

News story: Welsh company wins £82M contract on global stage

The deal with Qioptiq in St Asaph, North Wales, will see battle-winning handheld equipment – including night-vision goggles and day and night weapon sights – maintained over the next six years, to ensure they are available to our personnel around the globe.

This good news for Wales, as the UK prepares to celebrate St David's Day, follows the recent announcement that North Wales will be a global repair hub providing maintenance services for F-35 components, in a move worth millions for the region.

Speaking at the IDEX trade show, Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

It's a pleasure to announce this £82 million contract here at IDEX. This deal will provide our troops with the equipment they need to stay safe, while also delivering £47 million of savings.

This contract is made possible by our £178 billion equipment plan, supported by a Defence budget that will rise every year until the end of the decade.

Work under the new Surveillance Target and Acquisition Support (STAS) contract will create eight new positions at the company, which employs around 560 at its St Asaph and Bodelwyddan sites. By merging 20 individual support contracts into one deal, the MOD will save £47 million for the tax payer over the next six years.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

This massive contract for Qioptiq underlines Wales' reputation as a world leader in the defence technology sector, coming hot on the heels of the choice of DECA Sealand as the global repair hub for the F35 aircraft.

This enormous vote on confidence in the Welsh economy demonstrates that we offer the highly skilled workforce and facilities that investors need. It is also clearly great news for employment in the region.

The contract covers equipment used right across the Armed Forces, from frontline infantry and Royal Marine soldiers, to military specialists such as bomb disposal experts, including infantry periscopes, laser aimers and target locating equipment.

Chief Executive Officer of the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Tony Douglas said:

This new deal with Qioptiq has reduced costs by a third, demonstrating how we are constantly striving to build innovation and value into Defence procurement and support. Crucially, the STAS contract, will deliver improved support to Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

IDEX is a biannual international defence exhibition and conference dedicated to unmanned systems held in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The United Kingdom has supported IDEX since its inception and this year a Royal Navy Mine Counter Measure Vessel, HMS Penzance, will be attending.

Mrs Baldwin and the UK team will be working to develop closer links with a range of Governments and industrial partners in the Gulf. British companies are promoting a range of innovative world leading technologies, many suitable for armed forces in the region.

They are keen to share technology, offer value for money solutions supported by training and logistical support, and build joint venture partnerships on land and maritime border security; maritime mine detection and countermeasures; and chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear and biological and chemical defence.

News story: Defence Secretary: Britain committed to leading European security

Sir Michael told the annual Munich Security Conference that while Britain is leaving the European Union, the UK would not be stepping back from its role in European security.

Britain's leadership this year is demonstrated by two new major commitments to the NATO Alliance:

- Leading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, otherwise known as the 'spearhead force'. This UK-led NATO Brigade is ready and willing to respond to any threat the Alliance faces and shows how NATO is strengthening its collective defence and deterrence.
- Deploying a battle group of around 800 personnel to lead in Estonia NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, another way in which NATO is stepping

up to deter threats. Britain will deploy as part of the battle group the United States is leading in Poland, with over 100 troops.

The Defence Secretary also met with his German counterpart, Ursula von der Leyen, where he discussed the unprecedented level of cooperation between the two countries. Sir Michael also welcomed Germany's commitment to increase its defence spending.

Sir Michael, along with the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, yesterday [launched](#) Britain's new strategy for engaging more internationally in defence activity.

The International Defence Engagement Strategy is the way in which all defence activity, short of combat operations, work abroad to prevent conflict, build stability and gain influence internationally.

Speaking at the Munich Secretary Conference, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Britain is committed to Europe's security, and we're stepping up our engagement internationally. Whether defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, deploying with our NATO Allies to deter threats, or engaging globally to help countries develop their security, Britain is playing a major role – and will continue to do so.

The Defence Secretary also confirmed that Britain would keep the momentum up in the fight against Daesh. In Iraq and Syria, the RAF are flying day and night to defeat Daesh.

The RAF hit over 300 targets as part of recent operations to liberate eastern Mosul, and is now focussing efforts on the approaches to the west of the city, where it is expected the liberation operation will begin within days.

[News story: Defence Secretary calls on NATO to be fitter, faster, more agile](#)

Attending the annual Munich Security Conference, Sir Michael said the Alliance should not wait for another crisis before it modernises itself.

Calling for an ambitious programme of change, the Defence Secretary outlined three areas for a fitter, faster, more agile NATO:

- Greater flexibility for NATO's top commanders, including the power to

move more staff resources around to meet current and future threats.

- Less duplication – the Alliance has five financial control centres.
- Increased coherence – Sir Michael outlined that while improvements were being made, particularly in the merging of intelligence structures, more needed to be done to break down silos.

Describing Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 as a "wake up call" for NATO, the Defence Secretary said NATO members needed to invest more on defence and called on Allies to increase spending every year until the 2% Defence Investment Pledge, agreed at the UK hosted NATO summit in 2014, is met.

At the same time NATO should strengthen its relationships with other organisations, particularly the EU, while avoiding duplication.

Defence Secretary also called on NATO to project stability beyond its borders, by working globally to improve the security areas of fragile nations.

Speaking last night at the conference, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We want a fitter, faster, more agile NATO. This means more spending on defence by all the Allies, faster, more flexible decision making, and stronger partnerships.

