

[News story: British Army reservists join NATO's Kosovo Force](#)

The UK is extending the deployment for another year of around 30 UK troops, including reservists, to NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR).

The reservists will bring specialist surveillance and intelligence skills to enhance KFOR's capability and will be working with NATO allies to promote safety, security and stability in the region.

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

British Army reservists are top-class and this demonstrates the crucial role they play in protecting the UK's interests.

Our troops will work with key NATO allies, providing the expertise needed to maintain stability in the Kosovo region and Europe as a whole.

KFOR began as a peacekeeping force in the late 1990s. It has now evolved into a flexible body of around 4,200 troops, providing security in Kosovo and allowing freedom of movement for all people in the country. Troops are contributed by around 30 nations in addition to the UK, including Germany, Italy, Turkey, Poland and the US.

The announcement comes after Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster's visit to the region in November last year and boosts the UK's long-term presence in the region, which includes defence training assistance and capacity-building of the Kosovo Security Force.

[News story: DIO sets out vision for future working with industry](#)

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), has launched its commercial strategy setting out its vision for future ways of working with suppliers in the soft and hard facilities management, construction and property advisory sectors

DIO currently spends around £3 billion each year buying infrastructure services to enable the men and women of defence to live, work, train and deploy across the UK and overseas.

The strategy, which has been developed in consultation with industry partners, aims to transform the way DIO does business. It provides information on the types of opportunities available to prospective suppliers and outlines plans to create and sustain a competitive market.

Central to the strategy is the importance of a broad and more diverse supply base which increases value back to the taxpayer by generating wider competition. DIO aims to increase supplier numbers and create a genuinely competitive supply base which offers greater opportunities to small and medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as well as larger suppliers.

As a main infrastructure client, DIO will engage with industry by sharing pipeline information well in advance of planned procurements to help shape the market, drive innovation and invigorate and maintain a diverse portfolio of suppliers. In turn this will support economic growth nationally and in the regions by giving businesses certainty to recruit and retain staff.

Minister for Defence, Personnel and Veterans, Tobias Ellwood said:

The defence estate is where our armed forces live, work, train and deploy from and it's crucial we give them the best infrastructure possible.

Working with industry is key, and this commercial strategy will ensure that the £3 billion we invest each year in our estate gives more value for money, is better aligned to military needs and gives more certainty to the defence supply chain.

Graham Dalton, DIO's CE said:

The publication of this strategy, in anticipation of the updated 2018 DIO Procurement Plan, marks an important moment for DIO. We realise that we have not been the easiest organisation to do business with in the past and we are dedicated to changing that.

This strategy sets out our intent to broaden our supply base, and for our existing and prospective suppliers to have the confidence to work with us. We will work in an open and constructive way to deliver innovative and value for money services that meet the requirements of defence and the armed forces.

Mark Fox, Chief Executive of the Business Services Association said:

I welcome the publication of the DIO Commercial Strategy. BSA members were closely involved in its development. Its publication marks an important step forward in the relationship, with government partnering with the private sector to deliver the best possible services.

Gareth Rhys Williams, Government Chief Commercial Officer said:

At a crucial time for defence spending, I am very pleased that the Defence Infrastructure Organisation has applied government best practice alongside working with industry to launch its first ever commercial strategy.

It is important that we build a strong and broad supply chain for government contracts and by giving certainty and transparency to the market we ensuring value for money for the taxpayer and a vibrant economy.

The [DIO Commercial Strategy](#) sets the direction for future DIO procurement plans.

[News story: Charles Forte appointed new MOD Chief Information Officer](#)

Following an open competition to both internal military and civilian candidates and to candidates from outside the MOD, the Permanent Secretary Stephen Lovegrove and General Sir Chris Deverell, Commander Joint Forces Command have today announced the appointment of Charles Forte as the new Defence CIO.

Charles has 36 years industry experience gained from leading Information Technology companies globally. He has previously had the role of CIO at British Petroleum and in an interim position at Thameswater. He was also the Chief Executive Officer of Global IT Service at Prudential.

Lieutenant General Ivan Hooper, who has been acting both as the Chief Executive Officer of Information Systems & Services (ISS) and the Defence CIO will hand over the latter role to Charles when he joins the Department. Charles is expected to start in post towards the end of January 2018.

