

Paratroopers conduct joint exercise in Jordan in support of Carrier Strike Group

Press release

British Army soldiers airdropped into Jordan as part of a Joint Theatre Entry (JTE) parachuting exercise as the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) continues its operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.



Paratroopers have been taking part in a joint exercise in Jordan. © Crown Copyright

More than 150 personnel from 16 Air Assault Brigade conducted the low altitude insert from C-130 Hercules aircraft which took off from Cyprus. The Brigade, based in Colchester, is the most deployable and ready formation in the British Army, standing as a core component of the UK's Global Response Force. Once in Jordan, British troops joined a tactical exercise with elite paratroopers from the Jordanian Special Forces Group.

The exercise coincides with the CSG as it transitions from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. Both deployments showcase the capability and professionalism of the UK Armed Forces and their ability to be more agile and competitive against changing global threats. CSG's world-class air and maritime support will maximise potential of 16 Air Assault Brigade, part of the British Army's 'Future Soldier' concept, whereby UK Armed Forces will be more integrated, more expeditionary, and ready for future challenges.

Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heapey said:

The UK Armed Forces stand with Jordan against shared threats in the region.

The joint exercise is a showcase of the Global Response Force's impressive ability to operate across multiple domains and in harsh environments. They are the soldiers of the future, ready to tackle changing threats around the world.

Jordan is a key partner for the UK in the region. The joint exercise demonstrates the UK's commitment to Jordan and to regional stability, with the exercise taking place in Jordan's centenary year. In the lead up to the exercise a number of mission rehearsals also took place in Cyprus, where UK Defence has bases which maintain a permanent military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, helping to support regional security.

Brigadier James Martin, Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade, said:

16 Air Assault Brigade are the British Army's specialist in Joint Theatre Entry.

We are trained specifically in the techniques of air manoeuvre. It is a demanding role and the Brigade places a premium on being expeditionary and integrated with the other domains – critical for the Army's Future Soldier concept.

The UK has strong, historic bilateral ties in the Middle East and North Africa region, which are vital to UK prosperity and security. The UK Armed Forces will play a role as we look to deepen these links. The Pathfinders, trained in specialist airborne insertion techniques and capable of conducting offensive action tasks at very short notice, are the advance force for 16 Brigade and also played a part in the exercise. Their key role was identifying drop zones and landing zones where the main body of troops parachuted in.

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Thousands of service families receive £650-million accommodation boost

Five new contracts worth £650-million have been awarded to industry to deliver crucial building and maintenance services for more than 39,000 Service families.

Forming the next phase of the Future Defence Infrastructure (FDIS) programme, the four new regional accommodation contracts will cover the maintenance of properties across the UK, including plumbing, electrical works, repair services and the maintenance support helpline.

The contracts will create and sustain thousands of jobs across the UK supply chain and service family accommodation sites including Portsmouth, Marham, Aldershot, Edinburgh and Cumbria which are all set to benefit from it.

The seven-year contracts have been awarded to:

- **Amey Community Ltd:** £84-million contract for the northern region of the UK including, Scotland, Northern Ireland and North Wales. Amey has also been awarded a £126-million contract for the central region of the UK, covering the Midlands and Mid and South Wales
- **Vivo:** £148-million contract for the South East of England and an additional £148-million contract for the South West of England

In addition to the facilities work, military families will also profit from a new customer service centre acting as a single point of contact to streamline and resolve accommodation issues quicker. Pinnacle Group Ltd has won a £144-million contract to deliver these services.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty said:

Our military families are at the heart of the Armed Forces community and delivering high-quality accommodation services demonstrates how important they are to us.

These new maintenance contracts, accompanied with a brand-new call centre, will deliver essential services to our world-class military and their families.

Announced by the Prime Minister last November, Defence has received an increase in funding of over £24-billion across the next four years. This investment reflects the MOD's commitment to improving service accommodation and prioritising funding for critical infrastructure and services.

Air Commodore James Savage, DIO Head of Accommodation, said:

Accommodation is such an important part of family life for Servicemen and women, which is why we collaborated closely with representatives of our Service personnel and their families to develop these contracts and ensure that their needs are fully considered.

These new contracts offer the opportunity to break decisively from the past and to build on the commitments made by all suppliers to innovate and deliver more responsive and flexible services to the Armed Forces and their families.

