

News story: Iraq Afghanistan Memorial to be unveiled in London

The memorial honours both the UK Armed Forces and civilians who served their country in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan, and who supported them back home, from 1990-2015.

Around 2,500 invited guests will attend a service of dedication from a specially conducted Drumhead on Horse Guards at 11am, to include prayers, music and readings. A small ceremony will then be held in the gardens for the unveiling itself. It will be displayed on screens on Horse Guards.

The guests will be representatives of the many groups – military and civilian – whose efforts in those countries over a 25-year period are recognised, including current Service personnel, veterans, civil servants and charity workers.

They will be joined by The Queen, other members of the Royal Family, Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon and other senior politicians.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The memorial will stand as a permanent reminder of the contribution and sacrifice that so many members of our Armed Forces, aid workers and civilian personnel made towards the security of the United Kingdom and the interests of Iraq and Afghanistan. Their efforts underline our on-going commitment to support the people of this region in building a more stable future which will help keep Britain safer and more secure.



Union Jack flag on British Military base, Crown Copyright.

The memorial commemorates the duty and service of British citizens who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way, protected our nation's interests far from the security of the UK, helped those in danger and worked to improve the lives of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. UK Citizens, from a vast breadth of organisations across Government, charities and non-governmental organisations worked tirelessly over many years to help the citizens of both countries. Some made the ultimate sacrifice during their efforts to lay the foundations for peace and stability.

Importantly, it honours all those who worked on the humanitarian side of operations, whether in a military or civilian role including areas such as aid distribution, education, healthcare, infrastructure and governance. The memorial recognises, praises and remembers with gratitude the unstinting and selfless commitment of all those, military and civilian, who served their country in support of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The distinctive memorial has been designed by sculptor Paul Day and gives equal prominence to the civilian and military contributions. It consists of two large stone monoliths supporting a bronze medallion. The two-sided medallion has sculpted reliefs depicting the memorial's theme of "duty and service".

The memorial project is run by a board of trustees, whose chairman is former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Stirrup, and The Sun newspaper ran a fundraising appeal for the memorial. The unveiling is being organised by the MOD, on the trustees' behalf, in partnership with The Royal British Legion,

which is co-hosting a reception after the service.

After the unveiling, the public will be freely able to visit the Iraq Afghanistan Memorial in the Victoria Embankment Gardens.

News story: UK and Jordan standing shoulder to shoulder in fight against Daesh

During a visit to London, where the King also met with the Foreign Secretary, Sir Michael discussed the UK's deep and longstanding support to Jordan, an important regional ally.

As a country on the front line in the fight against Daesh, Jordan is working closely with Britain and other Coalition members to defeat the terror group. Jordan was one of the earliest contributors to airstrikes against Daesh, operating four F-16 fighters, as well as other transporter aircraft.

Following the meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Jordan is a longstanding and key ally of the UK and an important partner in countering the shared threats we face.

We stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight against Daesh, our militaries exercise together and we're assisting Jordan in the development to develop of its armed forces.

Through our global role we're committed to helping Jordan in sustaining its stability which in turn makes Britain safer and more secure.

Over the last financial year, the UK, through our Conflict Security and Stabilisation Fund (CSSF), has contributed over £32 million in helping Jordan's security, and next year we will aim to contribute a further £28 million. This funding, as well as longstanding defence engagement between the two countries, means that the UK and Jordan have a substantial defence relationship, including:

- Building up Jordan's border security, through helping develop their

border surveillance capability.

- 200 UK forces last year participated in Exercise Shamal Storm 16, and this year British forces will work alongside a stepped up Jordanian force.
 - The UK leads and helps to fund Jordan's Quick Reaction Force (QRF). The QRF is a Rapid Response force which has the ability to respond to threats at distance.
 - Through NATO, Britain is providing financial support to developing Jordan's cyber defence, military exercises and information protection.
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[News story: Royal Air Force playing major role in world's premier air combat exercise](#)

Based at Nellis Air Force Base, Exercise Red Flag pits 'Blue' coalition forces against hostile 'Red Force' aggressors, mirroring real-life threats in air-to-air, air-to-ground, space and cyber warfare.

Red Flag's live element takes place over the US Air Force's premier military training area in Nevada; over 15,000 square miles of airspace and 2.9 million acres of land – an impossible scale to achieve in Europe.

Speaking about the Exercise, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The RAF is playing a major role alongside our greatest ally in the world's leading aerial combat training exercise.

Britain's pilots and aircrews will receive unparalleled training and an opportunity to sharpen the combat skills they are demonstrating every day in the fight against Daesh.

Training alongside our US partners and other nations shows how the UK is stepping up internationally, ensuring maximum interoperability with our allies, and in doing so helping keep Britain safer and more secure.

