

## UK Minister for Armed Forces Rt. Hon Mark Lancaster visits Ghana

The UK's Minister for Armed Forces Rt Hon. Mark Lancaster will visit Ghana from 26th to 28th August 2019 and other partner countries in West Africa. His visit is reflective of the strong and enduring partnership Ghana and the UK share, reaffirming the UK-Ghana defence relationship, whilst reinforcing the UK's strong commitment to Ghana at a time when heightened region security tensions are presenting challenges.

In Ghana, the RT Hon Mark Lancaster will meet with H.E. Alhaji Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia the Vice President of Ghana, where they will reaffirm their long enduring partnership, and discuss the growing regional security threats Ghana faces from the changing dynamics to its north and from piracy, illegal smuggling and fishing in the Gulf of Guinea. He will emphasise the UK's commitment to a strong partnership that enables a secure and prosperous Ghana and wider sub-region, and discuss the regional responses to the security challenges. The Minister of Armed Forces will also meet Ghana's Minister for National Security Hon. Mr Albert Kan Dapaah, the Deputy Defence Minister and other senior officials.

At lunch time he will visit the Veterans Association of Ghana (VAG) Headquarters where, by laying a wreath at the monument of the unknown soldiers, he will reflect on how enormously grateful her Majesty's British Government and people are for the contribution of Ghanaian soldiers who supported the British Army during the Second World War. He will take lunch with a number of Ghana's veterans and Ghanaian ex- British Armed forces servicemen. The UK is committed here in Ghana – as in the UK – to keeping the memory of the fallen alive in the best way possible by ensuring that their veteran comrades are fully supported. In November 2018 the UK established a £12 million fund, to be delivered to 7000 commonwealth veterans and their widows via the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Servicemen's League, to ensure that veterans and their widows can enjoy, at minimum, a basic standard of living. There are many Ghanaians who continue to serve in the UK armed forces and forge outstanding careers.

Securing territorial waters from piracy and illegal fisheries is essential to Ghana's economy and its prosperity. Rt. Hon. Mark Lancaster will visit the ECOWAS Zone F Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre, based in Accra. He will see some of the work the UK is doing to support the centre, and the successful signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for an integrated approach to Maritime Security on 25 Jul 2019 by the signatory countries of Zone F. He will re-emphasise the UK's commitment to this excellent work noting that as 90% Ghana's trade has a link to the sea, essential to have secure seas that are free from organised crime, piracy and illegal activities.

The Minister of Armed Forces final visit will be to the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) where he will take a tour

to further understand the pivotal role the centre plays in the region. He will reinforce the UK's commitment to bring UK expertise to the centre. The combination of this expertise, combines with KAIPTC's ability to attract attendees from across the political, civil and military spectrum regionally, ensuring excellent results. Ghana is the 10th largest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, KAIPTC plays a further crucial role in Ghana's contribution to regional and world peace and security, and the UK remains committed to partnering with Ghana in these endeavours.

In April this year, the UK and Ghana signed a joint declaration on 3 top priorities- Mutual Prosperity, Regional Security, and Health, Education & Equality and this visit following on from the visit of the previous UK Foreign Secretary reinforces our on-going strong relationship.

Ahead of the visit the British High Commissioner H.E. Iain Walker said: "The visit of the Rt Hon Minister of Armed Forces deepens the strong security ties between Ghana and UK; demonstrating that collaboration is key. As Ghana and the UK change, it is clear through the partnership we continue to forge, we move towards a common secure and prosperous future".