

New medal unveiled to honour Kabul evacuation heroes

Personnel from across the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force will receive the Operational Service Medal (OSM) Afghanistan, with its own distinctive clasp, for their involvement in Operation Pitting – an evacuation effort to airlift thousands of Afghans and British nationals from Afghanistan as the Taliban seized control of the country.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I'm delighted that Her Majesty The Queen has given permission for a special medal to be awarded to all those who deployed to Kabul, to honour their heroism in the face of extreme adversity.

Operation PITTING will go down as one of the great achievements of our UK Armed Services and their civilian counterparts in the post-war era. The whole country can be immensely proud of their tireless work to bring men, women and children to safety. They represent the very best of us.

Commanded from the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, Operation Pitting began on 13th August 2021 and assisted those eligible for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy from Afghanistan.

During this period of humanitarian crisis, the military provided food and water, clothing, medical supplies and hygiene products for evacuees and policed the airport alongside multiple forces from across the world. 16 Air Assault Brigade put 600 soldiers on the ground to provide force protection and logistical support to the vast operation at Kabul Airport.

The RAF also completed a record-breaking flight with a passenger number of 439 on a Globemaster.

The operation ended on 28th August 2021 and resulted in the safe evacuation of over 15,000 people on 100 flights, from at least 38 different nations. This was a key part of a multi-national effort which secured the evacuation of over 122,000 people.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Last August, the Armed Forces demonstrated true heroism, bravery and dedication by supporting Operation Pitting – a monumental effort to airlift over 15,000 vulnerable Afghans and British nationals from Afghanistan during a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis.

As the security situation worsened by the hour, our service men and women stepped up and delivered the largest British evacuation since the Second World War. They will rightly receive medallic recognition for their efforts.

I would like to thank them, and all our service personnel, on behalf of the public and UK Government for safely evacuating endangered Afghans through some of the most desperate scenes imaginable. You have done us all proud.

Following approval from Her Majesty The Queen, they will now receive the medallic recognition their efforts deserve.

The medal

The medal is the existing OSM Afghanistan, but with an 'OPERATION PITTING' clasp. Those who already have the OSM Afghanistan with the 'AFGHANISTAN' clasp will receive the new clasp to affix to the ribbon. The medal is silver and circular in shape.

- The obverse shows the crowned effigy of Elizabeth II with the inscription ELIZABETH II DEI GRATIA REGINA FID. DEF.
- The reverse bears the Union Flag, surrounded by the inscription FOR OPERATIONAL SERVICE and the four major points of the compass with, between the points, four Coronets: Royal (top left), Naval (Navy, top right), Mural (Army, bottom left), and Astral (Royal Air Force, bottom right).
- Ribbon: The ribbon consists of a broad central red stripe, flanked each side by a stripe of navy blue and one of light blue, to represent the three services, with an outer stripe of light brown, to represent the Afghan landscape.
- Clasp: OPERATION PITTING clasp.

[Footage shows giant steel beams installed for new £61m Coventry flyover](#)

Press release

Over two weekends last December, specialist teams used a 750-tonne crane to lift 32 beams – weighing a combined 720 tonnes – into place at Binley junction, Coventry



The new steel beams being installed at Binley junction in Coventry

New [time-lapse footage](#) released by National Highways shows the moment giant steel beams were lifted into place for a new £61m flyover on the A46 at Binley.

The scheme is part of a congestion-busting upgrade to alleviate queues for drivers.

This means that drivers staying on the A46 will not need to slow down for the roundabout, while also improving traffic flows for local businesses nearby.

National Highways Project Manager, Bryan Bradley, said:

This new time-lapse footage shows the methodical and complex work of putting the beams into place as part of our upgrade at Binley junction.

Given the scale of the task involved, the beams were lowered into place using specialist equipment.

We're making good progress on the upgrade and once the work is complete, it will alleviate congestion at a well-known bottleneck on the A46.

Work at Binley junction started last year (2020) and is set to be complete by Spring this year (2022).

The scheme also includes improvements to the existing footways for pedestrians and cycle paths.

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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Protecting women's participation in political and peace processes

Thank you Madam President for convening this debate. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would like to thank High Commissioner Bachelet, Ms Yaftali and Ms. Asoka for briefing the Council on the realities of women defending and building peace across the globe.

As we've heard today, women human rights defenders and peacebuilders face violence and reprisals because of their goal – building and sustaining peace which is central to the purpose of this Council. These attacks obstruct women's meaningful participation in peace processes. This Council can only operate effectively when it has honest briefing about situations on the ground. Women human rights defenders and peacebuilders who brief the Council provide those insights, and we depend upon them.

We have a duty to protect them and to deal with reprisals effectively. Without adequate protection, violence will continue to serve as a means to silence women's participation. Madam President, only two years ago, this Council committed to ensuring a safe enabling environment for women peacebuilders and civil society, in UN Security Council Resolution 2493.

I would like to offer three areas of practical action:

1. Addressing women's protection in country contexts;
2. Ensuring a safe environment for women human rights defenders;
3. Providing resources and political support to women peacebuilders.

Firstly, women's participation in country contexts. Ms Yaftali spoke movingly about the resilience of Afghan women and girls, despite the violence and discrimination they face. Ensuring Afghan women can safely participate in public life and shape their own futures is the best way to protect the progress achieved on gender equality. The empowerment of women and girls is fundamental to a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Secondly, we must safeguard the participation of women in decision-making processes. It is not enough for women to be part of structures and institutions. Their participation must be meaningful.

