

[News story: MOD confirms the death of Captain Dean Sprouting](#)

Updated: Minor amend

It is with regret that the MOD must announce the death of Captain Dean Sprouting of the Adjutant General's Corps at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, on 31st January 2018. He was serving with Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland. The incident is currently under investigation, but we can confirm that it was not the result of enemy activity.

Lt Col Rob Hedderwick, Commanding Officer, The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

It is hard to do justice to a man such as Dean Sprouting with simple words. In no time at all he had become an indispensable part of the battalion, not only for his professional expertise but also for his compassionate manner and camaraderie. His intelligence and sharp wit was apparent from the outset; there was an ever-present twinkle in his eye and he would gladly admit that his youth had been full of adventure.

Dean was simply one of those people whose infectious humour and enthusiasm drew others to him. His professional knowledge was second to none and his sage advice already something I had come to rely on. His loss is keenly felt by us all and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and children whom I know he cherished more than anything else in this world. I am hugely proud and thankful to have known him. He was a very good man.

Warrant Officer Class One Tam Millsip, Visiting Warrant Officer, 51 Infantry Brigade said:

Dean's warm, personable nature was never diluted while conducting his duties and those who he had dealings with were always left smiling after Dean imparted his unique wisdom and outlook on life.

Dean was a tremendously entertaining man to be around. He would bring a great deal of joy and laughter to those around him often at the expense of himself; there was never a boring day spent with Dean and my thoughts go out to his family at this very sad time.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence confirms the death of Capt Dean Sprouting of the Adjutant General's Corps, who died earlier this week at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this very difficult time. An investigation is underway to establish the detail but it is not a result of enemy activity.

[News story: Defence Secretary discusses threats with US counterpart](#)

Both countries have recently unveiled new plans for improving security, following the UK's announcement of the Modernising Defence Programme and the US publication of its National Defense Strategy.

The two programmes are closely aligned in their thinking, with a strong emphasis on modernising forces to tackle the increasing shared threats faced on several fronts, while strengthening international alliances and forging new ones.

In his first visit to Washington DC as Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson said:

Our two countries face the same threats in an increasingly dangerous world. We stand shoulder to shoulder on the battlefield, we share vital intelligence and technology, and our century-long relationship is the closest of any two allies across the globe. Together, we will always keep the streets of the UK and the US safe, protect our citizens, and defend our way of life.



The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

Current threats to prosperity and safety, including Russia, North Korea and the ongoing fight against Daesh, were high on the agenda during a meeting at the Pentagon that reinforced the UK's position as the US's defence partner of choice.

NATO remains the cornerstone of UK and US defence and ahead of the NATO Summit in July, both countries have been calling for other nations to invest more in security. The US and UK are the two largest contributors to NATO, and among just six countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence.

The UK's defence trade partnership with the US is worth \$3billion, including collaboration on several key projects such as the F-35 programme, Unmanned Air Systems and a Common Missile Compartment for UK-US Ballistic Missile Submarines.

An even closer bond is expected after Brexit, as the UK pursues new relationships and trade deals outside of Europe, which the Secretary of State emphasised when he visited the British-American Business Association during his visit.



The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

[News story: Huge new Atlas aircraft hangar opened by Defence Minister](#)

The Atlas maintenance, repair and overhaul facility, which covers 24,000 metres squared and is 28 metres high, is now fitted out and fully operational in support of RAF transport operations all over the world.

Minister for Defence Procurement Guto Bebb said:

From deploying troops and armoured vehicles to a war zone, to getting vital support to humanitarian disasters, our Atlas fleet plays a global role and it needs a home to match.

This huge hangar provides exactly that, and will see Brize Norton ready our Atlas fleet for action wherever they are needed in the world.



A £70 million hangar large enough to contain three of the RAF's new Atlas transport aircraft at the same time was officially opened by Defence Minister Guto Bebb at RAF Brize Norton today. Crown copyright.

The hangar was built under Defence Infrastructure Organisation contracts and has cost approximately £70 million including fit-out work, with activity on the facility ramping up since late 2016 when it was handed to Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation.

The hangar is designed to make Atlas maintenance easier, safer and more efficient. The internal layout is the result of extensive feedback from support delivery teams and has been designed to be highly adaptable with easy access to specialist tools and equipment.

Support for the UK's Atlas fleet is enabled through a £410 million agreement between DE&S and Airbus Defence and Space – part of the UK's ongoing commitment to the Atlas programme which is sustaining 8,000 jobs across the national supply chain.

RAF Atlas aircraft, a familiar sight in the skies above RAF Brize Norton where they are based, recently formed part of the UK's relief response to Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean where they made shuttle flights from Barbados to destinations across the region to deliver key support, including to the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Anguilla.

Defence Equipment and Support Director Air Support, Adrian Baguley, said:

The Atlas programme is delivering a world-class fleet for the RAF,

offering the UK next-generation transport and airlift abilities for operations all over the world.

Expert support on the ground in the UK is an essential part of that capability and this new facility will ensure that work continues for decades to come.

The aircraft can carry up to 37 tonnes over a range of 2,000 nautical miles. It is able to deploy troops and equipment between and within theatres of operation either by parachute or by landing on short, potentially unprepared airstrips.

Atlas can also carry armoured vehicles, drastically reducing the time it takes for a deploying force to be ready to fight. For humanitarian roles, it is capable of deploying mobile cranes, excavators and large dump trucks for disaster relief operations— for example clearing earthquake sites.



