

News story: Ministry of Defence expands counter-poaching training into two new parks in Malawi

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced today that deployments to Nkhotakota and Majete Wildlife Reserves will begin in May, following a successful pilot scheme in Liwonde National Park alongside the conservation non-profit African Parks, doubling the number of rangers mentored by British soldiers to 120.

A conservation crisis occurring around the globe is causing the loss of countless species, and one of the main factors behind this is the illegal wildlife trade, which drives the decline of many of Africa's animals, including elephants, rhinos and lions.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Poaching is a horrific and cruel trade that is putting the very existence of this planet's most majestic wildlife in jeopardy.

Our brave Armed Forces are the best in the world and are playing their part in putting an end to this sickening and illegal industry, to protect these magnificent mammals.

By providing training and mentoring to the park rangers, they will form a skilled network to ensure that the world's precious species are here for generations to come.

Under the guidance of British Army troops, African Parks rangers will learn tracking, infantry skills, bushcraft and information analysis to improve the interception of poachers.

The long-term goals of training park rangers in Malawi are for them to effectively police their parks and respond appropriately to the threat of poaching, which is worth approximately £7bn to £17bn year.

Training in the two new parks has been funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

Liwonde Park Manager, Craig Reid, said:

The MOD deployment to Liwonde in 2017 was very beneficial to the African Parks effort in securing the integrity of this park which was once overrun with poaching.

The soldiers helped mentor the Rangers as part of the long-term project aimed at ensuring a sustainable law enforcement effort. We are very appreciative of the ongoing support rendered to our team on the ground.

All three parks, Nkhotakota, Majete and Liwonde, are managed by African Parks in partnership with Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife.

Brighton Kumchedwa, Director of National Parks and Wildlife, said:

We are really pleased that the British Army will be returning to Malawi to work in partnership with the Malawian authorities and African Parks on counter-poaching activities. This will build on the success of their previous deployment and ensure that life becomes increasingly difficult for those intent on wildlife crime in Malawi.

[News story: Firing of 50,000th simulated round from turret trainer signals savings of £125M](#)

The trainer, based at Tidworth Garrison in Wiltshire, was first introduced in 2005 to train the commander, gunner and loader of an AS90 – a self-propelled 155mm Howitzer gun.

It is designed to allow gun crews to practice their routine firing drills, turret operating procedures and crew duties without the expense of live firing and offers the immersion and realism of firing, with a reduced safety risk and a highly reduced cost.



Based on a real AS90 turret, the trainer uses an electro-mechanical system to fully replicate a complete firing cycle. This includes the weight and size of the artillery rounds and the noise and turret movement on firing.

Since the trainer was introduced more than 8,500 soldiers have used the equipment. This experience enhances their safety for when they progress to live firing and allows them to focus on more advanced training scenarios.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

This equipment provides high quality training for the British Army that's also cost efficient. As live firing events are extremely expensive and can be logistically challenging, using the AS90 turret trainer is a great alternative. It also offers immersive training that prepares users for live firing both in practice and on the battlefield.

The 50,000th simulated round was fired by Lieutenant General Paul Jaques, Chief of Materiel (Land) at Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S), the MOD's procurement agency based at MOD Abbey Wood in Bristol.

Lt Gen Paul Jaques said:

This firing marks another milestone demonstrating Defence's innovative and cost-saving approach to deliver effective and

worthwhile training for our personnel. I'm exceedingly proud of the team's work and the benefits gained by the soldiers that get to use the training equipment.

The milestone, on February 14, represented savings of approximately £125 million over a 12-year period on the basis that live rounds cost £2,500 per use.

[News story: UK steps up commitment to a modernised NATO](#)

Mr Williamson signalled that the UK will meet its commitments, including an uplift of around one hundred personnel in our contribution to NATO's modernised Command Structure – the precise numbers will be determined through further work between now and the Summit. This will help to ensure that NATO can meet the security challenges of today and tomorrow.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

NATO is the cornerstone of our defence but we live in an uncertain world, with the confrontation and conflict we face shifting and evolving. NATO must modernise at the same pace, so we can respond better and faster to deter those that threaten our safety and way of life.

NATO will today discuss a range of issues including burden sharing, cooperation with the European Union, and efforts to modernise the Alliance. A key element of modernising NATO will be the adaptation of the Alliance's Command Structure. Defence Ministers will decide whether to implement a design which includes proposals for a new Command for the Atlantic and a Command to improve the movement of military forces across Europe.

The proposed Command Structure, which has been influenced by senior British staff, represents a key aspect of the UK's priority to modernise and strengthen NATO so it remains able to command and control its missions and operations wherever they are required.

