

News story: Defence Secretary announces new Defence Arctic Strategy

The strategy will enhance the Ministry of Defence's focus on the Arctic, underlined by our current commitments in the region and future deployments.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

As the ice melts and new shipping routes emerge, the significance of the High North and Arctic region increases.

Russia, with more submarines operating under the ice and ambitions to build over 100 facilities in the Arctic, are staking a claim and militarising the region. We must be ready to deal with all threats as they emerge.

The change in the natural environment in the Arctic and High North is driving a change in the security environment and, as the region becomes more accessible, there has been an increase in military activity. The new Defence Arctic Strategy will put the Arctic and the High North central to the security of the United Kingdom.

Currently, the Royal Marines conduct cold weather training in Norway on an annual basis, with around 800 due to deploy in 2019. As part of the new Arctic strategy, the Marines training will become joint with Norway on a long-term basis and integrated into Norway's defence plan, providing UK troops a unique opportunity to train alongside a key ally.

The strategy will also complement our NATO commitments and in 2019, four RAF Typhoons will for the first time patrol Icelandic skies. This will allow the UK to work closely with allies to deter aerial threats to Euro Atlantic security. The mission will also provide the RAF with unique opportunities to test its skills in different environments.

In 2020 we will also increase our operational commitments in the area with the introduction of new P-8 Poseidon aircraft. Based out of RAF Lossiemouth, the sub-hunters will help combat a range of intensifying threats, not least increasing submarine activity in the Arctic.

This increased submarine activity poses a new threat and is something the Royal Navy is ready to combat. In 2018, a Royal Navy submarine took part in ICEX with the US Navy for the first time in ten years and as part of the new Defence Arctic Strategy, the Navy will mount regular under-ice deployments in the years to come.

[News story: UK to maintain military presence in Germany](#)

Around 185 British Army personnel and 60 Ministry of Defence civilians will remain in Germany, once the withdrawal of British Army units to the UK has been completed.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are increasing our British points of presence across the world. We will not be closing our facilities in Germany, and instead use them to forward base the Army.

Army personnel will be permanently based in the country where the UK is retaining the 45-square mile Sennelager Training Area, which provides both UK and NATO forces with an expansive live firing training area. It has a long tradition as a home from home for British service personnel.

The remaining Army personnel will also support critical NATO infrastructure and assets such as the combined river crossing capability based in Minden. It uses M3 vehicles jointly operated by British and German troops, and both nations are currently in discussions regarding a future bilateral upgrade of the vehicles.

Retaining Sennelager alongside the adjacent Athlone Barracks will provide remaining British personnel with the vital domestic infrastructure, including housing and schooling.

Elsewhere the Army is maintaining a presence at the Ayrshire Barracks in Mönchengladbach, where approximately 2,000 vehicles can be stored, and the German Wulfen Defence Munitions Storage Facility, which holds operational ammunition.

[News story: Defence Secretary Bolsters Support for Armed Forces](#)

The new package will help the Armed Forces throughout their careers by offering a renewed focus on personal development and creating a support network for those living with significant illness, caring for others.

The package will also ramp up support for those leaving the services, including a new transition programme and ID cards for all military leavers so

their service to their country can be recognised easily.

A new fund will be dedicated to supporting the careers of the spouses and civil partners of those who serve, in recognition of the vital role of families within the military community. This fund follows the success of the MOD's Spouse Employment Support trial, and will facilitate access to vocational training and development opportunities, helping them enter new sectors or self-employment.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The bravery and dedication of our people is second to none. Whether they are in service, have served, or support the service of a loved one, we owe them a great debt of gratitude for their work in keeping this country safe.

It is only right that we give our Armed Forces every opportunity to develop their skills to reach their potential, while ensuring that their spouses and civil partners are just as valued for the part they play.

By the end of 2020, all serving personnel will have access to their own Professional and Personal Development Plan – a new scheme that will enable them to hone the skills they need to succeed throughout their service, and equip them for the next stage in their careers.

Providing an extra layer of care for those preparing to leave the military, the new Defence Transition Service will deliver specialist support for serving personnel who are most likely to face challenges as they adjust to civilian life. These individuals will be offered unique solutions to the challenges they face, including help with housing or employment.

To further support the transition to civilian life, the Defence Secretary also announced that new ID cards will be available to military service leavers shortly. The ID cards will initially be given to everyone leaving the Armed Forces, and will give them instant recognition for their service to the country.

Those who have already made the transition to civilian life will be able to apply for an ID card in 2019. The cards will allow easy access to the range of support available from the public and charitable sectors, including registering with their local authority for priority healthcare and housing.

The Defence Secretary added:

The vast majority of those who have served in our Armed Forces go on to lead successful and rewarding lives, but it's important we recognise that the transition is not always smooth. We are dedicated to upholding the support they receive while in uniform as they take this next step, and I'm delighted to be adding an extra

helping hand to those most in need.

The challenges that service leavers can face are unique, and I want to make sure that they are fully equipped with the tools to thrive independently, whatever issues they face.

[News story: UK set for new Birmingham warship and will keep amphibious assault ships, Defence Secretary announces](#)

Speaking in Birmingham, the Defence Secretary outlined that one of Britain's new cutting-edge Type 26 frigates will be called HMS Birmingham, becoming the fourth Royal Navy ship to bear that name.