Britain yesterday [launched](#) its International Defence Engagement Strategy, which contained a new plan for how the UK will strengthen cooperation with Allies and partners, allowing Britain to collectively pack a more powerful punch.

[News story: UK's global role reinforced in new International Defence Engagement Strategy](#)

Launching an ambitious framework for the UK's defence engagement overseas, Sir Michael Fallon and Boris Johnson committed to increasing cooperation with partners across the globe to keep Britain safe.

For the first time, defence engagement was made a core defence task in the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015. As a result, Britain is now stepping up its global commitments and leadership in international organisations, including NATO and the UN, as well as with bilateral partners.

Britain's defence policy is becoming more 'International by Design', ensuring that we make our alliances and partnerships central to all that we do.

Defence engagement helps build the robust relationships on which our influence, prosperity and security depend. It enables us to respond to threats and crises when they emerge and strengthens our position as the world's leading soft power.

Our commitment to international Defence Engagement includes:

- Establishing three new regional British Defence Staffs for defence engagement in Gulf, Asia Pacific and West Africa.
- New Defence Sections in Albania and Finland and new Attaché posts in Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia (for the South Caucasus), Qatar, Japan, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- New Defence Section for the Sahel, covering Senegal, The Gambia, Mali and Niger.
- Increased military exercises with NATO partners and allies including in Ukraine, Poland and Estonia.
- Leading development of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) with Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Norway.
- Exercising and training with partners in the Five Power Defence Arrangements such as Exercise Eastern Venture.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Our increased ambition for Defence Engagement abroad demonstrates the UK's global role.

Whether it's by increasing our military expertise in the Middle East, training Nigerian forces in maritime security, or RAF Typhoons exercising over South Korea, Britain is committed to working internationally to protect our people and interests.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The International Defence Engagement Strategy ensures we get the best value from our brilliant and brave Armed Forces and world-class Diplomatic Service, enabling them to deliver security and prosperity for the British people. This is about sending a clear signal of the UK's intent as a dynamic, agile, cutting-edge global power.

Ahead of the annual Munich Security Conference, which started today, the Foreign and Defence Secretaries reaffirmed the UK's commitment to European security. The Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, is also attending the conference. As Britain leaves the European Union, the UK is stepping up its global role and leadership in European security.

This year Britain is:

- Leading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a Brigade size force ready to respond to any threat.
- Leading NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Estonia, where 1000 British troops will deploy alongside other NATO Allies to deter threats.
- Deploying a company size force to Poland, as part of the US' EFP battle group.
- Sending Typhoons to police NATO skies over Bulgaria and Romania.

[News story: UK urges Coalition to maintain momentum against Daesh](#)

With Daesh losing in both Iraq and Syria, Ministers considered the Coalition campaign plan for 2017. This included plans for the operation to liberate Western Mosul, which the Defence Secretary reviewed with the Iraqi Prime Minister and Defence Minister during his visit to Iraq last weekend. With eastern Mosul recently liberated by Iraqi forces, operations to free the west of the city from Daesh's tyranny will start shortly.

The RAF has been in action, striking Daesh around the approaches to the city in recent weeks ahead of the launch of the operation, including sinking a Daesh heavy machine gun team last week on a boat on the River Tigris. On Tuesday careful surveillance operations allowed a building on the north-western outskirts of Mosul to be identified as a Daesh headquarters. With Iraqi forces keeping close watch from across the Tigris, a flight of Typhoons were able to conduct a highly accurate attack late at night – two Paveway IVs demolished the target.

[RAF Typhoons bomb a Daesh HQ](#)

RAF fast jets and remotely piloted aircraft have now carried out over 1,200 airstrikes against Daesh, second only to the United States in numbers of Coalition strikes.

In Syria, where the picture is more complicated, the Defence Secretary confirmed that by spring the operation to isolate Raqqa, the last major city Daesh holds in Syria, would be complete. It is expected that thereafter the liberation of the city itself will begin.

As the fight against Daesh enters a new phase, Ministers reviewed Coalition requests to make the training effort more flexible. The Defence Secretary last month authorised UK personnel to deliver training at secured and protected locations in Iraq, in addition to the training sites at Taji, Al Asad, Besmayah and Irbil, where personnel are already deployed. By training forward Britain will now deliver the infantry skills, counter-IED, combat first aid and bridge-building training where Iraqi forces need it. British forces previously mentored Iraqi forces carrying out bridge building ahead of the liberation of eastern Mosul.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Daesh is losing ground, fighters, and funding. Now we need to keep up the pressure on Mosul and Raqqa to deal Daesh a decisive blow. Britain will continue playing its leading role providing vital intelligence, precision airstrikes, and training Iraqi forces where they need it.

The meeting of Coalition Defence Ministers took place following discussions the day before on what more NATO would do to protect its southern borders. Sir Michael confirmed that Britain will send a UK military officer to help lead NATO's newly established training and capacity building mission in Iraq. This effort will help Iraqis defeat Daesh with training including in countering explosive devices. This commitment builds on the work that Britain is already doing in the country, where, we are helping to train Iraqi forces at an unprecedented level, with over 3,000 being trained a month.

Read more about UK activity against Daesh [here](#)