

[News story: UK steps up commitment to European security](#)

Speaking at the NATO Defence Ministerial in Brussels, Gavin Williamson will commit four RAF Typhoons to the Southern Air Policing mission in Romania next summer. Following a successful rotation last summer, the fast jets will be redeployed to the country, working with our Romanian allies to police the Black Sea skies.

Marking a further commitment to Europe, the Defence Secretary will announce that the UK is stepping up in the Western Balkans. In addition to the troops already based in Kosovo, supporting peace in the country, and our contribution to the EU's Op Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from next year a Battalion will be held at high readiness to respond to any situation in the region. This will see 600 soldiers ready to move into the region at short notice.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

In the face of an increasingly assertive Russia, the UK has significantly stepped up its commitment to Europe and today I can confirm a further package of support, showing how we remain at the forefront on European security.

We are standing by our allies across air; deploying Typhoons to Southern Air Policing in Romania, land; increasing our support to the Kosovo peacekeeping operation, and sea; with HMS Ocean returning to the NATO Standing Maritime Group.

The Defence Secretary will also welcome the return of HMS Ocean to one of NATO's Standing Maritime groups, following its redeployment to the Caribbean to help in the hurricane recovery.

[News story: Statement from Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson](#)

Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

I am both honoured and excited to have been appointed Defence

Secretary. I have always had the greatest admiration for the professionalism and valour of all those who serve in our country's Armed Forces.

The United Kingdom faces rising threats in a worsening international security situation, making Defence's work all the more important. It is imperative that we continue to take the fight to Daesh and keep Britain safe. As we leave the European Union, and forge a new Global Britain, Defence has the opportunity to deepen old friendships and contribute to building new ones around the world.

I am determined to ensure that the Armed Forces receive the recognition they deserve for the great work they do, including through the Armed Forces Covenant, and that they evolve both to meet the changing threats that we face, and to ensure that they properly represent the modern society that they defend.

[News story: Hundreds of Service personnel support London Poppy Day](#)

Servicemen and women descended upon the capital today to lend their support to The Royal British Legion's (TRBL) annual London Poppy Day.

Around 980 personnel from the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force greeted commuters at underground and mainline railway stations across London. It was part of a bid to raise more than £1 million for TRBL in 24 hours.

The day began with the official fundraising launch in Covent Garden, where Service personnel joined celebrity supporter Phil Daniels, star of *Quadrophenia* and *EastEnders*. At noon fellow *EastEnders* actors Barbara Windsor and Shane Richie visited Liverpool Street Station, where The Band of the Parachute Regiment performed.

Military bands played at a number of stations to brighten up the day for those heading to work while uniformed collectors gathered donations. Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin showed her support at Westminster tube station in the morning while Defence Ministers Earl Howe, Mark Lancaster and Tobias Ellwood helped the fundraising efforts at Waterloo Station at lunchtime. The Band of the Grenadier Guards livened up the busy Waterloo concourse in support of the appeal.

Scotland's capital city was also awash with poppies for Edinburgh Poppy Day, with military volunteers collecting on the streets, transport hubs and shopping centres.

Remembrance Sunday falls on 12 November this year and members of the Armed Forces around the world will mark the occasion. Today's Armed Forces are inspired by their predecessors and continue the proud traditions of service and achievements of those who have gone before them.

[News story: New nurseries open for UK forces families in Cyprus](#)

The opening of the early years facility is a significant milestone for BFC, DCYP and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), which has overseen the project, funded through LIBOR fines set aside by the government to support MOD infrastructure improvements for childcare facilities on the defence estate.

BFC currently has over 3,000 military personnel serving abroad, over 300 civil servants and over 3,700 spouses and children. The return of UK troops from Germany within the next 2 years will see BFC become the UK's largest permanent overseas military base.

Before this year, childcare for forces families on the island consisted of crèches that were housed in military buildings that were not designed as creches. In 2014, BFC, DCYP and DIO began a project to build 4 bespoke nurseries for the children of British families serving in Cyprus.

