

[News story: Autonomous supply to military front line: apply for contracts](#)

Updated: Updated news story photograph.

The [Ministry of Defence](#) is to invest in projects that look at ways of using autonomous systems in the 'last mile' of the supply chain to front-line military operations.

Up to £1.5 million is available in the first phase of the competition. There is up to an additional £1.5 million in phase 2 that includes proposed system designs. This will only be available to projects funded through phase 1.

A third phase could include a longer period of trials and evaluation of promising proposals.

Last mile supply

Last-mile resupply involves delivery of combat materials from a physical base or logistics vehicle and is often challenging because of the hostile and contested environment. Although described as last-mile, real-life distances could be up to 30km in some instances.

Current ways of supplying the front line involve transport aircraft, helicopters, large trucks, trailers with quad bikes and soldiers on foot.

The challenge areas

This funding competition is particularly looking for solutions in 3 challenge areas:

- unmanned air and ground load-carrying platforms
- technologies and systems that allow load-carrying platforms to operate autonomously
- technologies to autonomously predict, plan, track and optimise re-supply demands from military users

The competition is for fully funded contracts under SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative).

[Find out more about SBRI.](#)

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is midday on 21 June 2017
- the competition is for fully funded development contracts
- phase 1 contracts are likely to be worth between £40,000 and £80,000 and last up to 6 months
- a networking event for potential applicants will take place on 23 May 2017
- there will be a webinar for potential applicants on 30 May 2017

[Find out more about this competition and apply.](#)

[News story: HMS Enterprise returns home after three years on Navy operations](#)

During her time away she helped to stop people smuggling across the globe, saved thousands of lives at sea, and protected Britain's interests.

Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mike Penning said:

During her three years deployed away from the UK, HMS Enterprise and her ship's company have helped make the world a safer place.

From disrupting people smuggling in the Mediterranean to assisting in the free flow of trade in the Gulf, and from providing reassurance to our overseas territories to surveying the world's oceans, she has epitomised how the Royal Navy is protecting the UK's global interests.

In almost three years she has steamed 150,000 nautical miles, visited 20 countries, and navigated four of the seven seas.



LH Payne with his twins girls Summer and Amelia

HMS Enterprise's epic deployment began in June 2014, when she headed to the Mediterranean on a routine deployment. At the time, growing unrest in Libya led to the UK government encouraging British citizens to evacuate, and Enterprise was tasked with rescuing more than 200 people from Libya.

She was then tasked with conducting survey operations in the Gulf and southern Red Sea, joining the continuous Royal Navy presence in the region which works to secure some of the most vital shipping lanes in the world and protect Britain's economy.

It was during this time that teams from the ship volunteered to visit an orphanage in India, helping to refurbish several classrooms, build some swings and even fix a trampoline.

Enterprise later moved to the Mediterranean where she joined the naval force set up to deal with people smuggling. Over the course of the following year, the sailors on board destroyed over 100 unseaworthy craft and rescued over 9000 people. As a result she was awarded the Firmin Sword of Peace, the Naval Capability Prize and the HM Efficiency Award, as well as receiving a personal commendation from the Chief of the Defence Staff.



P0 Everson accepts the Firmin Sword from Minister for the Armed Forces Mike Penning

Following the heat of the Mediterranean Enterprise was re-tasked to the South Atlantic to stand in for Falkland Islands patrol vessel HMS Clyde during her refit in South Africa.

The ship, and her crew of 78 sailors, returned to Devonport today for the warmest of welcomes from friends and families. Commander Philip Harper, Commanding Officer of HMS Enterprise said;

The crew of HMS Enterprise are justly proud of the work they have done since deploying, and the wide variety of operations will be hard to match in the rest of our careers.

At the same time, we are all really looking forward to coming home. The results of our deployment speak for themselves and we are all eager to spend some time with our families before the ship deploys again later this year.

News story: HMS Sutherland escorts two Russian warships past UK coastline

The Type 23 frigate located the two Russian ships in the early hours of Friday morning [14 Apr 17] as they sailed through the North Sea towards the Dover Straits.

The Steregushchiy-class corvettes, Soobrazitelny and Boiky, were joined later in the afternoon by a Russian support tanker and an ocean-going tug.

HMS Sutherland will continue to monitor the movements of the ships as they pass close to UK territorial waters today.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

HMS Sutherland is carefully marking these Russian ships as they pass close to UK waters. The Royal Navy maintains a vigilant watch and is always ready to keep Britain safe.

Royal Navy sailors on the Plymouth-based frigate keep watch on every movement of the ships, using state-of-the-art radars to track the course and speed of the ships as they pass close to the UK.



HMS Sutherland is escorting the Russian ships. Crown Copyright.

Commander Andrew Canale, the Commanding Officer of HMS Sutherland, said:

As one of the Royal Navy's high readiness units, HMS Sutherland is required to escort warships that approach the UK and this task is considered routine business for us.