The 6,900-tonne frigates will be world-class anti-submarine warships and will provide cutting-edge protection for the likes of the UK's nuclear deterrent and the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, with the ability to conduct a whole range of other operations anywhere in the world.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Three of our nation's ships have proudly borne the name Birmingham. Those ships won five battle honours. Today, in honour of this great city, we will be naming one of our eight Type 26 global combat ships HMS Birmingham.

HMS Birmingham is the fourth of the UK's eventual eight Type 26 frigates to be named, with HMS Glasgow, HMS Belfast and HMS Cardiff the first three to be built. The frigates will begin to enter service in the 2020s. All the ships are being constructed by BAE Systems on the Clyde in Scotland, where the project is guaranteeing 20 years of work and safeguarding over 4,000 jobs. HMS Birmingham will be part of the second batch of ships to be ordered in the early 2020s.

She will be the fourth ship to be named in honour of the Midlands city, with the first being launched in 1913 and playing a key role in the First World War. The last, a Type 42 destroyer, took part in a range of missions including safeguarding international shipping during the Iran-Iraq War and patrolling the Falkland Islands before leaving service in 1999. The Defence Secretary also put to bed any speculation about the future of

amphibious assault ships HMS Bulwark and HMS Albion being withdrawn from service early.

He said:

To deliver what seems impossible, the Royal Marines need to be able to bring the fight from the sea to the land. As such, I am happy to announce today that I am protecting their vital landing platforms HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark.

The two ships deliver the punch of the Royal Marines ashore by air and by sea. Boats from the landing dock in the belly of the ship can be sent ashore with Marines on-board, whilst assault helicopters can be launched from the flight deck.

Throughout their time in service, the ships have conducted a range of vital missions including securing Iraqi oil platforms, tackling terror and piracy in the Horn of Africa, playing a key role in migrant search and rescue operations and evacuating British citizens from warzones in Libya and the Ivory Coast. HMS Albion is currently supporting peace and security in the Asia-Pacific, promoting UK interests across the world as the nation's flagship.

[News story: Fighter jets join forces with British aircraft carrier to make history](#)

Royal Navy Commander Nathan Gray and RAF Squadron Leader Andy Edgell were the first pilots to land their stealth F-35 Lightning fighter jets on board the carrier, demonstrating the formidable force HMS Queen Elizabeth and her fleet of jets will be.

The first landings and take-offs from HMS Queen Elizabeth are the culmination of a national endeavour lasting more than a decade to bring an aircraft carrier back to the UK's arsenal. Able to embark up to 36 of the supersonic jets, the carrier provides the Royal Navy with a capability possessed by few others.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The largest warship in British history is joining forces with the most advanced fighter jets on the planet. This marks a rebirth of our power to strike decisively from the seas anywhere in the world.

The historic first landing on the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth is a monumental moment in our country's proud military history. It is also a statement of Britain's determination to promote peace and prevent war.



Fighter jets join forces with British aircraft carrier to make history

The landings mark the start of more than 500 take-offs and touch-downs set to take place from the mammoth warship during the next 11-weeks, with the jets being put through their paces in a range of weather conditions.

The return of 'Carrier Strike' to the UK comes eight years after a fighter jet last landed on a British carrier.

Commanding Officer, Capt Jerry Kyd, who was also the captain of HMS Ark Royal when the last Harrier took off from a carrier, said:

I am quite emotional to be here in HMS Queen Elizabeth seeing the return of fixed wing aviation, having been the captain of the aircraft carrier which launched the last Harrier at sea nearly eight years ago.

The regeneration of big deck carriers able to operate globally, as we are proving here on this deployment, is a major step forward for the United Kingdom's defence and our ability to match the increasing pace of our adversaries. The first touch-downs of these impressive stealth jets shows how the United Kingdom will continue

to be world leaders at sea for generations to come.



Fighter jets join forces with British aircraft carrier to make history

Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, Cdre Andrew Betton added:

The Queen Elizabeth Class carriers have been specifically designed and built to operate the F-35 Lightning, offering an immensely flexible and potent combination to deliver military effect around the world. Conducting these trials is a critical and exciting step on this journey and I applaud the many thousands of civilian and military personnel who have played a part in bringing the strategic ambition to reality.

While the HMS Queen Elizabeth Class carriers will be able to project British military power across the globe for the next half-century, they can also provide humanitarian relief, deepen defence relationships with key allies and provide critical support to our forces as they are deployed across the world.

In recent operations, US aircraft carriers like the USS George HW Bush and USS Harry S. Truman have played a central role in the Gulf and the Mediterranean, conducting strikes against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

This week's historic flight trials come more than 100 years after the UK's HMS Argus became the world's first carrier capable of safely launching and recovering naval aircraft.

The ship will go on to continue her programme off the US east coast. The flight trials are expected to take around 11 weeks, during which time the ship is also expected to call into New York.

HMS Queen Elizabeth remains set to be deployed on global operations from 2021. Britain now has sixteen of a planned 138 F-35 Lightning jets as part of its world-leading fleet of military aircraft.



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