The new contracts will require suppliers to work differently, such as fixing faults on an initial visit to a property and undertaking simple preventative maintenance while attending properties to reduce disruption to families.

The contracts ensure industry suppliers adopt and adhere to recognised industry standards for the allocation, management and maintenance of military homes, implementing robust mechanisms to address poor performance alongside incentives to exceed contracted standards.

In the last financial year, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation spent £160-million on major improvements and the modernisation of its housing stock. The new FDIS contracts will enhance this even further.

The accommodation services contracts follow the recent announcement of a £1.6-billion to deliver hard facilities management services across the UK Defence estate. The final phase of the FDIS programme will see a contract awarded for the management and maintenance of the UK Defence Training Estate.

[Chlamydia screening to focus on reducing harm from untreated infections](#)

Following an evidence review and a public consultation, England's NCSP is changing to put a greater emphasis on reducing the harm of untreated infections on young women's reproductive health. The programme will aim to provide treatment more rapidly and expand testing in community settings for sexually active women aged under 25 years.

Until now, the focus has been on increasing chlamydia diagnoses, through asymptomatic screening in young men and women. The changed approach is designed to achieve better long-term health outcomes

The programme will also place more emphasis on reducing reinfections, which are known to increase likelihood of serious consequences, through better notification of sexual partners and retesting following treatment.

Previously, the NCSP's strategy was to proactively offer all sexually active young adults aged under 25 years chlamydia testing as a routine part of every

primary care and sexual health consultation, with the aim of controlling chlamydia in the population through early detection and treatment of asymptomatic infection.

Going forward, chlamydia screening in community settings, such as GP practices and community pharmacies, will only be proactively offered to young women and aim to speed up diagnosis and treatment.

Young men will still be offered a chlamydia test if they have symptoms, if their partner has chlamydia or as part of care offered by specialist sexual health services. Young men can still request a test at a sexual health service.

In 2019, less than 10% of all chlamydia testing in 15 to 24 year olds involved young men outside of sexual health services.

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, transgender women and non-binary people (assigned male at birth) can continue to access testing as appropriate through specialist sexual health services.

The change comes after a comprehensive review of the programme by an international group of experts in sexually transmitted infection (STI) control, who found that focusing on harm reduction will lead to better health outcomes.

Kate Folkard, Deputy Director for the National Infection Service at Public Health England (PHE) said:

The expert review group has highlighted the need for the National Chlamydia Screening Programme to focus its efforts on reducing harm by improving asymptomatic screening of young women as they are most at risk from ill health and further complications due to untreated chlamydia, particularly to their reproductive health.

The new strategy will maximise the programme's health benefits, helping reduce complications such as ectopic pregnancy, pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

Specialist sexual health services will remain unchanged. Everyone can still get tested if needed and if you have had sex without a condom with new or casual partners you should have an STI check up annually. Many clinics offer STI tests via their website, which are sent in the post to be taken at home.

Dr John McSorley, President of the British Association of Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) said:

BASHH welcomes the National Chlamydia Screening Programme Expert Review recommendation that future strategy focusses on harm reduction to maximise health outcomes. We recognise the importance

of evaluation of all activity and the need to react and respond to that expert analysis of the best available evidence.

It is important to acknowledge that this change in emphasis is designed to increase the amount of testing in the population of young women most at risk of harm from chlamydia infection. We welcome that commitment.

We recognise too, that this change sits amid an overall commitment to support all young people, and the range of primary and specialist sexual health services that exist. Immediately prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, England experienced some of the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections on record, thus it is vital that the sexual health of all of our population continues to be invested in.

[Extra £28 billion for the Union since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic](#)

News story

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have benefitted from £28 billion of UK government funding to the devolved administrations, figures released today by the Treasury show.



The annual publication of the [Block Grant Transparency](#) shows that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic the Scottish Government has received an additional £14.5 billion, the Welsh Government an additional £8.6 billion and the Northern Ireland Executive an additional £5.0 billion.

This funding has enabled the devolved administrations to provide support to individuals, businesses and public services across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland through the Barnett formula in response to Covid-19 and will

continue to support the recovery through 2021-22.

This comes as part of the unprecedented package of support for the whole of the UK throughout the pandemic, with £352 billion spent right across the UK on Covid-19 measures such as the furlough scheme, self-employment support, help for businesses and the procurement of vaccines.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Steve Barclay said:

The UK government is fully committed to supporting the entirety of the UK throughout the pandemic – with an additional £28 billion for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since the start of the pandemic.