Over the two-day Ministerial, Defence leaders will discuss efforts to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture. Britain's Armed Forces have taken a leading role in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence, providing the Framework battlegroup in Estonia and a providing a company to the US-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Poland. The Defence Secretary welcomed the arrival of Danish forces in Estonia and the announcement that

France will return in 2019 to support the UK-led force. NATO's role in the fight against terrorism was also discussed with the Defence Secretary welcoming the progress that has been made.

NATO remains the cornerstone of UK defence and, as one of the largest contributors, is one of only a few NATO countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence.

[News story: MOD submits final Typhoon proposal to Belgium](#)

The proposal comes with the full support of the governments of the four Eurofighter nations – Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – as partners in Europe's largest collaborative military aircraft programme.

The proposal includes 34 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, underpinned by the offer of a deep strategic, defence and industrial partnership between the Governments of Belgium and the UK.

Speaking in Brussels, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

These proven jets offer Belgium a formidable capability which forms the backbone of European air power, as well as a comprehensive long-term defence and industrial partnership with the UK. A unique partnership with the RAF and integration with our world-leading support service mean Belgium's selection of the Typhoon would be a powerful demonstration of us working together to support security across the continent in the face of intensifying threats.

Speaking at the press conference in-country, Air Vice Marshal Keith Bethell said:

Our world-class Typhoon has led the way in combat air power and this demonstrates the continued confidence in the capability the Typhoon has to offer. With more than 20,000 flying hours on global operations to date, the Typhoon offers unparalleled reliability and proven interoperability with our allies

As well as the jets, the UK are offering Belgium the opportunity to benefit from the RAF's experience of over ten years operating the Typhoon, and to further strengthen over 70 years of co-operation between the two forces. It proposes integration with the RAF's Typhoon support arrangements which is considered the most cost-effective next generation combat aircraft support

service. The proposal also includes a comprehensive package including a training partnership which would see personnel from Belgium and the UK jointly train and exercise together.

The UK MOD is leading the proposal on behalf of the Eurofighter Typhoon partner nations and companies. The invitation from Belgium to submit a final offer demonstrates the strong confidence in the jet. The proposal to Belgium represents the most inclusive international equipment partnership presented to another European partner by the Eurofighter Typhoon programme.

The proposal also offers Belgium the opportunity to establish a National Network Cyber Centre, a Cyber Innovation Centre and a Cyber Research Partnership, all underpinned by a partnership between the UK and Belgian governments.

As 'the true European solution to meet Belgium's Air Combat Capability Program', the selection of the Typhoon would also act as a catalyst for greater aerospace and defence industrial cooperation across Europe. There would be opportunities for Belgian industry to work more closely with the Eurofighter Typhoon industrial partners which include some of Europe's largest defence companies. Through closer industrial cooperation Belgium and Belgian industry would also be positioned for partnership in the development of next generation combat air capabilities.

The Typhoon is a highly capable, combat proven, air defence and ground attack aircraft with full swing-role capabilities. In addition to supporting RAF operations protecting the UK in the skies above Britain and globally, the Typhoon has already been purchased by nine nations around the world. Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson was in Qatar at the end of last year to witness Qatar's purchase of 24 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft which will help sustain thousands of jobs in the UK and across Europe.

News story: Defence Minister presents Nepalese President with Gurkha Annual Report

The Minister for the Armed Forces – who served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers himself – handed the document, which provides an update on the state of the Brigade and their work, to the Right Honourable Bidya Devi Bhandari on Monday.

It shows that the Brigade currently boasts more numbers than ever before, and this year commemorated Gurkha troops reaching the summit of Everest for the first time in their history.

His visit coincided with the completion of local, provincial and parliamentary elections under a new constitution, helping to secure a more peaceful, united and democratic Nepal.

Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

Britain has long supported Nepal's stability and prosperity, and I am delighted to be here at such a pivotal moment in its history. I look forward to continuing the strong bond between our nations, which is underpinned by the magnificent work of our Gurkha troops.

For more than 200 years, Gurkhas have been an integral part of the British Armed Forces – fighting in the First and Second World Wars, the Falklands, Afghanistan and Iraq and winning 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest British award for gallantry.

They were also among the first on the scene when Nepal was hit by a devastating 7.8 earthquake in 2015, helping to rebuild communities and provide aid to those left homeless.

As well as President Bhandari, the Minister also met Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Defence Minister Bhimsen Das Pradhan, and other senior military and political figures to strengthen defence and bilateral ties.