

News story: Britain and France Sign Agreement for Test Pilot Exchange

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and French Minister of the Armed Forces Mme Florence Parly today (17 May) held the first Defence Ministerial Council since the announcement of a permanent and regular forum for the discussion of UK-France defence cooperation in January 2018. During the meeting a bespoke technical arrangement which will oversee the exchange of test pilots between the two nations was signed.

The agreement formalises an exchange enabling French pilots to train at the UK Empire Test Pilots' School based at MOD Boscombe Down, and British pilots to train at the French Test Pilots' School, Ecole du Personnel Navigant d'Essais et de Reception based on the Istres Le Tube Airbase. This reciprocal exchange of personnel ensures that the skills of military flight test, analysis and capability enhancement are shared between the Armed Forces of UK and France, further strengthening the UK's relationship with France and building on the strong partnership between our armed forces.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

France is one of our most important allies and this agreement symbolises the importance of deep defence and security relationships. By participating in this exchange programme, we will strengthen understanding between our personnel.

We are the only two European powers willing and able to deploy and sustain significant military power and we will continue to work towards a special partnership for the future.

The UK and France have also successfully carried out the second development firing of the Sea Venom missile which will equip the Royal Navy and French Navy helicopters to prosecute a wide range of surface threats, from fast inshore attack craft up to corvette-sized vessels, including in coastal environments. Sea Venom has both 'fire and forget' mode as well as a 'man in the loop' capability, which allows full missile control until target impact.

French and British Armed Forces operate alongside each other in NATO, including as part of the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia. The UK and France have been fighting Daesh together in Iraq and Syria, and last month launched coordinated strikes against Syrian regime chemical weapons stocks. The UK and French navies work together around the globe to uphold freedom of navigation and the laws of the sea, with UK personnel currently taking part in France's Jeanne d'Arc naval deployment to the Asia-Pacific region, and are building on work last year to increase coordination of hurricane relief efforts in the Caribbean.

We are also developing cutting-edge defence capability projects together and

deepening links across our Armed Forces, vital actions as both the UK's National Security Capability Review and last year's French Strategic Review of Defence and National Security described a world of rising instability and unpredictability – which is why we are conducting the Modernising Defence Programme to make sure we are configured to address the intensifying and complex threats that we are our allies now face.

[News story: Andy Adams appointed as the Chief Constable of the Ministry of Defence Police](#)

Andy assumed the role of Temporary Chief Constable last July following the untimely death of Alf Hitchcock.

The MDP provides a range of specialist armed policing skills and capabilities that help to ensure the protection of Defence people, assets, information and the Defence estate. As Chief Constable, Andy will lead the MDP's delivery of armed policing services to a range of Defence and external customers.

Andy joined the MDP in September 2015 as the Deputy Chief Constable, having previously served as the Deputy Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary. He has overseen the MDP's ongoing programme of organisational reform and development, including the implementation of the new MDP Operational Policing Model and the MDP's deployments under Operation Temperer.

Julie Taylor, Director General Head Office and Commissioning Services said:

I am delighted that Andy has been appointed as Chief Constable for the MDP. Having worked for the Force since 2015 he has a comprehensive and effective understanding of the emerging threats facing our Armed Forces and the country. He'll continue to take the Force from strength-to-strength and I look forward to continuing to work with him closely.

Sir Brian Burridge, Chair of the MOD Police Committee, said:

As the new Chief Constable of the MOD's specialist police force, Andy Adams brings an extensive wealth of experience from across the spectrum of policing. This will be vital in transforming the MDP in order to meet tomorrow's complex security challenges.

Andy Adams, Chief Constable of the MDP, said:

I am absolutely thrilled to have been appointed as the Chief Constable of the MDP and look forward to leading the Force and continuing our important work, protecting our people at home and overseas.

“I’d also like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me whilst in the role of Temporary Chief Constable.

Andy formally takes up post with immediate effect.

Press release: The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall join families at ceremony for victims of overseas terrorism

They will be joined at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, by nearly 300 family members and friends who lost loved ones in terrorist attacks abroad.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, will lead the ceremony to dedicate the memorial, entitled Still Water, which was designed by Alison Wilding and Adam Kershaw.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Boris Johnson, Home Secretary Sajid Javid and Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, who has led on the delivery of the Memorial and whose brother was killed in the 2002 Bali bombing will also attend.

Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Defence People and Veterans said:

Today is a day when we remember the lives of those who were tragically taken in terrorist attacks abroad.

I know from personal experience that in times of pain we must come together to support and help one another. This memorial stands as a symbol of our unity against violence and hatred and will be a peaceful space for families to remember their loved ones.

It is hoped that the memorial will become a place of reflection, remembrance and contemplation for anyone who has been affected by terrorism.

[News story: British army officer killed during WW1 is honoured as he is laid to rest](#)

2nd Lieutenant (Lt) Eric Henderson who served with the 8th (City of London) London Regiment 'Post Office Rifles', has finally been laid to rest after he was killed on the first day of the Battle of Messines during WW1. 2nd Lt Henderson was buried during a moving ceremony at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Oak Dump Cemetery, near Ypres in Belgium.



The Royal Artillery Regiment bearer party carry the coffin of 2nd Lt. Henderson (Crown Copyright), all rights reserved

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was held on Wednesday 16 May 2018 and was conducted by the Reverend Thomas Hiney CF, Chaplain to the 19 Royal Artillery Regiment.



The Royal Artillery Regiment bearer party take 2nd Lt. Henderson to his final resting place (Crown Copyright), all rights reserved

Nicola Nash, JCCC said:

It's a great honour to be here today to lay this brave man to rest, who fought so courageously alongside his comrades. I am particularly grateful that Eric's family were able to be here to witness him being finally laid to rest after so many years.

