

[News story: Defence Secretary announces world class innovation panel](#)

Defence Innovation Advisory Panel

Addressing engineering students, academics, and apprentices, Sir Michael Fallon announced three members of the new Defence Innovation Advisory Panel. The Panel will be charged with driving forward the MOD's Innovation Initiative, which aims to encourage imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship, in pursuit of maintaining a military advantage in the future.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Backed by an £800M innovation fund, we want to transform defence and work with small firms, academics and others to find solutions to the threats to our security.

This panel of world class innovators will bring their drive and expert insights to the vital task of keeping the UK ahead of our adversaries and boosting our prosperity.

Major Tim Peake, the first British astronaut at the European Space Agency, is one of the panel members to be announced. Businessman and former Chairman of McLaren Technology Group Ron Dennis, Innovate UK's Chief Executive Ruth Mckernan, and Robert Hannigan, retiring GCHQ Director, all join him.

Major Tim Peake said:

I'm delighted to be part of the Ministry of Defence's drive to place innovation at the heart of everything they do, and to bring my experience to the effort to improve the technology, organisation, and culture that keep the UK safe.

Ron Dennis said:

There can be nothing more important than our national security, and I'm enthusiastic to be among the first of those named to this world-class Panel, who have joined MOD to spearhead their efforts to innovate across the organisation, from technology to culture – challenging the status quo, staying ahead of the curve through change and innovation.

Innovative Unmanned Technology

During his speech, the Defence Secretary also announced the launch of a two year £8 million second phase of innovative research and development, exploring the future of unmanned air systems. Developed in partnership with Leonardo Helicopters, the Rotary Wing Unmanned Air Systems (RWUAS) Capability Concept Demonstrator will be a vital tool in discovering how unmanned air systems can support our personnel on the battlefield of the future by developing new concepts and technologies.

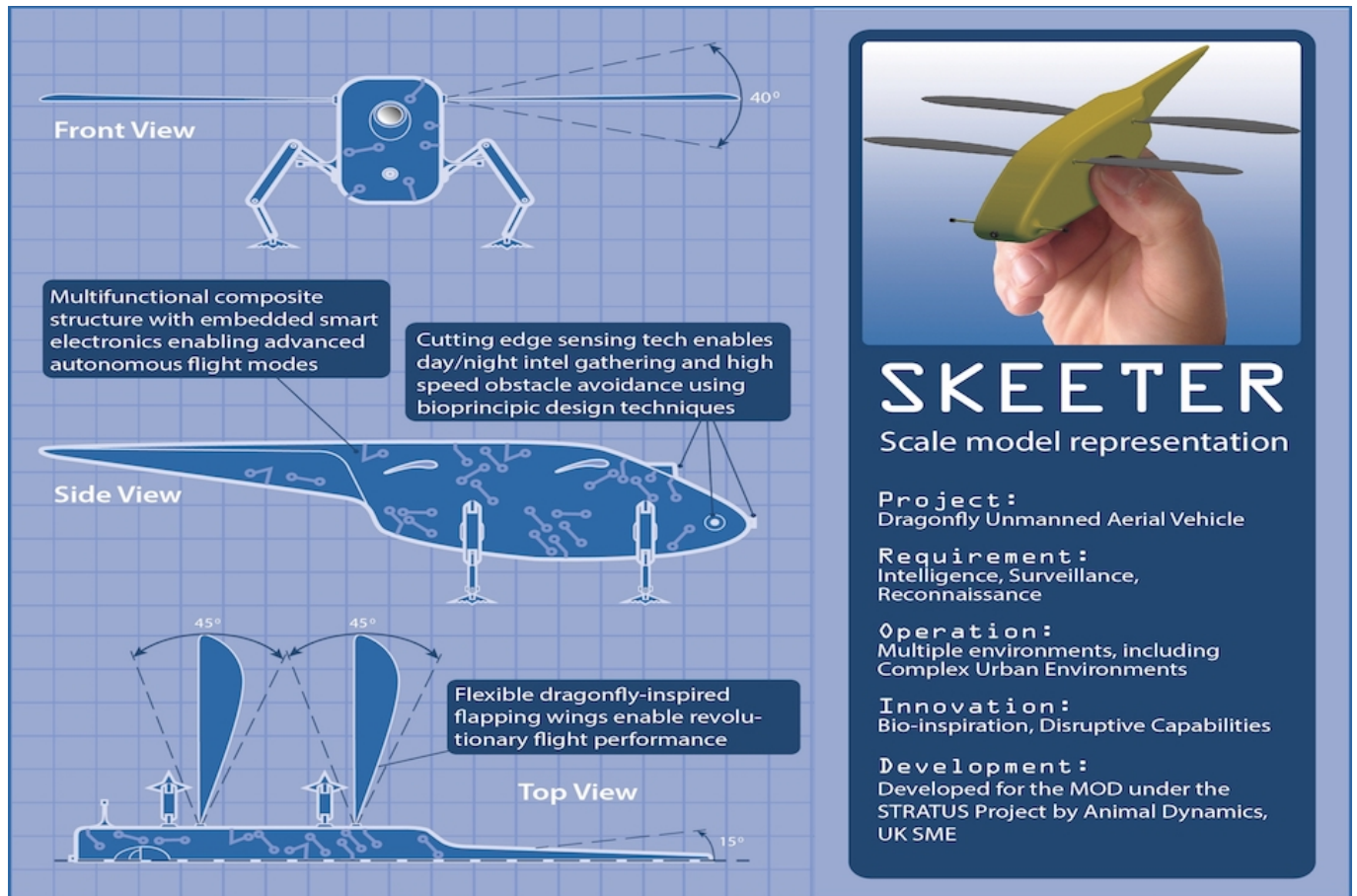
The jointly funded programme will utilise the specialist engineering skill base at Leonardo Helicopters by exploring emerging technologies and methods. The announcement comes after the Royal Navy led 'Unmanned Warrior' in 2016: a major international demonstration of autonomous systems which could transform the way in which the Armed Forces of the future help keep Britain safe.

