

News story: UK troops awarded UN medals for South Sudan peacekeeping mission

Updated: Text updated

MEDALS have been awarded to 106 UK troops currently deployed on Op TRENTON, the UK contribution to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

There are nearly 400 troops deployed in the world's newest country, split across three locations. Soldiers from the 32 Engineer Regiment led Task Force were recognised for their service to the UN by the Special Representative of the Secretary General Mr David Shearer on parade in Malakal. He said:

I would like to recognise the commendable efforts of everyone here on parade and honour your dedicated service here in South Sudan. Your efforts and professionalism are highly regarded and you make a valuable contribution to UNMISS. Wear these medals as the proud and worthy ambassadors of your country and of the United Nations that you are.

The UK Engineering and Medical Task Force has made a vital contribution to supporting the UN mission through improving infrastructure in the form of helicopter landing sites, runways, jetty and drainage improvements and staff accommodation builds. They have also been staffing the UK built Level 2 field hospital which provides essential healthcare to over 1,800 UN civilian and military staff based in Bentiu.

Air Vice Marshall Gary Waterfall, Chief of Staff for Joint Operations, also presented medals and thanked the soldiers for their work which represents the UK's renewed contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. He said:

We are dipping our toe back into the peacekeeping waters. But this moment marks that we have made it a step further, with our first full rotation earning their medals. I am proud of this achievement, and proud of all of you on parade that have made it possible.

The Commanding Officer of the UK Task Force is Royal Engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Katie Hislop. She said:

Today is about our people and providing the recognition that all our soldiers deserve; not just those visible on the parade square right now, but those who are in the sangars and behind the scenes

covering essential duties to protect and sustain us.

The Task Force has faced some unique challenges during its deployment which began at the start of the wet season. However, through innovation and teamwork, much needed improvements to UN infrastructure in both Malakal and Bentiu have been made. These will have a lasting impact on the mission and the next engineering contingent has been set up well for success next year.

The current contingent will remain in South Sudan over the Christmas period, continuing to enable the mission to protect civilians and build durable peace. They will return home to their families in January 2018.

[News story: Royal Navy ship set for Australia, Defence Secretary reveals](#)

The Defence Secretary had announced that [the ship would sail to the Asia Pacific whilst addressing the crew on-board in Devonport on Friday](#), and has now provided further information of the deployment.

During recent conversations with Australian Defence Minister Marise Payne and Minister for Defence Industry Christopher Pyne the Defence Secretary reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the Australia-UK defence relationship and exploring opportunities for our Armed Forces to work together.

The visit of HMS Sutherland, a Type 23 anti-submarine warfare frigate, offers further opportunities for the Royal Navy and the Australian Navy to collaborate.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Though we may be currently battling against each other on the cricket field, when it comes to defence, we stand together with Australia as allies not opponents. Our countries have fought alongside one another since the First World War and we continue to stand strong in the face of today's intensifying global threats.

I am pleased to announce that HMS Sutherland will set sail across the world next year and look forward to strengthening our close relationship with Australia.



The Type 23 frigate HMS Sutherland will deploy to Australia in the New Year.

The ship will visit Sydney, Perth and Adelaide and provides an outstanding opportunity for joint exercising. The deployment has the added benefit of showcasing Britain's cutting-edge anti-submarine warfare technology.

Australia and the UK remain extremely close trading partners, exchanging £13.1bn of goods and services in 2016. In that year we also agreed to establish a bilateral Trade Working Group to begin scoping out the parameters for a future Free Trade Agreement. This week International Trade Secretary Liam Fox is in the country to advance the UK/Australia trade relationship, following a visit from Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin earlier this month.

In August this year both countries' Foreign and Defence Secretaries strengthened the already close relationship in the [9th annual Australia-UK Ministerial talks \(AUKMIN\)](#), agreeing on further joint work on cyber, Commonwealth and modern slavery. This deployment is a tangible demonstration of that commitment.

Whilst in the country earlier in the month, Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin [announced the intention to look at the feasibility of fitting an Australian radar on future British warships](#). The 'CEAFAR' radar, developed by CEA Technologies, is already in service with the Australian Navy and a capability study to fit the radar to British ships will begin early next year.

[News story: New fingerprint chemical to 'make it much harder for criminals to escape justice', Defence Minister announces](#)

The technology uses an innovative chemical to recover fingerprints from surfaces that were previously extremely challenging or even impossible to work with, making them visible so that forensic scientists can identify guilty individuals.

This includes items exposed to high temperatures, including IED components and fired ammunition cases in a warzone, as well as metal items that have been deliberately cleaned, such as knives at a domestic crime scene. The new technique could help identify criminals ranging from insurgents to burglars.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

British innovation is progressing at a rapid pace and we are investing millions in it to keep our country safe. Whether it's used on a foreign battlefield or a British crime scene, this pioneering fingerprint technology will make it much harder for criminals to escape justice.

Steve Thorngate, from the Defence Security Analysis Division of Dstl, said:

Through our work with Dr Paul Kelly at Loughborough University, the ability to significantly increase fingerprint recovery rates from items recovered, means that criminals will find it much harder to conceal their identity. Although the technology needs further refinement, it will be of significant benefit to forensic scientists across the world.



The new technology uses a chemical to recover fingerprints from challenging surfaces, such as bullets.

The advanced fingerprint visualisation technology has been developed jointly by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), the Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) and Loughborough University.

