

Press release: UK host Australia-UK ministerial talks

Updated: Added link to joint statement

The UK Government will host Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop and Australian Minister for Defence Marise Payne in the UK for the 10th Australia-United Kingdom Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN) on Friday 20 July 2018.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson will join their counterparts for discussions of high level foreign policy, defence and security issues between the United Kingdom and Australia. This AUKMIN marks over a decade since the talks began and is a chance for both nations to reflect on the enormous progress made over that time.

Speaking ahead of the talks Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Australia is one of the UK's closest allies and I am delighted to be co-hosting Foreign Minister Bishop and Defence Minister Payne so soon after being appointed as Foreign Secretary. Our relationship with Australia is based on shared history, interests and values, and we have a dynamic modern friendship including a significant exchange of people and goods. The recent commissioning of nine warships from BAE, to be manufactured in Australia, is a sterling example of this relationship in action.

I look forward to our continued work together on global challenges and opportunities – based on our shared respect for the rules-based international system. The fight against extremism and terror, eliminating modern slavery and encouraging global co-operation will be top of the agenda during this tenth AUKMIN. Talks with businesses and government on boosting trade between us when we leave the EU will also be a top priority.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are entering an exciting new era for Britain and Australia with our two nations having one of the strongest relationships in the world. With both our world class Armed Forces respected and present all over the globe, defence is one of the pillars of our deep and enduring relationship.

The £20 billion Global Combat Ship deal between BAE Systems and the Australian Government demonstrates how defence and our Armed Forces are not just vital to keeping us safe but also crucial to delivering prosperity, jobs, and keeping our two countries at the height of innovation and advanced manufacturing. I look forward to strengthening our historic defence relationship further this week.

The United Kingdom has a strong and dynamic relationship with Australia underpinned by common values, shared heritage and a closely aligned strategic outlook. Military ties between the 2 nations are deep and long-standing, including a range of operational and intelligence activities such as joint-operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The recent awarding of a £20 billion contract from the Australian Government to BAE Systems to build nine British Type 26 Global Combat Ships is a demonstration of the relationship between the 2 countries creating a safer world.

Following the talks, a joint statement was published: [The UK and Australia: a dynamic partnership for the 21st century](#).

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@Jeremy_Hunt](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

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News story: The Veterans Advisory & Pension Committee North East embark upon moves to counter identity theft

Concerns relating to information security in the official payment of pensions or benefits was examined and an ongoing project to improve the protection of the armed forces community was launched.

This important concern resulted in a veteran contacting the Board concerned that Veterans UK and The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) inappropriately share confidential information with the recipient's bank opening the possibility of identity theft.

The North East Board's Mr Peter Sinclair examined the problem and found that Veterans UK, and The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provide banks with the veteran or benefit claimant's National Security Number, and specifics of the claimant's pension or benefit. This information being listed on every payment of the pension or benefit is open to a considerable number of people. This laxity opens the veterans or community member to the possibility of identity theft.

Upon speaking with senior bank officers, he discovered that such personal information is not needed by the bank and it appears to be a remnant of a procedure going back many decades and even then, was not information needed for financial institutions to process pensions or benefits.

The North East Board have raised concerns that providing such sensitive information is a breach of Data Protection Laws and is directly counter to the Government's advice on providing such sensitive information, which specifically states;

To prevent identity fraud, keep your National Insurance number safe. Don't share it with anyone who doesn't need it.

The NE Board have raised serious concerns that the provision of such personal information raises the danger of the armed forces community, especially the vulnerable ones, to having their identity stolen and that such service identifiers could constitute a security problem for the armed forces community.

The North East Board has made their concerns noted and are actively making moves to ensure that such potential problems are addressed and veterans and the whole armed forces community have the same protections as every other member of the community. They are actively seeking to ensure that the procedure effecting the armed forces community comply with the letter and spirit of the law regarding information sharing.

The North East Board is pursuing this matter with urgency.

[News story: Sky's the limit for defence personnel taking part in Edinburgh Tattoo](#)

The RAF will be the lead presentational service, in its centenary year, for a new show marking the theme of 'The Sky's the Limit'.

The band of the Royal Air Force College, and pipers and drummers from across the Service, will play a central role in the world famous show. Three serving RAF personnel also star in this year's Tattoo advertising campaign.

In 2 of the adverts Flight Lieutenants Jonny Downen (main image) and Mikaela Harrison, from RAF Conningsby's 29 Squadron and RAF Falcons display team, transform from a highland drummer into a Typhoon pilot, and from a highland dancer into parachutist. In a third version, RAF Honnington's Senior Aircraftman Christopher Craig changes from being a RAF Regiment gunner into a bagpiper (below).



Royal Air Force Regiment gunner into a bagpiper. Image credit: The Royal

Edinburgh Military Tattoo

The Royal Navy and army musicians also taking part in this year's Tattoo include the Royal Marine Band Plymouth, The Band of The Royal Regiment of Scotland, and pipers and drummers from The 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions, The Royal Regiment of Scotland (1, 2 and 4 SCOTS), The Royal Dragoon Guards, The Queen's Royal Hussars and The Scots Guards.

Brigadier David Allfrey, Chief Executive and Producer of The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, said:

We are delighted to support RAF100 in their role as the lead Service at this year's Tattoo. Under our own theme of The Sky's The Limit, we will explore gravity, the history of manned flight, even into space, and the power of human potential.

We are looking forward to exploring all manner of creative possibilities and collaborations in the production, in the international cast, in the music, in the lighting and projection and in special effects. There are exciting prospects, some of which are out of this world!

Taking place against the iconic backdrop of Edinburgh Castle to a live audience of 220,000, the Tattoo extravaganza returns for 24 performances with a 100 minute showcase of music, dance and technical wizardry, including some of the world's finest military bands and performers.