SMEs at the heart of innovation

SMEs are at the heart of the Innovation Initiative, and earlier on Monday, the Defence Secretary visited two world-leading Oxfordshire-based small and medium enterprises. The Defence Secretary took part in an Innovation Roundtable with industry representatives, academics, think tanks, and senior policy-makers. The goal is to work more effectively with businesses and academics across the UK – and particularly with SMEs which might not normally think of themselves as Defence suppliers.

Sir Michael Fallon discussed the innovative collaboration between Reaction Engines, the MOD, and suppliers while touring the cutting-edge facility. The company is a global leader in aerospace propulsion and is currently designing and developing technologies for the next generation of air and space vehicles, with the potential to enable hypersonic flight and transform space access.

He also toured the Animal Dynamics facility, viewing their Skeeter intelligence-gathering micro-drone, which has tiny wings inspired by the dragonfly. Animal Dynamics' innovative research is focused on so-called "biomimetic technology": producing drones based on natural forms. The MOD has placed contracts with Animal Dynamics worth up to £1.5M since June 2015 as part of its Disruptive Capabilities initiative. The drone is part of a wider, innovative MOD Disruptive Capability project, which aims to significantly improve intelligence gathering in complex urban environments.



The Skeeter intelligence-gathering micro-drone manufactured by Animal Dynamics.

The Defence Secretary also visited the new Centre for Applied Superconductivity: a joint project between University of Oxford and local industrial partners and research centres that share an interest in the discovery and future applications of novel superconducting materials. These include improved MRI healthcare scanners and in new quantum technologies for sensors and meteorology. This direct engagement between the research community and commercial application is precisely the kind of dialogue the Innovation Initiative seeks to foster.

Chief Scientific Advisor

As part of Defence's drive to transform its culture, the role of the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor has been expanded and is responsible for the MOD's commitment to spend 1.2% of its budget on science and technology. While in Oxford, the Defence Secretary announced that world-renowned scientist Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte has been appointed to lead the MOD's research and technology programme. As the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Durrant-Whyte will work across the UK and internationally to drive defence innovation, commission research, and use technology to keep our people safe in challenging environments.