According to the International Civil Society Action Network's research, enabling environments require the mainstreaming of protection in our WPS policies and practices. Safe environments also depend upon the establishment and support of women's mediator networks, as well as the development of security sector policies that respond to threats of reprisal. Thirdly, we must act in our national capacities and through the UN to provide resources and political support to this agenda.

The UK is wholly committed to preventing and responding to reprisals. Over the past two years we have funded the OHCHR to:

- Develop guidance to prevent reprisals against civil society briefers to the Council
- Strengthen UN engagement with a coalition of Member States to take action against reprisals; and
- Provide field training for UN staff on assisting women peacebuilders at risk of facing reprisals.

We provided over \$300,000 to the Urgent Action Fund to protect and relocate women human rights defenders under threat of reprisals.

We will continue to work closely with peacebuilders and ensure that protection is at the heart of our new National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security.

Madam President, the message from this meeting is clear. We must do everything within our means to protect women's participation in political and peace processes, in countries like Afghanistan and before this very Council.

UK Government and Devolved Governments seek views on the Joint Fisheries Statement

The UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland have launched a public consultation on the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS).

A key component of the Fisheries Act 2020, the Joint Fisheries Statement sets out the legally binding policies the UK Government and Devolved Governments will follow, at a UK level and individually, as they work together to deliver world-class sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management.

The consultation, running from 18 January to 12 April 2022, will welcome views from industry and environmental stakeholders, the public and all those interested and affected by the proposed policies.

The Joint Fisheries Statement sets out policies from the respective governments for achieving, or contributing to achieving, the eight objectives

outlined in the Fisheries Act 2020 which will help to achieve the UK's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

In line with the Fisheries Act's objectives and international obligations, the Joint Fisheries Statement sets out how the UK will adopt an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and includes a commitment to mapping and protecting our blue carbon resources.

It recognises the importance of fishing and aquaculture, and the benefits it provides to all parts of the UK as a source of employment and identity for our coastal communities. To support this, the Joint Fisheries Statement includes policies to help the industry thrive, including commitments to upskilling industry and succession planning, and promoting the consumption of locally sourced seafood.

The Joint Fisheries Statement sets out three main areas to deliver our ambition:

Protecting and, where necessary, recovering our fish stocks; Reducing the effects of fishing on the marine and coastal environment; and Supporting a modern, resilient, and environmentally responsible fishing industry.

Environment Secretary George Eustice, said:

The Fisheries Act has given us the powers to implement our own independent fisheries policy, improve our marine environment and make decisions based on the health of our fish stocks and not vested interests. Today, we are setting out our shared vision for a sustainable fishing industry that delivers for our fishermen, the environment and the whole Union.

We have taken back control of our waters, and a year on from the Trade and Cooperation Agreement a positive picture is emerging for our fishing industry. We have seen an increase in quota that will amount to around £146 million by 2026 and we are investing £100M into coastal communities so that they can benefit from better infrastructure, new jobs and investment in skills.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord said:

We are committed to delivering world-class sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management. I welcome this publication and the joint working taking place across the UK to ensure we maximise the economic and social benefits for our communities of becoming an independent coastal state.

Mairi Gougeon MSP, Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, said

I am pleased to launch the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) which respects the devolution settlement on fisheries management and is clear about the limits and extent of its role in terms of devolved powers and responsibilities. This document is the result of careful work by officials from across the UK and demonstrates what can be achieved through meaningful and purposeful engagement.

The Joint Fisheries Statement will help us use our devolved powers to secure a sustainable future for the Scottish fishing industry, onshore and offshore, within the context of tackling the twin crises of climate and biodiversity and our commitment to achieve and maintain good environmental status for all of Scotland's seas.

The UK Government and Devolved Governments are committed to working closely with industry and are seeking views from stakeholders to ensure the Joint Fisheries Statement works with the needs of our industry and marine environment. The consultation document can be found <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/sustainability-devolution-and-legislation-team/jfs/> .

The UK Government and Devolved Governments will be organising joint information sessions to help stakeholders understand the document, in order to aid them in drafting their consultation responses.

[Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Italian Republic \(January 2022\)](#)

Press release

The Rt Hon Edward Llewellyn OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Italian Republic and Non-Resident Ambassador to San Marino.



The Rt Hon Edward Llewellyn OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador

to the Italian Republic and Non-Resident Ambassador to San Marino, in succession to Ms Jill Morris CMG who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Lord Llewellyn will take up his appointment in February 2022

Full name: Edward David Gerard Llewellyn Married to: Anne Llewellyn Children: Three

2016 to 2021	Paris, Her Majesty's Ambassador to France and Her Majesty's Non-resident Ambassador to Monaco
2010 to 2016	Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street
2005 to 2010	Chief of Staff to the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition
2002 to 2005	Office of the High Representative, Sarajevo, Chief of Staff to Lord Ashdown, High Representative and Head of the Political Department
1999 to 2002	European Commission Brussels, Member of the Cabinet of the EU Commissioner for External Relations
1997 to 1999	Office of the High Representative, Sarajevo
1992 to 1997	Hong Kong, Personal Adviser to the Governor
1988 to 1992	Conservative Research Department (including a year as a private secretary to Margaret Thatcher Nov 1990 – Oct 1991, on loan from the Conservative Research Department).

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