It is vitally important the Royal Navy demonstrates its presence and commitment to the integrity of UK territorial waters as we work around the clock to secure the seas of our island nation.

As a high-readiness unit, HMS Sutherland may be called upon at any time to help prevent arms trafficking, people smuggling, conduct counter-terrorism operations, maritime search and rescue, or escort duties like those it is undertaking today.

[News story: £22.7 Million awarded to support older veterans](#)

The money will help organisations across the country to continue the invaluable work they do to support older veterans, which includes providing access to health care and carers, support with using the internet, and offering general advice.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Our veterans have given so much for their country, and the Aged Veterans Fund is a way of us thanking our older veterans and ensuring they are cared for in later life.

One of the awards, totalling almost £4 million, went to Poppyscotland who manage 14 projects under its Unforgotten Forces programme, which provides wellbeing improvements to homes, helps to prevent veterans from feeling isolated, and support to those who suffer hearing problems.

Mark Bibbey Chief Executive at Poppyscotland said:

We want people to understand that key organisations in the area of support provision have joined forces to provide a more holistic provision for aged veterans. If a veteran is engaged with one organisation, for example, they can immediately be referred to another – or multiple consortium members if required. The essence is strength in numbers and we want the identity of our consortium

to reflect this.

Age UK received £4.4 million for its Joining Forces scheme, which gives up to 12 weeks of tailored support for older veterans across the country, providing information and advice, practical support at home, access to social events and digital technology, and opportunities to become more active.

Steve Hampson, Head of Innovation & Programmes at Age UK said:

Joining Forces allows us to build on the work we already do across the country with older veterans and to reach out to those who may need more support. The grant means we can develop and test our services, and learn more about how best to support older veterans to get more out of later life. Our work has at its core what older people want to achieve for themselves.

£4.8 million was awarded to the Legion Healthy Living Portfolio, led by The Royal British Legion, to promote healthy living through a number of ways including local activities, research to improve services, and the training of specialist staff.

Steve Baynes, Head of Grants and Social Policy at The Royal British Legion said:

This grant will help the Legion continue its work with a network of charities, supporting the Armed Forces community through thick and thin. In particular, the grant will enable us and our partners to focus on achieving lasting social change for aged veterans. The veterans to benefit will be from a range of communities, including those who are at risk of becoming socially isolated, struggling with their physical or mental health, with hearing loss or in residential care. Many of the projects will also benefit carers and family members of those who Served, and some are research-oriented so that we, as a society, are better informed of current and emerging needs.

The ten charities to receive the awards are Age UK, Poppyscotland, The Royal British Legion, the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, Cornwall Rural Community Charity, Rural Action Yorkshire, St Johns and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service, Age Cymru, Seafarers UK, and Hospice UK.

The Aged Veterans Fund which was set up in 2015, had a total of £30 million of LIBOR funds available to support older veterans.

It is designed to support non-core health, wellbeing, and social care needs for older veterans (born before 1 January 1950), including surviving Second World War veterans, those who undertook National Service, and other voluntary enlisted veterans who may need some focused support in relation to their

health and social care needs.

This final round of awards comes after the Aged Veterans Fund initially granted £6.6 million to eight organisations in 2016.

[News story: UK personnel depart for NATO Kosovo role](#)

A team of nearly 30 UK troops has left the UK for Southern Europe to join NATO's Kosovo Force, helping to maintain safety, security and freedom of movement.

The year-long deployment will bolster the mission's capability, following a request from NATO for further support to KFOR by allies. Its particular role will be to support KFOR's ability to carry out intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. The UK team will be based in the KFOR headquarters in Pristina.

KFOR began as a peacekeeping force in the late 1990s. Now it has evolved into a smaller, more flexible body of around 4,200 troops, acting as one of the main security providers in Kosovo. Troops are contributed by some 30 countries, including Germany, Italy, Turkey, Poland and the US, as well as the UK.

At the NATO Summit in Warsaw last year, Allies reaffirmed that KFOR would continue to contribute to a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. It will also continue to adapt. As the Warsaw communiqué made clear, changes to the Alliance's troop presence reflect conditions in the country. The force's overall goal is to enable self-sufficient security in Kosovo.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

This deployment of troops demonstrates how we remain committed to supporting security and stability in the Western Balkans region. NATO remains a cornerstone of our defence and by defending the security of Europe we strengthen our security at home.

This deployment follows support the UK provided in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015 to the EU Force (EUFOR).

As the Prime Minister has announced the UK will be increasing its engagement in the Western Balkans, including through our hosting of the 2018 Western Balkans Summit.

The UK has more than 3,000 military personnel deployed on operations around

the world, clearly demonstrating Britain's global Defence footprint. The UK continues to meet NATO's target of spending 2% of GDP on Defence, backed by a Defence budget that will rise every year for the rest of this decade.