[News story: SJFHQ undertake valuable maritime familiarisation visit to HMNB Devonport](#)

Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) was established under the last Strategic Defence and Security Review and is a new deployable, operational 2* Joint Headquarters intended to command Joint forces in response to a crises or contingency worldwide.

SJFHQ personnel come from all 3 services and the purpose of the visit to [HMNB Devonport](#) was to widen the experience of SJFHQ staff from the [British Army](#) and the [Royal Air Force](#) in particular, so they can better appreciate the significant contribution the navy can play in any future operations. This will help them to plan more effectively and understand how the Royal Navy can best be utilised in SJFHQ led Joint operations.



Lt Col James Fuller, RM, briefs SJFHQ personnel on the capabilities of HMS Bulwark. Crown Copyright/MOD 2017. All rights reserved

The team spent 2 days at HMNB Devonport, where they received briefs on a range of topics, from amphibious operations to naval logistics and the new [Type 26 Global Combat Ship](#). They toured the assault ship [HMS Bulwark](#) and travelled in Offshore Raiding Craft for a coxswain demonstration from [1 Assault Group Royal Marines](#). After a briefing from the Navy's Flag Officer

Sea Training (FOST) team, the SJFHQ team then split into groups to visit 2 vessels currently undergoing FOST training and assessments. The first group travelled to [HMS Duncan](#) and watched her crew on an air assault exercise, while the second watched a damage control exercise on Norwegian frigate HNOMS Otto Sverdrup.



SJFHQ personnel ready to experience a ride on Offshore Raiding Craft, courtesy of 1 Assault Group Royal Marines. Crown Copyright/MOD 2017. All rights reserved

Lt Col Nick Morton RA, SJFHQ, said:

As a Joint Headquarters, it's essential that we all have a good understanding of the capabilities and specialisms of each of the 3 branches of the armed forces, not just our own. Visiting Devonport has really helped me to develop and embed my knowledge of the Royal Navy and the reality of how it operates.

SJFHQ also has embedded staff officers from the UK's partner nations in the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and the Anglo-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, several of whom took part in the visit. The visit to HNOMS Otto Sverdrup therefore also provided an opportunity to see a JEF partner nation in action.

Captain Peter Olive RN, Assistant Chief of Staff (Operate Branch), SJFHQ said:

Our visit was enormously valuable to the team, especially those from the army and RAF. It has really brought the Royal Navy to life for the staff and helped them to understand more about the limitations and difficulties of maritime operations, as well as the enormous benefits maritime power can provide to any future deployments.

Everyone here at HMNB Devonport and on HMS Bulwark, HMS Duncan and HNOMS Otto Sverdrup has been extremely helpful and accommodating, so thank you to them.

The visit followed an earlier familiarisation visit to the Army's Land Warfare Centre and plans are underway for a similar event with the RAF.

[News story: UK troops on NATO mission join Estonian national celebration](#)

Ahead of the deployment of 800 British troops to lead part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia, an advance team from 5th Battalion the Rifles already in country today joined the Estonia Independence Day Parade, marching through the capital of Tallinn to a crowd of thousands.

The event marks the Estonian Declaration of Independence in 1918, after Britain played a key role in helping the Estonians to gain their independence.

The UK and Estonia have a long history of working together across Defence, including standing side by side in Afghanistan, and next year marks 100 years since the earliest co-operation between the Royal Navy and Estonia.

In November 1918, to support the independence of the Baltic States, a Royal Navy Squadron was deployed to the region. This close relationship continues today, and in January this year, HMS Ramsey joined NATO's maritime group, commanded by ENS Admiral Cowan, an Estonian ship named after the Royal Navy commander in the Baltic in 1919.

The ENS Admiral Cowan, a former Royal Navy mine hunter, was formally handed over to the Estonian Navy in 2007, and is now the lead vessel of its division.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Today's landmark in Estonia's history is an opportunity to celebrate our defence ties that stretch back over a century to when they gained independence.