As part of his new role, Charles will be responsible for the development of MOD strategy and policy on the operation and protection of all MOD Information and Communications Technology, including cybersecurity.

Press release: Support deal worth £100m agreed for Puma helicopters

The deal will sustain around 25 jobs at Airbus Helicopters UK Ltd in Oxfordshire at the company's base in Kidlington and at RAF Benson, where the front line squadrons are based and many more across the supply chain.

The support arrangement will enable planned and responsive Puma operations to take place and ensure the maintenance of the aircraft as it provides support to ground troops on the battlefield and to civil and emergency services responding to disasters and emergencies.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

This £100 million investment will ensure our Puma helicopters continue to transport British troops and kit to the front line – helping us provide vital support quickly in rapidly evolving situations.

The deal – part of our £178 billion Equipment Plan – will not only give our Armed Forces the kit they need to deal with intensifying global threats, but will also sustain British jobs at Airbus Helicopters.

The contract, which is intended to eventually provide support until the Puma HC Mk2 out of service date, currently planned for March 2025, will provide technical services to support safety management and fault investigation and materiel support including repair and overhaul of major components. It will also provide a training service for RAF maintenance engineers.

The Puma HC Mk2 was the first helicopter deployed to the Caribbean from the UK to provide emergency humanitarian relief to the islands left devastated by Hurricane Irma back in September 2017.

Deploying rapidly, the aircraft provided relief to people who saw their homes destroyed and helped deliver supplies and aid as part of the wider UK emergency response within 72 hours of receiving the call. Separately, the Puma HC Mk2 has been deployed to Afghanistan since 2015 as part of the UK's contribution to the NATO Afghanistan Mission named Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT.

Air Vice Marshal Graham Russell, Director Helicopters, for the MOD's procurement organisation, Defence Equipment and Support said:

The Puma HC Mk2 is carrying out a vital role in troop transport, load movement and humanitarian operations around the world. The upgraded helicopters represent a significant increase in capability

over the Mk1.

This support arrangement, which embraces learning from the early days of operating the Mk2 aircraft, will ensure that cost-effective support is always available to allow the user to deliver the capability wherever and whenever it is needed.

[News story: Defence Secretary visits Appledore yard as warship competition ramps up](#)

The Ministry of Defence announced plans to procure a new class of frigates, the Type 31e, as part of [the National Shipbuilding Strategy which was launched last year](#). The warships will be built in the UK, with a set price cap no more than £250M per frigate for the first batch of five, with an investment decision to be made at the end of this year.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Visiting a shipyard that has built hundreds of vessels and meeting some of the next generation of apprentice shipbuilders leaves me in no doubt of the current resurgence of UK shipbuilding. The South West is crucial for our military, with a particularly special connection with our Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and it's good to see Babcock seeking to strengthen that even further with this bid.

The department has received over 20 expressions of interest from industry with Babcock today announcing it will lead a bespoke team of industry partners, including Thales, BMT, Harland & Wolff and Ferguson Marine in a bid for the new Type 31e.

The MOD spent £810 per person in the South West region last year, greater than any other region in the UK coming in at a total value of £4.4bn. The department's direct spend in the area is estimated to sustain 30,000 jobs, one in every 70.

Babcock's Appledore facility has been a particularly integral link in the production of the largest ships in the Navy's history, with their production of a number of significant 'blocks' of the UK's new aircraft carriers. Separately, the Appledore yard has recently been working to deliver a new class of offshore patrol vessels for the Irish Naval Service.

The Defence Secretary was given a guided tour of the yard and visited some of

the 260 staff employed there and met with the apprentices showing their enthusiasm for the potential opportunity to build cutting-edge ships for the growing Royal Navy.

The frigates will be designed to meet the needs of the Royal Navy, but also with the export market in mind. The Government will work with industry to provide support to become internationally competitive, boosting the UK economy and jobs, while also helping to create a more stable and well-protected world.

The Defence Secretary will go on to visit the Commando Training Centre in Lymstone, Devon, which is entering its 78th year of training Royal Marines. An average of 1,300 recruits, 2,000 potential recruits and 400 potential officers attend training courses at the centre every year, and the Defence Secretary will meet many of those set to join the Corps.