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Wing Commander Ed Horne, the Officer Commanding 70 Squadron RAF which operates the UK's Atlas aircraft said:

This new hangar provides us with a world-class maintenance facility to match the world-beating capability of the Atlas aircraft.

The UK has ordered 22 Atlas aircraft for the RAF, 18 of which have been delivered. The entire fleet is due to be delivered by 2022.



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[News story: New Shetland radar to better protect UK Northern airspace](#)

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, visited the site of the new £10m Remote Radar Head facility, at Saxa Vord, Unst, Shetland, to inspect its progress.

The radar will improve RAF and NATO understanding of the airspace north of Britain and further out across the Norwegian Sea, improving the UK's sovereign capability at a time of heightened Russian military activity. It will see the island return to the role it performed during the 1960s and 70s, when the site was used as an early warning radar on NATO's northern flank.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We will always protect our skies from Russian aggression. This radar is a vital part of the UK's defences as we react to intensifying global threats and reinforce our ability to tackle them. Russia's actions are not limited to Europe's eastern borders - the threat to British livelihoods is severe and real.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, Chief of the Air Staff, said:

The radar system at Saxa Vord is an important part of ensuring that the RAF can fully protect both the UK's airspace and that of our NATO allies, in the face of increasing pressure from Russia.

Right at the tip of Shetland, Saxa Vord is a very remote site, so I'm extremely grateful to the team who have been working hard through the cold of winter, with snow and 120 mph gales, to ensure that the construction has remained on schedule.

The Saxa Vord Radar head will provide key information on aircraft movements to the north of the UK and feed the nationwide Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) operation which is responsible for policing international and UK airspace from RAF Lossiemouth in Moray and RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire, as well as supporting civil air traffic control.

During the last five years, the RAF has carried out 69 QRA launches. Just last week (15 Jan), two Typhoon aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth were scrambled to intercept two approaching Russian military aircraft which did not respond to the air traffic control authorities.

The RAF monitored the jets as they passed through international airspace, before escorting the Russian Blackjacks out of the UK's area of interest. At no time did the Russian bombers enter UK sovereign airspace.

Defence, Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, managed the redevelopment of the site and delivered the new infrastructure and capability for the RAF, commissioning the works through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Services. The Saxa Vord remote radar head will be operated remotely by RAF personnel and contractors will only attend the site for maintenance.

Simon Dakin, Director Intelligence Surveillance Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance, for Defence Equipment and Support, said:

The Air Defence and Electronic Warfare Delivery Team has shown outstanding innovation and teamwork to deliver this vital capability ahead of time and within budget.

During his two day visit to Shetland, Sir Stephen Hillier also toured the adjacent Saxa Vord RAF and Exhibition Centre and met representatives from

Shetland Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Sullom Voe and Shetland Space Centre Ltd, as well as delivery personnel from FCO Services & ADEWS, Brody-Forbes, 90 SU, Serco, Mobile Met Unit and McDonald Scaffolding.

Scotland is home to more than 10,000 regular and 4,000 reserve armed forces personnel, whilst Scottish industry benefits from defence spending £1.5bn with it each year. This investment supports 9,750 private sector and highly skilled jobs in Scotland.

[News story: New navy warship accepted by Defence Minister](#)

The 90-metre warship, which successfully completed her maiden sea trials in December, will soon be sailed to Her Majesty's Naval Base Portsmouth, where she will be commissioned into the Royal Navy and prepare for counter-terrorism, anti-piracy, anti-smuggling and other maritime Defence operations.

During his visit the Minister also announced key milestones in the UK's Type 26 Frigate programme – the start of production of the next section of hull for HMS Glasgow – and BAE Systems' signing of a new £5.6 million contract to establish a Type 26 electrical testing facility in Leicestershire.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

Thanks to the hard work of the Clyde shipyards, HMS Forth is now ready to join the Royal Navy surface fleet and begin the vital task of defending the UK and her interests around the world.

Developing the Type 26 capability is also making great strides forward, reflecting the UK's commitment to this cutting-edge new warship, which will sustain 4,000 jobs in Scotland and right across the UK.

HMS Forth, one of five new OPVs being delivered for the Royal Navy, will enter service this year. Her sister ships – HMS Medway, HMS Trent, HMS Tamar and HMS Spey – are all expected to enter service by 2020.

The latest unit for HMS Glasgow, which will extend over two deck levels and house the ship's two large electric drive motors and associated shaft line, is now under construction and will weigh 132 tonnes once complete.

It will be added to the rest of the structure of the ship as it takes shape across the Clyde in Govan.

The newly-signed Electrical Integration and Test Facility sub-contract with

General Electric, enabled through a £3.7 billion MOD contract for the first batch of Type 26 ships, will establish a centre in Whetstone, Leicestershire. This facility will allow critical power and propulsion integration and de-risking tests for Type 26, ensuring the Frigates have safe and effective propulsion systems.

The agreement, which follows a previous Design Development contract signed in 2016, brings the total committed investment in the facility to around £13 million.

Director Ship Acquisition for Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the MOD's procurement organisation, Henry Parker, said:

Formal acceptance is a hugely important step in the delivery of any new ship and the teams at DE&S could not be prouder to see HMS Forth emerge from trials ready for delivery to the Royal Navy.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with BAE Systems to ensure successful delivery of the new OPV and Type 26 fleets.

Like her sister ships, HMS Forth will be equipped with a 30mm cannon and a flight deck capable of receiving a Merlin helicopter.

Displacing around 2,000 tonnes, they will have a maximum speed of 24 knots and will be able to sail 5,500 nautical miles before having to resupply.