The project started life at Loughborough University where the concept was inadvertently discovered by Dr Paul Kelly, and developed by Dstl into an operational capability. Foster + Freeman (F+F), one of the world's foremost forensic science equipment suppliers, will refine the technology before making it commercially available early next year.

The announcement also comes as the MOD prepares to host the two-day Artificial Intelligence Hackathon this week to explore the opportunities that 'AI' can provide to the defence of the UK.

Funded by the MOD's £800m Innovation Fund, the Hackathon will bring top representatives from the MOD, defence industry, SMEs and academia together to brainstorm ideas on how AI can be applied across businesses, the military and civil society.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin added:

This Hackathon is yet another example of how defence is getting together with academia and industry to ensure the UK remains a world leader in research, collaboration, and security.

The MOD has committed 1.2% of the rising defence budget to cutting-edge science and technology.

The licence for the fingerprint technology has been negotiated by Ploughshare Innovations, Dstl's technology transfer company, and has since been licensed by F+F.

[News story: Defence Secretary announces £250M investment in new homes for service families](#)

The significant investment will see nearly 1000 new homes built in three locations across Salisbury Plain, the British Army's largest training area in the UK. The locations for the new housing are Bulford, Larkhill and Ludgershall.

The new homes, which will be built by British construction company Lovell, will offer modern three and four bedroom accommodation, as well as a number of bungalows and adapted homes for families with specific needs, such as wheelchair access. Work on the new homes, which are being built under the Army Basing Programme (ABP), is expected to be completed in May 2020.

The new homes will support Service personnel and their families relocating from Germany in 2019 and also units moving within the UK.

Pre-construction work on the project has already begun, including off-site highways to facilitate access to the new homes. The returning troops can expect modern accommodation, as well as access to catering, retail and leisure facilities.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This considerable investment in nearly 1,000 new homes is a reflection of our commitment to supporting Armed Forces families. Service families make an immense contribution to our country and I'm delighted to announce this £250 million funding for new homes to welcome our troops relocating from Germany.

The £250 million investment comes alongside a further £90 million in road and utility improvements in support of the three developments. £1.1 billion has already pledged to the Salisbury Plain area for living and working accommodation 'behind the wire' including 2,500 bed spaces for single soldiers and the construction, conversion or refurbishment of nearly 250

other buildings such as offices, garages, workshops and mess facilities.

The Army is also working closely with Wiltshire Council to ensure that the soldiers and their families have access to all of the services they need, including education and health facilities. Wiltshire Council is spending over £20 million of the MOD's contribution towards local community services in support of education provision across all age ranges.

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood said:

Investing not only in new homes but in all the things that help to make a place feel like home, such as education, infrastructure and leisure facilities, will make a big difference for those returning to the UK after being posted abroad. This boost to the area will provide a close-knit community for Armed Forces and their families for years to come.

The Army Basing Programme has also recently completed building and refurbishment of accommodation at a number of other sites across the country in support of Troops relocating from Germany and within the UK. The ABP has also invested in new facilities in Kinloss, Leuchars, Catterick, South Cerney and North Luffenham, and significant refurbishments have taken place at a number of other MOD sites including York, Aldershot and Thorney Island.

[News story: MSPs discover more about life in the naval service](#)

The purpose of their visit is to help MSPs to better understand the range of social and welfare issues relevant to armed forces personnel, and their families, within their community.

During their visit the MSPs saw displays of Royal Marine marksmanship, all terrain driving, stalking, artillery, and met with the Royal Navy's bomb disposal experts from HM Naval Base Clyde. They also met with the families of RM Condor and the Naval Families Federation.

Naval Regional Commander Captain Chris Smith said:

While Defence is clearly reserved to Westminster, it is the Scottish Parliament's policies and decisions that affect the day to day lives of Scots-based service personnel.

This is why it is essential that our elected representatives better

understand military life, all the more so given that Scotland will be home to the entire Submarine Service from 2020, as well as an Army Infantry Brigade, the RAF's Quick Reaction Alert interceptors (North) and submarine hunting Maritime Patrol Aircraft flying from Lossiemouth.



As part of the Armed Forces Visit Programme, a group of MSPs visited the Royal Marine base at Arbroath.

Launched by Presiding Officer Ken Macintosh MSP and the Ministry of Defence in April, the Armed Forces Visit Programme has already had successful fact-finding visits to the Army's Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik, and RAF Lossiemouth, Moray.

The MOD has around 10,000 sailors, soldiers, and air personnel living permanently in Scotland, supported by 8,000 reservists and civilians.

Scottish industry benefits from Defence spending £1.5bn with it each year, supporting 9,750 private sector jobs in Scotland.

The Defence Board confirmed in February 2017, that £1.7 billion would be invested to upgrade Scottish military bases over the next decade.

List of attending MSPs:

- Keith Brown MSP, SNP, Clackmannanshire/Dunblane, (Cabinet Secretary Economy, Jobs and Fair Work/Veterans)
- Maurice Corry MSP, Conservative, West Scotland

- Graeme Dey MSP, SNP, Angus South
- Murdo Fraser MSP, Conservative, Mid Scotland and Fife
- Daniel Johnson MSP, Scottish Labour, Edinburgh Southern
- Liam Kerr MSP, Conservative, North East Scot
- Gordon Lindhurst MSP, Conservative, Lothian Region
- Lewis Macdonald MSP, Scottish Labour, NE Scotland
- Graham Simpson MSP, Conservative, Mid Scotland and Fife
- Annie Wells MSP, Conservative, Glasgow