Over the past year we've protected jobs and businesses across the UK with furlough and other support schemes, our vaccine rollout is now helping us unlock the economy, and our Plan for Jobs is levelling up opportunity and helping people back into work.

The UK government's Plan for Jobs is helping to support, create and protect jobs across the UK. The Kickstart scheme is already helping thousands of 16 to 24 year-olds into work, the Restart scheme will help around a million people who've been out of work for more than a year, and 13,500 new Work Coaches have been recruited to give tailored support to people out of work.

Further Information

- The [fourth edition of the Block Grant Transparency](#) provides information for the years covered by the 2015 Spending Review, Spending Round 2019 and Spending Review 2020, and includes funding up to Main Estimates 2021-22. The last release was in June 2020.
- The publication sets out a detailed breakdown of the devolved administrations' block grant funding and is intended to increase transparency of the block grant calculation process. This includes how much the devolved administrations receive through the Barnett formula and other funding such as for City and Growth Deals and support for farmers.
- The Barnett formula determines changes to the block grant funding in relation to changes in UK Government departmental spending. The formula essentially provides the same pounds-per-person change in funding in each nation of the UK. It is applied when departmental budgets change at Spending Reviews, fiscal events and Main/Supplementary Estimates.
- The Barnett formula comprises three elements: the change in departmental spending; the extent to which the departmental spending is on a policy area that is devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and population.
- Further information on how the devolved administrations are funded can be found in the [Statement of Funding Policy 2020](#).

Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan: UK statement

Thank you Madam Chair. I would like to join other speakers in welcoming you Ambassador Frobarth to the Permanent Council. Congratulations on your appointment, and thank you for your thorough report.

Kazakhstan is an important partner for the United Kingdom, and we look forward to continuing and expanding our bilateral cooperation with you and them, working to fulfil OSCE commitments.

I was pleased to read in your report of the frequent engagement you have had with the host government, including meetings on the importance of exchanges with civil society in implementing the legislative reforms stemming from the presidential agenda on political modernisation and liberalisation. We encourage active engagement with civil society generally and their consultation in the reform processes.

Additionally, I hope that the process of political modernisation includes taking into account the recommendations made by ODIHR following the January elections. These will ensure that the electoral system fully lives up to Kazakhstan's international obligations and commitments.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend you and your team for the work you have done to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, including fulfilling your mandate and responding to the emerging needs in your host country. It was very good to read that you were able to build the capacity of thirteen crisis centres providing assistance to people subjected to increasing incidence of domestic violence; as well as developing an educational video on gender-based violence.

Madam Chair, I would like to draw attention to three areas of the report that I think deserve our special attention.

First, on cyber.

While the UK understands the inherent advantages to an interconnected world, cyber-attacks seek out vulnerability regardless of national borders. With the increase of cybercriminal activities last year and the increased risks for many citizens of becoming victims of cyber crime activities, it is right that the Office supported events to raise public awareness of the risks of cyber and to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies.

Second, on media freedom.

The UK warmly welcomes the provision of a platform for government agencies, civil society, and the media community to discuss the challenges of the

country's media legislation. And we were pleased to learn that the Office supported the Annual Central Asian Forum on Internet Development on issues such as the safety of journalists.

As ODIHR said in their [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#) following the January elections, public dissent in Kazakhstan can result in sanctions, prosecutions and detentions. This deters alternative voices throughout the country, impacts on citizens' behaviour, and stifles genuine political debate.

Finally, on gender equality.

I was pleased to read that you sought to find ways to promote gender mainstreaming in every project your office undertook; and the work you have done on women's economic empowerment through the rural women's forum is of special interest.

Particularly noteworthy is your partnership with NGOs, government, and multinationals to involve women in the green economy and highlight women's achievements and contributions to agriculture. It is encouraging to read that your work to promote the role of women has resulted in the election of two participants of the forum as members of the Parliament of Kazakhstan.

Madam Chair, I would like to finish by again thanking you Dr Frobarth for your presentation today and the great deal of collaboration your office undertakes to deliver your work. Please do extend this cooperation to the diplomatic missions in Nur-Sultan. I know that my colleagues in the British Embassy there are eager to continue collaborating and partnering with your Office, including in delivering common objectives in all three dimensions.

Thank you.