

[News story: Hurricane Irma: Foreign Secretary interview on BBC Today Programme](#)

I sympathise with the distress of all the families in the Caribbean, but I must point out we have had half a million British nationals in the path of this hurricane. In St Martin in particular, this is controlled with the Dutch and the French, who have been evacuating people but in priority depending on their medical needs. This is a very big consular crisis and I am confident we are doing everything we can to help British nationals, but there are half a million affected.

We've been able to get 700 troops into the region, and police officers coming in. I think there are now more than 50 UK police arriving in the area. I've talked to the governor, Gus Jaspert, and he has told me of the psychological benefits of seeing UK service personnel helping and restoring a sense of order.

No, we were there as soon as the crisis broke. It doesn't make any sense when a hurricane is impending to send in aircraft or ships that are not going to be capable of withstanding the storm. If you look at what is happening now, there is an unprecedented British effort to deal with what has been an unprecedented catastrophe.

The emergency hotline is there – 44 (0) 207 008 0000 – we instantly set up a system for people to donate via the Red Cross. I must respectfully dissent from the critics of the Government. Gus Jaspert is being hailed as a hero and that is right. We have responded in a timely and highly organised fashion. These are British overseas territories and we are going to be there for the long-term. We will come with a recovery plan for these islands and help them restore their financial services and tourism industries.

Taxpayers money is already being deployed. £28 million has already been spent and we will be announcing further support over the next few days. This is an absolute priority for our Government and we understand the huge economic blow that has been dealt in these islands. The Government is working together at all levels to restore confidence and I pay tribute to the local administrations.

[To donate to the British Red Cross Hurricane Irma appeal visit](#) or call 0300 456 4999.

Read more about the [government's response to Hurricane Irma](#).

Press release: COBR meeting on Hurricane Irma, 10 September 2017: Foreign Secretary's statement

Foreign Secretary's post-COBR statement

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I've just come out of COBR where we've again been discussing the catastrophe that's engulfed our friends in the British Virgin Islands, in Anguilla and Turks and Caicos, and of course across the Caribbean, the victims of Hurricane Irma.

It was a mercy that Hurricane Jose proved less destructive than had been feared, but now we're stepping up our aid effort. Three planes going in today, 500 British troops in the region, 125 UK soldiers on British Virgin Islands alone. As I speak, 53 UK police officers in the air, on their way to help sort things out, get these wonderful places back on their feet.

If you want to donate to help British people over there in the Overseas Territories, then we will match your contributions to the Red Cross, pound for pound.

To donate to the British Red Cross Hurricane Irma appeal visit: www.redcross.org.uk/HurricaneIrma or call 0300 456 4999.

Read more about the [government's response to Hurricane Irma](#).

Press release: Hurricane Irma: UK government actions update, 10 September 2017

- RFA Mounts Bay, our first military response, patrols Caribbean waters for 6 months of the year during the Hurricane season (June to November). Its crew are in a high state of readiness to be able to swiftly provide

humanitarian and disaster relief, which they have already delivered to Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands.

- The Prime Minister announced a [£32 million relief fund](#) to support the humanitarian effort and the UK was the first country to arrive on the scene. In addition to this, the UK government is also [doubling all public donations made to the British Red Cross appeal](#).
- A team of British humanitarian experts has been in the region for a week working with authorities and directing the humanitarian response.
- In Anguilla, RFA Mounts Bay has:
 - delivered 6 tonnes of emergency aid
 - rebuilt and secured the Emergency Operations Centre
 - restored power to the hospital
 - reinforced shelters
 - cleared the runway at the airport (which is now serviceable)
 - cleared roads, including to the police station
 - provided further support in the British Virgin Islands
- HMS Ocean is also being deployed and will help with the reconstruction after the hurricane. Additional UK government staff are on standby to provide assistance once the hurricane has passed.
- There are just under 500 troops currently in the region, made up of marines, engineers, medics and specialists, including Army and RAF personnel.
- A C17, Voyager and A400M aircraft carried over 200 Royal Marines, as well as engineers and specialist personnel from all 3 Services. They have provided medical supplies and aid including 2.2 tonnes of UK aid shelter kits providing shelter for almost 1,000 people, rations and clean water. A total of 10,000 UK aid buckets and 5,000 solar lanterns have been dispatched.
- Amongst those deployed were the 40 Commando Royal Marines and the 3 Commando Brigadiers, 8 DFID humanitarian experts, 10 FCO Rapid Deployment staff as well as humanitarian experts funded by UK aid.
- Two members of the UK police cadre, who offer support to the military in times of international crisis, flew out on Friday and a further 53 British officers, from 14 police forces are due to fly out on Sunday.
- Our Ambassador to the US has deployed teams of staff at airports in the affected areas of the USA. They are providing advice and support to British nationals in Florida and issuing emergency travel documents.

