

News story: Defence Secretary reviews tax on Armed Forces in Scotland

The Defence Secretary's intervention follows the decision by the Scottish Government last month to create new income tax bands and increased tax levels, which will see personnel in Scotland worse off than the rest of the UK.

The Defence Secretary has reassured servicemen and women that he would look to mitigate against the negative impact of Scottish taxes. Up to 8,000 service personnel are set to be hit by the tax rise.

On 21 February 2018, the Scottish Parliament ratified their income tax rates and thresholds applying to Scottish taxpayers. As a result those earning more than £26,000 will pay more tax in comparison to their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

Scotland plays a key role in the defence of the UK and its contribution is set to increase. Some, 1,400 submariners will move to HM Naval Base Clyde by 2020, creating the new single home of the entire UK Submarine Service. Army numbers are also increasing with the return of troops from Germany.

An additional 400 personnel will move to RAF Lossiemouth as it adds a fourth Typhoon squadron and prepares to receive the entire UK fleet of nine submarine hunter Poseidon P-8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft from the early 2020s.

News story: Burial service for soldiers of the first world war

Burial for Private Thomas Edmundson

A burial service will be held on Wednesday 14 March at Perth Cemetery (China Wall), Belgium, for Private (Pte) Thomas Edmundson. Pte Edmundson was killed in action during the first world war while serving with the Durham Light Infantry.

His remains were discovered near the town of Zonnebeke and were identified using DNA testing.

He will be buried with full military honours on 14 March.

The service has been organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and will be attended by British Defence Staff, members of the family,

regimental representatives from the Rifles Regiment and local dignitaries. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission will be providing the headstone.

Burial Service for 2 Soldiers of the First World War

A burial service will be held on Thursday 15 March at Orchard Dump Cemetery, France, for 2 soldiers of the first world war.

Their remains were discovered during excavation work near the town of Gavrelle. One soldier belonged to the Durham Light Infantry; intensive research and DNA testing has been carried out but unfortunately, to date, his identity has not been established. The other soldier served with the Bedfordshire Regiment, but it has not been possible to identify him.

They will be buried with full military honours on 15 March.

The service has been organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and will be attended by British Defence Staff, regimental representatives from both The Rifles and Royal Anglian Regiments and local dignitaries. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission will be providing the headstones.

News story: Defence Secretary praises contribution female military personnel make to keeping Britain safe

Updated: caption

On a visit to RAF Brize Norton, the Defence Secretary met with women on the front line of the RAF's transport operations, including a Voyager air to air refuelling and troop transport pilot, logisticians and engineers. Mr Williamson also recognised the hard work that has gone into making the armed forces more diverse.

Over 10% of the military is now made up of women, with the RAF leading the way with 14% female representation. Increasing numbers of women are also joining the armed forces, with over 12% of new recruits this year being female, up from 11.2% last year. The MOD is committed to reaching its target of 15% of the military being female by 2020. 42% of MOD civil servants are also female.



Defence Secretary meets with female RAF personnel on International Women's Day

Speaking at the event, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Women play a crucial role across our Armed Forces and it is important we reflect on the amazing contribution they make every single day keeping the British people safe.

It is vital that we have the very best people our society has to offer and that they also represent the society that they defend. Today has been a great opportunity to meet some of those inspiring women who make our Armed Forces the best in the world.

Women are an essential and valued part of Defence and play a key role in keeping Britain safe. Over the last year, female members of the armed forces have contributed to defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, delivered essential humanitarian aid to British Overseas Territories affected by Hurricane Irma and most recently helped with the military's support to snow relief in the UK. In December 2017, six Army officers also became the first all-female group to cross Antarctica.



(Left to right) Flight Lieutenant Kerry Bennett, Sergeant Sim Rezazadeh-Wilson and Squadron Leader Eleanor Taylor pictured in front of an A400M transport aircraft at RAF Brize Norton.

The military is currently in the process of opening its ground close combat roles to women, a historic move first announced in June 2016. The Royal Tank Regiment has already opened its close combat roles to women and last year the RAF became the first service to open all of its trades and branches to women, with the RAF Regiment starting to take female applications in September 2017.

By the end of this year, all infantry regiments in the Army and the Royal Marines will have opened their close combat roles to women.

While visiting Brize Norton, the Defence Secretary met with a number of women who are working across a number of trades in the RAF, including Voyager Pilot Flight Lieutenant Kerry Bennett, Squadron Leader Eleanor Taylor, an engineer and Logistic Mover Sargent Sim Rezazadeh-Wilson.

News story: UK steps up cyber defence

Part of a joint investment by the MOD and the National Cyber Security Programme, the School will address specialist skills and wider education in line with National Cyber Security Strategy objectives.

Armed Forces' Minister Mark Lancaster, who opened the school, said:

Cyber threats to the UK are constantly evolving and we take them very seriously. That's why the Defence Cyber School is so important. It's a state-of-the-art centre of excellence that will train more personnel across Defence and wider government in dealing with emerging threats.

With threats from hostile states changing at pace, the UK faces a deliberate attempt to destabilise secured peace and prosperity.

The 2016 National Cyber Security Strategy provided £1.9 billion of transformative investment in cyber, which is being used alongside more conventional land, maritime and air capabilities, to meet these threats head-on.

Now, building on current capabilities; which include the Global Operations and Security Control Centre at MOD Corsham; and the MOD Computer Emergency Response Team (MOD-CERT); Rapid Response Teams will be established from April.

Teams of specialist Incident Responders will be available to deploy to locations around the UK and overseas, to tackle malicious cyber activity.

Commander Joint Forces Command, General Sir Chris Deverell, said:

Defence has a number of very highly-trained military personnel on hand to deal with emerging and complex cyber threats. We are reinforcing these capabilities with the creation of Rapid Response Teams. Our threat-hunters give us the ability to identify, isolate and respond to these threats, whenever and wherever they might arise.

The UK has advanced counter-cyber capabilities which can protect national interests from harm caused by adversaries. Furthermore, offensive cyber can be used to deal with serious threats to the UK.

News story: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia's visit, March 2018

His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman is visiting the UK for the first time

since he became Crown Prince in June 2017 and since Saudi Arabia started a major programme of domestic reforms. Saudi Arabia is amongst the largest political, diplomatic and economic power in the Middle East, and the visit will usher in a new era in our bilateral relations with one of our oldest friends in the region.

The Crown Prince's visit builds on the Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia in [November 2017](#). It will help to enhance our co-operation in tackling international challenges such as terrorism, extremism, the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen and other regional issues such as Iraq and Syria.

Saudi Arabia has also set out Vision 2030, a roadmap to open up the country's economy over the next 15 years. This will provide opportunities for British businesses in sectors including education, entertainment and healthcare where they have world-class expertise. It also includes plans for Saudi Arabia to become a global investment powerhouse and the Crown Prince's visit will help explore ways in which Saudi Arabia can build on its investment in the UK in sectors such as infrastructure.

British Ambassador Simon Collis talks about the ties between our two countries

[Saudi Crown Prince Visit](#)

[Britain's relationship with Saudi Arabia begins a new chapter](#)

Find out more about the Crown Prince's visit

- [Prime Minister Theresa May looks ahead to the visit](#)
- [Saudi reformer Mohammed Bin Salman deserves our support: Foreign Secretary's article](#)