

News story: New £1bn deal to support Navy operations will support over 700 British jobs for a decade, Defence Minister announces

The contracts, which will secure over 700 jobs at shipyards across the country, will support the UK's Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships and the Royal Navy's Survey and Hydrographic Fleet. The deal covers 17 ships and will improve how spares, repairs and maintenance work are carried out.

The successful companies will work on the ships at dockyards around the UK to ensure they are serviced and fitted with the latest equipment and systems, whether they are undergoing a refit, undertaking training or on operations.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

This £1bn deal secures work for some of our world-leading shipyards into the next decade, supporting over 700 jobs for workers to ensure our ships remain at sea to defend the nation. This vital work is not only great news for our Navy, but also underlines the importance of defence to our national skills and prosperity.

Agreements following a competition include expected to be worth:

- £357 million with Cammell Laird in Birkenhead to support the RFA's Fort and Wave class tankers
- £262 million also with Cammell Laird in Birkenhead, to support the RFA's new fleet of four 39,000-tonne Tide class tankers
- £239 million with A&P in Falmouth to support the RFA's Bay class landing ships as well as the casualty ship RFA Argus and Royal Navy ocean survey vessel HMS Scott
- A £150 million contract with UK Docks Ltd on Tyneside to support the survey ships HMS Echo and Enterprise and the ice patrol ship HMS Protector.

The deal is expected to deliver savings worth over £100M for defence, with agreements including delivering improved support and greater efficiency in ways such as new support solutions and improved performance targets. The whole contract is underpinned by a robust set of performance measures to ensure continued value-for-money.



HMS Protector. Crown copyright

In addition to the four already signed, a further three contracts under the Future In Service Support (FISS) project are expected to be signed within the next year. The news is the latest development in supporting the nation's military ships, after the MOD unveiled a new model worth around £1 billion to support the Royal Navy fleet and sustain over a thousand British jobs.

Defence Equipment and Support acting Chief of Materiel Ships, Neal Lawson said:

Through the placing of these contracts and making changes to the way we provide support under this agreement, we will be able to deliver significant financial benefits.

These include savings expected to be more than £100 million over the course of ten years, as well as improvements in the performance, reliability, safety and sustainability of the RFA and hydrographic fleets.



RFA Tidespring. Crown copyright

Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels supply all Royal Navy ships from the Queen Elizabeth class carriers to destroyers, frigates and patrol vessels with fuel, ammunition, food and spares, wherever they are in the world. They also undertake disaster relief, counter-piracy, counter-narcotics and humanitarian operations around the world.

Hydrographic vessels conduct oceanographic survey duties and safeguard the integrity of the UK's territorial waters, while the Ice Patrol Ship, HMS Protector, is the MOD's sole capability in the ice.

[Press release: UK deepens defence cooperation with Germany](#)

Gavin Williamson, alongside his German counterpart Ursula von der Leyen, signed a Joint Vision Statement today deepening the already strong UK-German relationship and increasing defence cooperation across a range of areas, from tackling violent extremism to building new military capabilities.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Although we are preparing to leave the EU, our commitment to European security is resolute.

The statement signed today strengthens UK-German ties and bolsters the defence of two key NATO partners. This is an alliance we both hold dear.

The Defence Secretary also attended a demonstration from UK and German personnel who form part of the combined river crossing capability in Minden – a capability vital to NATO operations. The visit comes after the announcement that the British Army will be permanently based in the country beyond 2020.

The events in Germany followed a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels, in which Mr. Williamson stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Allies in condemnation of reckless and indiscriminate Russian cyber-attacks.

At NATO HQ, he discussed the importance of the alliance being ready to respond not only to the threats from the East but also from the South. He announced that the British Army would be deepening cooperation with partners through linking 1 Div HQ, which leads overseas military capacity building, to NATO's emerging Defence Capacity Building initiatives.

He also attended NATO's Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), consulting with counterparts to ensure the alliance has the necessary tools and procedures in place to respond to a nuclear crisis.

News story: Defence Minister reaffirms UK commitment to the Gulf

Gulf security is our security, Defence Minister Mark Lancaster reaffirmed whilst visiting Iraq, Bahrain and Oman. As part of the five-day visit, the minister also officially opened the UK-Oman joint exercise, Saif Sareea 3, alongside Oman's Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harub Al Busaidi.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

The security of the Gulf is of the utmost importance to not only regional stability, but to the world's economic stability.