- Our US Network is liaising closely with the US authorities to get British nationals to safety.
- The Foreign Office has set up a hotline for those concerned about friends and relatives affected by the hurricane: +44 (0)20 7008 0000. At their request, we are taking all emergency calls for the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands on this number.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

We continue to work flat out to help the people who have suffered so much in the Caribbean, particularly of course in our overseas territories, in Anguilla, in the Turks and Caicos, and above all in the British Virgin Islands where there's been massive devastation. We're following the path of Storm Jose now, we're sending 500 troops, they're already in the region, huge amount of supplies, all sorts of efforts to get fuel into the region, to get power generation started again to help with sanitation, getting the hospitals going and everything that you would expect from the UK government to support British people overseas.

And I just want to say to everybody watching this, if you want to give, if you want to support those who have suffered in the terrible disasters of Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Jose, then we recommend giving to the Red Cross, and we in the UK government will match you pound for pound.

Watch the [Foreign Secretary speaking](#).

To donate to the British Red Cross Hurricane Irma appeal visit: www.redcross.org.uk/HurricaneIrma or call 0300 456 4999.

Read more [announcements about government actions relating to Hurricane Irma](#).

[News story: Hurricane Irma: UK military provides relief to the Caribbean](#)

Named Operation Ruman, on Friday nearly 300 UK military personnel equipped with aid supplies left the UK to provide immediate relief to people who have seen their homes destroyed.

Departing from RAF Brize Norton, a C17, Voyager and A400M aircraft carried

over 200 Royal Marines, as well as Engineers and specialist personnel from all three Services, medical supplies and aid including emergency shelter kits, rations and clean water. Amongst those deployed were the 40 Commando Royal Marines and 3 Commando Brigade.

The aircraft have now landed in Barbados, as part of the UK Joint Taskforce in Barbados. The taskforce will use Barbados as a hub to distribute aid. The C17 continued its journey onto the US Virgin Islands – the island with the only usable runway in the region – with 85 personnel on board.

On Saturday, another C17 left from Brize Norton carrying a Puma helicopter and the UK is planning to send another Puma to the Caribbean tomorrow.

In addition to the arrival of the aircraft, RFA Mounts Bay has also reached the British Virgin Islands, with a Wildcat Helicopter embarked conducting reconnaissance flights and a helicopter to help deliver supplies and aid. Her crew will help with structural repairs and restabilising communication.

The 16 Royal Engineer Commandos, deployed from Mounts Bay, are also providing key support to the British Virgin Islands including to the Governor who has made clear that his priority is to restore law and order and to put vital communications in place. They are also working hard to clear runway, making it serviceable and allowing for further aid to reach the islands.

In addition to the support offered by RFA Mounts Bay in the Caribbean, HMS Ocean was also diverted from her tasking in the Mediterranean to the Caribbean in order to bring the help the islanders get back up on their feet after the hurricanes have passed. HMS Ocean will embark equipment and aid at Gibraltar on passage to the Caribbean on Monday.

Aid has also been supplied from DFID's disaster response centre at Kemble Airfield in Gloucestershire, including 10,000 UK aid buckets and 5,000 UK solar lanterns. This aid will reach those in need in the next few days by the quickest and most effective route possible.

[News story: RFA Mounts Bay delivers vital aid to Caribbean islands](#)

The ship has been deployed in the Caribbean since July in preparation for the hurricane season, ready to provide support at a moment's notice. Tasked by the Royal Navy, she was the UK's first military response to the Caribbean.

The ship carries a specialist disaster relief team – drawn from the Royal Engineers and Royal Logistics Corps – as well as heavy plant for lifting and shifting and emergency kit and shelters provided by the Department for International Development. Also on board are the Royal Navy's Mobile Aviation

Support Force – aviation specialists, meteorological advisors and flight deck crews.

Engineers were on hand to stop a potentially-dangerous fuel leak at Anguilla's main petrol dump, restore power to the island's sole hospital and hand out shelters providing temporary homes for people left homeless by the storm. They also cleared the runway which was declared safe for relief flights.

RFA Mounts Bay's Wildcat helicopter – from 815 Naval Air Squadron based at Yeovilton – also flew Governor Tim Foy on a flight over the island – which is about the size of Plymouth – to survey the damage from the air during seven hours of continuous flying. The reconnaissance flight found widespread damage to infrastructure, schools, government buildings and power supplies.

As a result of the sortie, the island's leaders and ship's team decided to focus efforts on supporting the police headquarters as the hub of the relief effort, get the hospital on its feet again, and reinforce two shelter stations – particularly important with Hurricane José now barrelling towards the region.

Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer Capt Stephen Norris RFA said:

My people worked tirelessly throughout the day with determination and flexibility to support the Governor and the people of Anguilla.

Although Anguilla suffered extensive damage, normal signs of life were returning – some roads open and the local population beginning a recovery and clear-up operation.

RFA Mounts Bay is now making for the British Virgin Islands – 90 miles to the west – to concentrate today's disaster relief efforts.

As part of a wider military effort, Britain's flagship HMS Ocean has been diverted from her NATO mission in the Mediterranean to the Caribbean to help with the reconstruction effort – as HMS Illustrious did in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines four years ago.

Meanwhile, three flights will shortly be departing RAF Brize Norton carrying Royal Marines, Engineers, medical supplies and aid including emergency shelter kits, rations and clean water. Tomorrow a further C17 will leave from Brize Norton carrying two Puma helicopters.