Full design work began in 2015 through DIO SD for 4 nurseries. DCYP, the MOD's professional lead on all matters relating to service children and young people, managed the funding for the improvements. DIO worked with them and BFC to scope locations, develop plans and manage the construction and launch of new nurseries in Ayios Nikolaos, Dhekelia, Akrotiri and Episkopi.

Ayios Nikolaos, Akrotiri and Dhekelia nurseries were completed in July 2017 and opened for business after staff training for the September 2017 term. The Episkopi nursery will be complete later this year and will open in early 2018.

Speaking at the ribbon cutting ceremony, Major General Illingworth was keen to highlight this key issue and congratulate all those involved in seeing the project through to completion. He said:

I am delighted to be here alongside our colleagues from the Directorate for Children and Young People, to officially open this fantastic early years facility.

This is the culmination of a lot of hard work and demonstrates our commitment to early years learning here in Cyprus.

Investing in early years education is very important, and I have no doubt that the children of our military and civilian personnel based here in Cyprus will reap the benefits of this wonderful facility for some years to come.

DCYP director, Mike Cooper was equally enthusiastic:

I echo the comments from Major General Illingworth. The importance of education, even at an early age, cannot be overstated.

These fantastic new settings in Cyprus offer an excellent foundation for lifelong learning and support the government agenda for extending access to high quality childcare.

They also provide great employment opportunities for spouses seeking a skill that will be valued on their return to the UK.

Gary Brownlee, DIO area manager, said:

This project is a good example of how DIO works together with our armed forces customers to deliver a project that meets their requirements, taking into account their needs, respecting the local environment and contributing to the quality of life for armed services personnel and their families abroad.

We are pleased to see the nurseries being enjoyed by children, families and staff. It is very rewarding to see the many years of planning and construction come together successfully.

Thank you to all of the staff within DIO, our contractors and our colleagues in BFC and DCYP for their hard work.

[News story: Science and tech at core of defence as Minister launches new strategy in Birmingham](#)

By setting out specific research areas and capability priorities, like autonomy, cyber and sensor technology, the strategy will encourage defence to be even more responsive to emerging opportunities and threats, whilst promoting more innovation and collaboration with suppliers.

The Defence Minister made the announcement while visiting Small and Medium-Sized businesses (SMEs) in Birmingham, one of the UK's up-and-coming tech hubs, at EEF's brand new facility in the West Midlands.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

This new strategy puts world-beating science and technology right at the core of our Armed Forces. Investing millions into innovative ideas from dynamic British companies will help us defend the country in the face of intensifying threats and keep us ahead of the curve.

A world-leading centre for life sciences, Birmingham has over 36,800 digital jobs, with over 550 startups created from 2011 to 2015, making it a fertile ground for new ideas for UK Defence and Security.

Last year saw the department's direct spend with smaller business increase by over 10%. Many have benefitted from the MOD's £800 million Innovation Fund, with the department committed to spend 1.2% of its rising defence budget on science and technology.

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) is one way the finances are channelled, harnessing innovative ideas to give the UK a strategic advantage in Defence and Security through themed competitions and an 'Open Call' for Innovation.

Since its launch, the DASA has assessed nearly 700 proposals from almost 400 organisations and has successfully awarded its defence portion of the 'Open Call' budget for this year.

Ideas have included computer games to help military units develop more effective tactics, a device to reduce the noise of aircraft and vehicles and a redesigned geolocation tracker.

Over 40% of submissions received were from SMEs that have not engaged with defence before, reflecting the success of the MOD efforts to make it easier for SMEs to win defence business, maximising the innovative solutions they can offer the Armed Forces.

Last month the Defence Minister announced the launch of the MOD's new Supplier Portal, which brings together for the first time a range of useful information for new and prospective suppliers in one place.

A new Twitter channel, @defenceproc, is also being used to provide regular updates to suppliers on opportunities and events that the MOD is supporting, whilst the department also launched two simplified, plain English short-form contracts for use in lower value less complex procurements last year, reducing the existing baseline terms and conditions from 18 pages to three.

The new Science and Technology Strategy will be led by the MOD's Chief Scientific Adviser Hugh Durrant-Whyte, who joined this year following a

career at the forefront of the robotics sector in Australia.