Britain is playing a leading role in European security by deploying forces to Estonia, alongside our allies, to defend NATO.

Backed by a defence budget rising every year, our deployment will be defensive but fully combat capable, from armoured fighting vehicles to communications specialists who can deal with cyber threats.



Photo Source: EESTI KAITSEVAGI Credit:TKE

At the NATO Warsaw Summit last year, the UK committed to leading one of four battlegroups in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland. In addition to the 800 UK troops, France and Denmark will also deploy personnel to Estonia.

The main body of UK troops are due to arrive in April and will arrive with Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicles and Challenger II tanks. British personnel have been exercising with Estonian, French and Danish colleagues in Germany recently to prepare for the deployment. The UK will also be deploying troops to Poland in support of the US-led battlegroup there.

The Defence Secretary discussed the deployment with NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels recently and also called on NATO to modernise its structures to be able to deal more effectively with current and future threats, including the threats from terrorism and cyber.

Earlier this week, Colonel Giles Harris, Commander British Forces in Estonia, met with Prime Minister Juri Ratas, who personally welcomed him to Estonia.

During their meeting Col Harris and the Prime Minister discussed the historic deployment of a multinational NATO contingent to the region.

Col Harris said:

It is great to have NATO troops parading here on Estonian Independence Day. It reminds us of our shared history and values.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid also attended the celebrations, which in addition to the parade, included a formal flag-raising ceremony at the Tall Hermann tower, wreath-laying at the Monument of War of Independence on Vabaduse Square, and a church service.



Photo Source: EESTI KAITSEVAGI Credit:TKE

To find out a bit more about the NATO enhanced Forward Presence mission, watch the short explainer video below:

[NATO eFP answered](#)

[News story: Tail rota footage from MCA helicopter crew on training flight](#)

Here's something a little bit different for all our aviation buffs out there! We're all a wee bit impressed with these epic cloud surfing views taken from a tail rotor cam on the UK Coastguard search and rescue helicopter based at Inverness during a recent training exercise. Enjoy the new view from one of the best offices in the world!

[Inverness crew on training flight](#)

[News story: MOD to attend Who Do You Think You Are Live 2017](#)

Experts from DBS within the MOD are to attend the Who Do You Think You Are Live event at the NEC, Birmingham, between the 6 and 8 April. The show, a spin off from the popular BBC1 TV series, "Who Do You Think You Are?", attracts over 12,000 visitors during the 3 days as it focuses on genealogy. The stand, supported by TNT UK Ltd, will be staffed by a DBS team from the Medals and Records Offices and will offer.

Displays of medals and service records

Medals and records advice, including identification of medals, entitlements, applying for medals and how to find out more, what records the MOD holds and how to access them.

Live post 1921 service record search facility.

The MOD continues to hold all service records where the individual had a discharge date of post 1921, these total around 10 million records, with about 500,000 having seen service in World War 1. Using a sophisticated database that supports the MOD's main archive, an assisted search facility will in many cases enable confirmation of whether or not the MOD holds a record for an individual. This information can then be used to apply for the record using the forms on gov.uk. To assist the search some or all of the following information is required: surname, initials, date of birth and service number.

Interpretation of service records

If you already have a service record, but are unsure what it says or how to interpret it, then DBS experts will be on hand to assist you.

- John Reynolds from the MOD's record office; a keen army historian and serving reserves officer, John has conducted battlefield tours across the world
- Stuart Hadaway from the air historical branch; Stuart has previously worked at the RAF Museum, Hendon, and is the author of military books, including "Missing believed killed: casualty policy and the missing research and enquiry service 1939 – 1952"
- Sue Pass and Clive Clarke from TNT's navy search service; Sue and Clive have a combined 17 years of experience working in the TNT's navy search service, responding to more than 6000 enquiries a year

Issue of veterans badges

If you are ex-forces and haven't yet got a veterans badge, then you can ask for one on the stand. Following confirmation of a service record identification and a check of the veterans badge database, the veterans badge will be issued. The following information will be required, surname, initials, date of birth and service number.

The DBS team look forward to seeing you!