson's nephew, Brian Webster, reads during the service,
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The nephew of Flight Sergeant John Thompson, Brian Webster, said:

The ceremony today is the final piece in the jigsaw of this amazing story, from the finding of the wreckage to the burial of the crew, we feel humbled and are grateful to all concerned.

On the morning of 29 October 1944, Halifax JP 244, 148 (special duties) squadron RAF whose motto was 'Trusty' took off from Brindisi, Italy at 7.59am to carry out a supply dropping mission, code named "Operations Tinker", to the Special Operations Executive in Albania. Some time later all communications were lost. The special operations record book noted: 'Nothing further was heard from this aircraft and must be presumed lost. It was seen to drop its load on the target.'

Wreckage positively identified as being from a Halifax was found recently following wild fires in Albania. Subsequent research by the air historical branch and the JCCC could conclude these were from Halifax JP 244.

The Reverend Jonathan Stewart said:

It is a real privilege for me to be involved, laying to rest members of this RAF crew who undertook such an important mission to help bring us the freedom that we all enjoy today. Even though many years have passed, this is a poignant moment for all concerned.

Eleni Kakkava, CWGC regional supervisor Greece and the Balkans said:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is honoured to commemorate by name those airmen of 148 squadron who flew and died together on 29 October 1944, on the Malta Air Forces Memorial. Today we are deeply moved to be able to lay members of the crew of Halifax JP244 to rest in the Tirana Park Cemetery and mark their grave with a CWGC headstone.

We remember their sacrifice and that of all those who served and will care for their graves and their memory with dedication, forever.