The Tattoo was set up and run for charitable purposes. It has gifted £10 million to service and civilian organisations including the Soldiers Charity (formerly known as the Army Benevolent Fund) and RAF Benevolent Fund.

[News story: Injured veterans and service personnel take part in excavation at Barrow Clump](#)

A team of injured military veterans and service personnel join DIO archaeologists, local volunteers, Wessex Archaeology and Breaking Ground Heritage to excavate the track at Barrow Clump on Salisbury Plain.

Barrow Clump is the site of a scheduled monument, an Early Bronze Age burial mound (c2000BC) that later became the burial place for Anglo-Saxons in the 6th century AD.

The current excavation has been taking place since Monday 2 July and is

expected to last until Friday 20 July. It is being done with volunteers from the Operation Nightingale programme which uses archaeology to aid in the recovery of soldiers who are sick, wounded or were injured on operations in Afghanistan.



Skull excavated at Barrow Clump in Salisbury Plain. Photo: Crown Copyright 2018

Last November, remains outside the barrow were found including a man with an iron spear and a woman with jewellery.

In July 2018, service personnel discovered burials with weapons and decorated pottery. Over 80 burials have now been found at the military training site.

Military veterans working on the dig are supported by Breaking Ground Heritage, a charity assisting veterans to learn more about archaeology and heritage with the aim of helping them to learn new skills as part of their recovery. Several are now studying the subject at University with others working as professionals in this area.



Archaeologists and volunteers at Barrow Clump dig site Photo: Crown Copyright 2018

Richard Osgood, Senior Archaeologist from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation said:

One of DIO's priorities is to support the Armed Forces and Operation Nightingale has been a huge success since it was first established in 2011.

I'm amazed at the artefacts that have been uncovered from our previous excavations and without the help of injured, sick and wounded soldiers and local volunteers we wouldn't have uncovered the Anglo-Saxon burial. I look forward to uncovering the track and its findings.

DIO is committed to preserving and maintaining heritage assets and the data found on the excavation will be used to improve the careful management of heritage on Salisbury Plain.

Richard Bennett, Project Director at Breaking Ground Heritage said:

Breaking Ground Heritage is pleased to be involved in this project with the support of DIO.

We work closely with DIO to provide injured soldiers and veterans

with the placements they need to take part in archaeological investigations on the Ministry of Defence estate.

The project has helped to improve the welfare of all those involved. Thank you to everyone who has took part in this project, they have all been valuable to the programme's results.



Skull excavated at Barrow Clump in Salisbury Plain. Photo: Crown Copyright 2018

The data derived from this excavation will be used to inform the careful heritage management of Salisbury Plain.

The discoveries unearthed during this excavation will be laid to rest in the Wiltshire Devisies Museum, along with a monograph on the fieldwork at the end of 2018.

[**News story: Intelligence technology to keep Joint Force Command one step**](#)

ahead of adversaries

The 'predictive cognitive control system' is being developed by Gloucestershire-based Montvieux and funded by the MOD's Defence Innovation Fund through the Defence and Security Accelerator's (DASA) fast track 'Revolutionise the human information relationship for Defence' competition.

The system takes a broad range of incredibly complex data, beyond the ability of analysts to simultaneously comprehend, and through the use of Deep Learning based neural networks, is able to make confidence-based predictions of future events and outcomes of direct operational relevance to Defence Users.

As part of Phase 2 development, the system is being refined in the innovation environment at RAF Wyton, and is being deployed into the live operational network (as a Beta service).

This will provide Defence analysts with a Machine Intelligence prediction Joe Hemming, Exploitation Lead said –

“This project is a great example of collaboration between DASA, the competition sponsors (Joint Force Command) and the front lines working hard to turn technology into true capability. It's a clear demonstration of the cultural shift across all organisations to focus on capability integration and exploitation as well as technology development.

Joint Force Commands operational deployment of this technology will allow real users to test the technology in a representative environment which will also demonstrate the real value of the technology to defence. Montvieux received over £600,000 in funding over both phases of the competition.

Lt Col Jon Kerr, Head CII said –

“The DASA has enabled the Centre for Intelligence Innovation to meaningfully engage with industry to understand their innovations and how they might apply to our work. It has then enabled us to shape the development of and deploy Montvieux's application onto our operational system.

This ability to engage early and partner with industry to deliver a solution has been invaluable to us. It has allowed us to put the front edge of innovation from UK industry through an accelerated development process and consequently fast-tracked the delivery of an appropriate solution for Defence.”

Peter Webb, Director of Montvieux, said –

“The parallel focus of DASA on placing advanced capabilities in the hands of military users and developing wider exploitation opportunities, including commercial opportunities, has given us the space to think differently about how we operationalise our research and innovation within the company. With the help of DASA, we have been able to plan-back from potential commercial outcomes, and identify the right industry partners to move this forward.”

The willingness of Defence, especially CII, to think differently about partnering, rather than conventional contractual relationships, has meant that we've been able to jointly support each other. The result is that Defence analysts are getting an amazing capability that generates real insight from the huge volume of information they hold, but also that we will get critical feedback from the operational use of our service. The reference point of having our services in live use also adds credibility to our commercial discussions with industry partners, this is further enhanced by our associated and support from the DASA.

Overall we have found our engagement with DASA invaluable and would encourage other companies to think differently and get involved. We are also hugely appreciative of the critical role our DASA's Technical Partner has played within the project, especially connecting us with the right people in defence at the right time to help maintain our momentum."

See the video below for more from Peter Webb, Director of Montvieux:

[Andrew Wire, Montvieux](#)