Although over 100 years have passed since Eric's death, we passionately believe in continuing to honour his sacrifice and the sacrifice of all members of the Armed Forces who are lost in battle.



The Royal Artillery Regiment bearer party ceremonially fold the Union Flag during the service (Crown Copyright), all rights reserved

2nd Lt Henderson initially joined the 28th Battalion London Regiment in July 1915 as a Private. He was soon commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and eventually joined the 8th Battalion London Regiment, also known as the Post Office Rifles.

2nd Lt Henderson was killed in action on 7 June 1917 aged 21 years old, near the village of Messines in West Flanders, Belgium. He was found a century later during road works in the area of Eekhofstraat, near Voormezele in Belgium. He was found with several artefacts including a silver coin that was engraved with '2nd Lt. Eric Henderson, London Regiment'. Further research, conducted by the JCCC, showed that the location of the soldier was exactly where the Oak Reserve Line was during the Battle of Messines, which corresponded with the location of Eric's regiment on the day of his death.

The beginning of the Battle of Messines was signalled by the explosion of 19 mines that had been laid under German lines. The shock of the explosion was overwhelming and devastating to the enemy. The objectives of the Post Office Rifles on the day were to capture portions of the four lines known as Oak Trench, Oak Support, Oak Reserve and Oak Switch as well as a formidable strongpoint known as the 'Dammstrasse'. Many of the casualties of the Battalion were due to machine-gun fire from the White Chateau, one of the objectives of the 7th Battalion. Some of the 1/8th took part in the attack on this Chateau, and materially assisted in its capture.



2nd Lt. Henderson's great nieces (l to r) Judith Leyman, Sarah Foot and Lucy Cocup stand with the Royal Artillery Regiment and military representatives (Crown Copyright), all rights reserved

Family members who paid their respects to 2nd Lt Henderson included his three great nieces, Lucy Cocup, Sarah Foot and Judith Leyman, as well as members of their own families.

Mrs Judith Leyman, Eric's great niece, said on behalf of the family:

Being here in Ypres, and knowing Eric's resting place, means an awful lot to us. He wasn't a dusty memory in our family, but part of our mental landscape.

Reverend Thomas Hiney CF said:

These war cemeteries of northern France and Belgium are one of the wonders of the modern world. To add to one is of course poignant. These stories still feel very alive to our national memory.

Sub Lieutenant Harry Lewis from the British Embassy in The Hague was also in attendance. Current members of the Royal Artillery Regiment paid their own tribute by providing the bearer and firing party.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC Commemorations Manager said:

For almost a century, 2nd Lieutenant Eric Henderson was remembered with honour on the CWGC's Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial to the Missing – one of tens of thousands of young men whom the fortune of war denied a known grave. When the memorial was unveiled in 1927, the assembled mourners were told 'He is not missing. He is here'. Today, thanks to the efforts of many, that statement has new meaning for Eric and his family.



2nd Lt. Henderson's headstone bearing a poignant message (Crown Copyright), all rights reserved

A new headstone bearing 2nd Lt Henderson's name has been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for his final resting place in perpetuity.

[News story: New stealth jets set to arrive home in Britain](#)

Updated: Fixed broken link

Gavin Williamson confirmed the imminent arrival of the F-35 Lightning stealth

jets to RAF Marham in Norfolk during an event at RAF Coningsby to mark the 75th anniversary of the famous Dambusters raid of World War II.

The aircraft are due to fly across the Atlantic Ocean from the United States with several air-to-air refuelling serials. They will be flown by members of the newly reformed 617 Squadron which flew, and was immortalised by, the Dambusters mission in 1943.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

75 years ago the Dambusters pushed the boundaries of what was possible. That same spirit of innovation continues today as the Dambusters of today prepare to fly the world's most advanced fighter jet in the skies over the UK.

Just like those Lancasters which played such a vital role in the Second World War, the F-35B Lightning is based on great British design, operating with futuristic technology to adapt to an increasingly dangerous world.

Today's 617 Squadron is currently training with the UK's F-35 Lightning jets in America before they start flying to the UK two months ahead of schedule. This provides a good opportunity for support staff to do extra training on the road to the jets being ready for operational service by the end of the year.



617 Squadron's Commanding Officer, Wing Commander John Butcher

617 Squadron's Commanding Officer, Wing Commander John Butcher, said:

I have the great privilege of leading a jointly manned Squadron made up of the best engineers, mission support personnel and pilots from the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

The original Dambuster Squadron did not know what their mission was going to be until the last moment. Yet they had to make sure they were ready and that is as true for us today. The spectrum of missions we can undertake in the F-35 will be huge and we have to make sure we are ready to do whatever is asked of us.

Read the full interview with Wing Commander Butcher which compares today's 617 Squadron with the Dambusters of 1943 [here](#)

The F-35B Lightning, multi-role fighter jet is the first to combine radar evading stealth technology with supersonic speeds and short take-off and vertical landing capability. It will be jointly manned by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy and can operate from land and sea, forming a vital part of Carrier Strike when operating from the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.



Wing Commander Guy Gibson, while Commanding Officer of No 617 Squadron RAF, wearing flying kit.

617 Squadron, commonly referred to as the 'Dambusters', were originally set up for the highly-specialised mission to knock out dams and disrupt

industrial production in the Ruhr Valley of Germany.

Wing Commander Guy Gibson hand-picked his bomber crews for the original 617 Squadron, who then went on to deploy the iconic 'bouncing bomb' which had to be dropped above the water at an exact height of 60 feet and a speed of 220mph. The crews successfully managed to breach the Mohne and Eder dams.