

News story: UK agrees new military training programme with France

The Defence Secretary will agree the new programme of UK-French training during his first bilateral meeting with Florence Parly, the newly appointed French Minister for the Armed Forces in Paris later today.

In September, over 1,500 British soldiers from 16 Air Assault Brigade will be joined by troops from 11eme Brigade Parachitiste on NATO exercise Swift Response in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. Meanwhile, French troops also plan to join 1,000 UK personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment on Exercise Askari Storm in Kenya in November, training on the prevention of instability and the spread of violent extremism.

During the visit, the Defence Secretary will also praise the French troops who have been deployed to Estonia as part of the UK-led enhanced Forward Presence battalion in the country since April this year.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The UK and France have a long enduring relationship and that will continue as the UK leaves the European Union.

We are deployed together in NATO, fighting against Daesh in Iraq and Syria and training together across the globe.

This announcement is the latest in a string of partnerships that highlight the enduring strength of the UK-French defence relationship.

Earlier this year, the UK and France signed a €100million agreement to develop future long range weapons and are working together on an unmanned combat air system. And as the UK prepares for HMS Queen Elizabeth to reach operational capability in 2020, France is expected to play her part in supporting the Carrier Strike Group, as the UK did with the French carrier Charles De Gualle in the Gulf during 2015 when HMS Kent was integrated into her task group.

The UK and France also run a personnel exchange programme. Improving how we work together, there are currently over 40 personnel working in reciprocal roles across the three services.

The Defence Secretary has also announced that the RAF Red Arrows will start their European and Gulf tour in France on 15th September, Battle of Britain Day, with a flypast in Cannes.

News story: Defence Secretary strengthens ties between UK and Oman

During the two day visit, the Defence Secretary met with the Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs, His Excellency Sayyid Badar bin Saud bin Harub Al Busaidi, signing a Memorandum of Understanding and Services Agreement in Muscat. The agreement secures UK use of facilities at Duqm, ahead of the completion of the UK Joint Logistics Support Base at the port, giving Britain a strategically important and permanent maritime base east of Suez, but outside of the Gulf.

The booming Duqm Port complex provides significant opportunity to the defence, security and prosperity agendas for both the UK and Oman. It has dry dock capability able to accommodate submarines and the UK's flagship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, which is the largest and most powerful warship ever built for the Royal Navy.

From Duqm, HMS Queen Elizabeth will be able to project influence across an important region. She will fulfil multiple roles from providing air power anywhere at any time, to supporting allies or delivering humanitarian aid and the port itself provides Britain with a hub from which to tackle issues such as the fight against Daesh.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

This agreement ensures British engineering expertise will be involved in developing Duqm as a strategic port for the Middle East, benefiting the Royal Navy and others.

Oman is a longstanding British ally and we work closely across diplomatic, economic and security matters. Our commitment to the Duqm port project highlights the strength of our relationship.

Through ensuring a permanent UK presence at Duqm, the UK will be able to shape the development of the Naval facility to support its carrier capability and wider British security needs in the region. Alongside at Duqm was HMS Monmouth, who has recently completed a five month deployment to the Gulf where as part of an international coalition she was involved in drugs busts worth £400m. The Defence Secretary praised the work of the sailors whose actions removed a key funding stream for terrorists in the region.



Sir Michael Fallon with His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs

Once completed, the UK Joint Logistics Support Base, a multi-million pound joint venture between British defence company Babcock International and the Oman Drydock Company, will provide the UK a permanent training facility in addition to a key military logistics centre in the Gulf. It will also be connected to other Gulf countries by the Gulf Rail Project.

The UK and Oman are established allies in the Gulf, with a wide range of shared interests. With a particularly strong defence relationship, the infrastructure built at Duqm port will support Exercise SAIF SAREEA 3 in 2018, the largest UK-Oman joint exercise for 15 years.

[News story: World renowned RAF Red Arrows to tour Middle East](#)

Updated: new version

On a visit to Kuwait, Sir Michael will announce that the Reds will perform in the country as part of a wider regional tour, with a programme that will

promote the United Kingdom's long-standing relations across the Gulf. The Defence Secretary will also review the campaign to defeat Daesh with commanders in the coalition headquarters in Kuwait.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

This historic Red Arrows tour will be a visible demonstration of UK engagement across the globe, flying the flag to promote Britain in important capitals through the GREAT campaign.

Kuwait is a vital partner. I will be looking to strengthen our military relationship with more frequent joint exercises and I will be reviewing the next steps in the campaign against Daesh with commanders at the Coalition's headquarters in Kuwait.

At a time when the UK is negotiating a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union, it is continuing to look outwards globally. The tour will highlight the partnership with the British Armed Forces in each nation visited, as well as demonstrating that the UK is 'open for business', committed to peace and security, and a leading player on the global stage.

The UK was one of the first members of the coalition and has focussed on supporting Iraqi security forces and the Syrian opposition to defeat Daesh. British soldiers in Iraq have trained over 58,000 Iraqis in battle winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills and the RAF have struck over 1,400 Daesh targets in Iraq and Syria as well as providing highly valued surveillance and reconnaissance, air-to-air refuelling and transport aircraft.