Typhoon jets, from 6 Squadron, RAF Lossiemouth, are operating in a swing-role capacity, fighting their way into hostile airspace, launching precision strikes on ground targets and fighting their way out again.



Typhoons taking on fuel from a RAF Voyager tanker during Exercie Red Flag.

Working with the US Air Force (USAF) F-35A Lightning II for the first time, and with USAF F-22 Raptors; the exercise has been a hugely rewarding exposure to 5th Generation aircraft for RAF crews ahead of the F-35B's introduction into the RAF's combat inventory in 2018.



US Air Force aircraft on take off at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada USA during Exercise RED FLAG, 2017.

This is also the first time the RAF's Voyager is taking part in the exercise. The Voyager is providing key air-to-air refuelling capability during the exercise, while a Sentinel and Rivet Joint are gathering intelligence and other mission-critical information.

Speaking from the exercise, Group Captain Graham Pemberton, RAF Detachment Commander said:

Red Flag replicates truly challenging, high-end warfare, from realistic aerial combat to emerging cyber and space threats. It's as close as we can get to the real thing.

Testing ourselves against highly capable enemy aggressors is hugely beneficial and improves and readies our personnel, from pilots to those in crucial support roles, for real world operations.

It's a privilege for us to work with our US Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force counterparts and to cement our relationships with them at an exercise of this scale.

The exercise will run until early February and marks the start of three months of RAF Typhoon activity in the USA.

News story: Armed Forces Minister confirms increase in support to Afghanistan

Speaking on his first visit to Afghanistan the Minister reaffirmed the UK's enduring commitment to the country.

Britain stepped up its support to Afghanistan this year, increasing by 50 the number of personnel in the country. They join personnel in country who are helping to train Afghan officers, advising the fledgling Afghan Air Force and working as advisors in the Afghan Security Ministries.

While UK and NATO combat operations drew to a close in 2014, Britain continues to support Afghanistan by training, advising and assisting the Afghan defence and security forces, as they continue to fight with increasing skill and capability. This year's increase in support brings the total number of the personnel committed to the operation to 500; Britain's second biggest overseas commitment after the campaign against Daesh.

During his visit, the Minister met with Afghan Cadet Behzad Hiedari, who won Sandhurst's Overseas Sword of Honour. The prestigious honour is awarded to the best overseas cadet in each year's class at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. The award highlights the talent in Afghanistan's security forces, which are being developed by the UK and our NATO Allies and partners.

One way in which British personnel are helping to develop Afghanistan's security forces is through the Afghan National Officer Academy (ANAOA). Minister Penning visited the site during the visit and met with the UK personnel helping to 'mentor the mentors'. Just as Afghan forces are in the lead for the security of their country, so are their UK-mentored officers, who are helping to train their country's next generation of leaders.



Mike Penning meets with a British adviser to female Afghan instructors for female cadets at ANAOA

Armed Forces Minister Mike Penning said:

Britain has an enduring commitment to Afghanistan. This year we're stepping up our support to the country, and have deployed 50 extra personnel, some of whom I visited at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, where the next generation of Afghan army leaders are being trained. The UK, along with our NATO Allies, is committed for the long term to developing the ever more capable Afghan National Security and Defence Forces to ensure Afghanistan is not a safe haven for terrorists.



Lunch with UK personnel who mentor Afghan trainers at the Academy

Since 2014, UK mentoring assistance has helped the ANAOA train over 1500 high quality officers.

The Government committed last year to provide £210 million to the Afghan security forces, until 2020, giving around £70 million a year.

[News story: Defence Secretary marks Australia Day](#)

The UK and Australia share an important Defence relationship, Sir Michael said as he addressed guests at an Australia Day reception at the Australian High Commission in London.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The bonds that bind Britain and Australia are deeper than those of any alliance of necessity or pact of mutual interest; we are family.

A century ago we fought shoulder-to-shoulder at the Battle of

Passchendaele. In the present time our bond is ever more relevant as we fight modern evils; flying wing-tip to wing-tip in Iraq and Syria to hit Daesh hard, training the Afghan Army in Kabul together and sharing crucial intelligence – all things that make us both safer and more secure at home.

But our bonds are those of mutual prosperity too. Backed by a rising Defence budget, Britain will also continue to open up new possibilities in trade and innovation with Australia as the UK steps up as Global Britain.

Later this year the Defence Secretary will attend the annual Australia-UK Ministerial Meeting, to discuss foreign, defence and security policy, alongside the Foreign Secretary and their Australian counterparts.

In future, the UK will take part in a variety of joint operations and Defence Engagement with Australia. In 2018 a Royal Navy frigate will visit the Asia Pacific and participate in an annual Five Power Defence Arrangements Exercise.

Australia will also host the 2018 Invictus Games for wounded, injured and sick military personnel and veterans, in Sydney.