Our commitment to our international responsibilities in the region is unwavering. Saif Sareea is far more than just a bilateral military exercise, it is a demonstration of our commitment and will leave behind a legacy for decades to come.

The official opening of Exercise Saif Sereea 3 signals the start of the UK's largest military exercise in 17 years, which will see over 5,500 UK troops train alongside Omani counterparts. It is the largest and the most complex of a series of events which will see the UK Armed Forces work with every single one of our Gulf partner nations in a combination of engagements on land, sea, and in the air over the coming months.

Mr Lancaster also visited Duqm port, opening the Joint Logistics Support Base, which will support UK forces operating and exercising in Oman and the region, including Queen Elizabeth Class carrier operations from 2021.

In Bahrain, the minister met the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa; building on the strong and close UK-Bahraini relationship and discussing the shared threats faced in the region. He also met Rear Admiral Paul J. Schlise, Deputy Commander U.S 5th Fleet and the Combined Maritime Forces, reviewing the operational challenges in the Gulf including current maritime threats facing the UK and partners. He also visited the recently opened UK Naval Support Facilities at Mina Salman port, home to just over 300 British military personnel.

In Iraq, Mr Lancaster met Iraqi Defence Minister Erfan al-Hiyali, discussing the close cooperation between the UK and Iraq in the fight against Daesh as well as confirming that the UK will be contributing 10% of the total personnel to the NATO Mission in Iraq to help build a strong security service. He also met UK troops who are currently deployed as part of the 79-member Global Coalition, commending their efforts in training nearly 80,000 Iraqi Security Force members in battle winning infantry, engineering, and combat medical techniques as well as providing courses on countering IEDs and other critical skills.

[News story: UK aid arrives: Vital relief lands in Indonesia](#)

The A400M Atlas touched down at the international relief centre at Balikpapan, which is the humanitarian operational hub for the affected region, at 1302 local time (0602BST).

On board were 1,280 much-needed shelter kits and 288 hygiene kits, as part of the £3 million pledged by the Department for International Development (DFID) to the relief effort. The aircraft was also carrying 3 tonnes of Indonesian supplies, in addition to the 17.5 tonnes of UK aid.

A DFID aid flight also departed for Balikpapan, Indonesia, from the UK last night, carrying vital supplies to support the earthquake and tsunami relief efforts.



UK aid being unloaded at the international relief centre at Balikpapan. Crown copyright.

The UK aid package includes much-needed air cargo handling equipment. This includes a forklift truck and conveyor belt that will rapidly increase the rate that humanitarian aid can be transferred off flights and distributed to affected communities. Other equipment includes transport trucks and a lighting tower generator. This will speed up the delivery of aid to those that need it most by facilitating a greater turnaround of aid-carrying flights at Balikpapan Airport.

The UK has responded to information from the Indonesian government about the needs of the residents. There is a DFID team of humanitarian experts in Indonesia coordinating the response.

In addition, the UK Government has also announced it will match pound-for-pound the first £2 million raised by the generous British public to the Indonesia Tsunami Appeal launched yesterday by the Disasters Emergency Committee.



UK aid being unloaded at the international relief centre at Balikpapan. Crown copyright.

[Press release: FC0 Press Release: Minister for the Middle East celebrates UK-Oman cooperation](#)

The Joint Working Group, which takes place on Sunday, will focus on the UK and Oman's partnership on areas such as trade, education and tourism. It will also be an opportunity to discuss regional issues such as the conflicts in Yemen and Syria, and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The Minister's visit also coincides with the Saif Sareea military exercise, which will see Royal Navy ships, Royal Air Force Typhoons and British Army troops train alongside Omani forces in their largest joint exercise for 17 years.

While in Oman, Minister Burt will have the opportunity to see other areas of UK-Omani cooperation in practice. These include a venture between the UK Premier League and the Oman Football Association whereby UK Football Coaches from Bournemouth FC have travelled to Oman to train Omani football coaches. Minister Burt will also attend a roundtable with female alumni of UK

universities now working in Oman to improve access to education.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Minister Burt said:

Cooperation between the UK and Oman continues to go from strength to strength. My visit this week is an opportunity to see some tangible examples of that cooperation – from the 5,500 UK troops involved in the joint UK-Oman military exercise, to British football coaches training their Omani counterparts.

Oman remains a lynchpin of relations in the Middle East region, and as ever I value their expertise on Yemen, Syria and wider Gulf issues. The 14th Joint Working Group between our countries is a chance to discuss these areas and build on the positive investment, trade and tourism relationship between the UK and Oman.

Further information

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