Ahead of the three year anniversary next month of UK involvement in the military campaign, the Defence Secretary review the progress with coalition Commander, US Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend and British Major General Rupert Jones, the Deputy Commander.

During the visit, the Defence Secretary will also announce a draft Defence Cooperation Accord which formalises the relationship with Kuwait and covers loan personnel and support to UK military personnel on training in Kuwait, which follows UK participation in exercise Desert Warrior earlier this year, the first time UK and Kuwaiti forces had exercised together for 15 years.

The Red Arrows tour will allow for further close cooperation with Kuwaiti and regional armed forces and promote opportunities for investment and trade with the UK, encourage government-to-government engagement to develop economic partnership, and showcase the excellence of STEM education with UK universities with displays in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.

Press release: Defence Secretary salutes Scots troops who keep us safe at home and abroad

Visiting Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik, Sir Michael Fallon met 2 SCOTS (2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland) where he praised the contribution the troops would make to helping keep the UK safe and highlighted how the range of their recent and forthcoming deployments “spanned continents” contributing to security “at home and abroad”.

In Iraq on OP SHADER, 2 SCOTS’ non-combat role will strengthen the Iraqi Security Forces as they fight to remove Daesh. They will provide the latest training in urban combat, marksmanship and countering improvised explosive devices.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

The men and women of our Scottish-based Armed Forces perform a pivotal role in keeping the people of this country, and our allies, safe.

From Afghanistan to South Sudan to Cyprus as well as recent deployments in the UK, the strength and versatility of 2 SCOTS allows them to operate in varied roles that span continents and project UK influence across the globe.

The men and women who serve here today can be proud of the valuable contribution they make to our security both at home and abroad.

In May 2017, 2 SCOTS personnel deployed on Op TEMPERER to guard key infrastructure sites in order to release 166 civilian Ministry of Defence Police and Civil Nuclear Constabulary firearms officers in Scotland. This was part of the wider UK response which freed an additional 1,000 armed civilian police officers to help protect the UK public, following the Manchester Arena terrorist attack.

Troops from 2 SCOTS will shortly also deploy on two United Nations’ missions: joining comrades from the Scots Dragoon Guards in Cyprus over the next few weeks, and deploying on Op TRENTON in South Sudan in 2018 to protect the UN forces building hospitals and other new infrastructure.

Previously, 2 SCOTS deployed on NATO’s Op TORAL peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan for nine months in 2015-16 where they helped develop the professionalism of the officer cadre passing through the Afghan National Army’s Officer Academy, and protected UK and allied troops in Kabul.

2 SCOTS will again be part of the UK Standby Battalion in 2018, contributing

to an additional force of 2,800 military personnel to support civilian police forces, should they request it.

2 SCOTS are a light role infantry battalion based in Penicuik comprised of 414 Scottish infantry soldiers and 35 officers, supported by 53 Army personnel from other regiments and battalions.

[News story: Royal Navy leads international efforts to seize drugs worth £400M](#)

The UK and France commanded a multinational naval task force which has scored eight drugs busts over the period, seizing 1.75 tonnes of narcotics worth nearly £400m, including 265kg of heroin and 455kg of hashish worth £65m by the Royal Navy Type 23 frigate, HMS Monmouth.

Since April, British, French, US and Australian warships in Combined Task Force 150 (CTF150) took part in Operation Southern Surge to counter narcotics trafficking, which funds terrorism in the region, scoring eight drugs busts.

The naval task force polices more than three million square miles of sea in order to track down vessels smuggling drugs and weapons, as well as providing reassurance to ships using the international waters. The multinational coalition is also focused on deterring and denying maritime terrorist activity in the region, which includes some of the world's most vital trade routes such as the Suez Canal and Bab Al Mandeb Strait.

The headquarters of CTF150 has been made up of 24 British and French sailors and commanded by French Rear Admiral Olivier Lebas.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The success of this join task force with our French allies is a demonstration of Britain's firm commitment to global maritime security and our ability to work with European allies to tackle the threat from drug smuggling.

The money made from these nefarious criminal activities fund the terrorists who threaten us at home and abroad. As we leave the EU we will continue to work alongside our allies to tackle smuggling in the region and maintain the free flow of shipping.

Deputy Commander Combined Task Force 150, Royal Navy Captain Paul Pitcher,

said:

The deployment of a combined French-UK staff has successfully demonstrated French-UK naval integration in an operational maritime environment. The ships under our command have enjoyed considerable success in seizing illegal drugs at sea, as well as providing naval presence to reassure the shipping community in and around the strategic chokepoint of the Bab Al Mandeb Strait.

The Franco-British team has been directing operations since April after taking over from the Canadian Navy, and has just passed on command to the Pakistan Navy. Navies from the Combined Maritime Forces, a coalition of 31 nations, take it in turns to lead the task force either from a command ship or the headquarters in Bahrain.

The Combined Task Force joint command is the latest in a series of shared commitments undertaken by the UK and France, demonstrating the enduring closeness of the two nations' defence relationship.

Earlier this year, around 60 Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel joined a French naval deployment to the Indian Ocean and Far East, while British and French forces routinely operate together as allies in the Global Coalition and NATO. This year, France is also contributing to the ongoing UK-led NATO enhanced Forward Presence deployment to Estonia.