

Belfast firm secures £98-million air defence missile contract

SHORAD is made up of High Velocity and Lightweight Multi-role Missile systems that can intercept air threats including fast jets, attack helicopters and unmanned air systems in a matter of seconds.

Thales UK won the initial contract in 2018, helping to modernise and develop the missile systems as part of the Future Air Defence Availability Project (F-ADAPT). This latest announcement confirms a five-year extension to the contract, sustaining over one hundred jobs at Thales UK's Belfast site and within the wider Northern Ireland supply chain.

Northern Ireland Secretary, Brandon Lewis said:

Northern Ireland has a proud history as a world leader in defence engineering and innovation. Today's announcement shows again the level of confidence in Northern Ireland as a great place to do business.

During these uncertain times, I am delighted that the investment of over £98-million will protect over 100 skilled jobs in Belfast. I would like to congratulate all those involved who have secured this vital investment.

Defence Minister, Jeremy Quin said:

This contract ensures the vital air defence capabilities, capable of dealing with a multitude of threats, are maintained and readily available to deploy.

The £98.4-million investment is the second major contract awarded to Northern Ireland's defence industry in less than three months highlighting Northern Ireland's important contribution to the delivery of our critical defence capabilities.

Delivering rapid potent attack capability, the SHORAD missile systems can be fired from three platform variants. These include a Shoulder-Launch for single fire; a Lightweight Multiple Launcher capable of firing three missiles via a tripod, and a Self-Propelled launcher designed to fire up to eight missiles from a Stormer armoured vehicle.

DE&S CEO, Sir Simon Bollom said:

Our dedicated team at DE&S has worked closely with industry

colleagues to ensure this crucial air defence capability remains primed and ready to support the UK Armed Forces until the end of 2026.

Northern Ireland plays an imperative role within UK defence and its supply chain. This is the second multi-million-pound defence contract awarded to a Northern Ireland-based industry this year. In January, Spirit AeroSystems in Belfast, won a £30 million contract for the [UK's first uncrewed fighter aircraft](#) supporting over 100 local jobs.

Defence has secured a substantial settlement of more than £24-billion over four years acknowledging the responsibility and recognition the UK holds internationally in the Defence realm. Through strategic and pivotal investments, defence will be in a stronger position to tackle challenge future threats whilst advancing UK prosperity.

[Report 02/2021: Freight train derailment at Eastleigh](#)

Press release

RAIB has today released its report into a freight train derailment at Eastleigh, Hampshire, 28 January 2020.



The derailed wagons

[R022021_210304_Eastleigh](#)

PDF, 4.44MB, 37 pages

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Summary

At about 11:32 hrs on Tuesday 28 January 2020, a freight train derailed while travelling over a set of points at Eastleigh West Junction, immediately south of Eastleigh station. The locomotive hauling the train ran derailed for about 35 metres, causing significant damage to the infrastructure. Four wagons subsequently derailed on the damaged track. Nobody was injured in the accident.

Some of the fastenings that hold the rails to the concrete bearers that support them had fractured, prior to the passage of the train. This allowed one of the rails to move outwards under the train, breaking further fastenings and causing the locomotive's wheels to drop inside the rail, as it moved further outwards. The design of these fastenings made them more prone to this type of failure when subjected to high lateral forces, which were present at these points due to the track geometry at the site and the curving characteristics of the locomotive. The local track maintenance team had not identified any relevant faults prior to the derailment as the fastenings had fractured below the surface of the concrete bearer and these failures were not apparent during visual inspections. Despite previous faults of a similar nature elsewhere, Network Rail had not developed an effective inspection regime to detect such failures. Measurements of the track geometry of this set of points had also not detected any indication of deterioration in the track fastening system.

RAIB also observed that the maintenance delivery unit at Eastleigh was not effectively managing the maintenance of its track assets, and that evidence identified for preservation as part of this accident investigation was lost during the track repair work undertaken by Network Rail after the derailment.

Recommendations

RAIB has identified two recommendations and two learning points as a result of the investigation. The recommendations are both addressed to Network Rail. The first regards the development of a management strategy to address the ongoing risk of failure of track fastening systems of the type involved in the derailment. The second concerns a review of how Network Rail measures dynamic track gauge on lines that are not monitored by a track measurement train.

The first learning point concerns the importance of ensuring the correct cause of engineering failures is identified, and that subsequent actions are taken to control the associated risks. The second learning point reminds rail industry bodies of the importance of preserving evidence for safety investigations, and their legal duty to do so.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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[HS2 Ltd response to Residents' Commissioner's report 14](#)

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[Alok Sharma welcomes UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership and aims for real progress on access to finance ahead of COP26](#)

During the last session of the UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum virtual series, COP26 President Designate Alok Sharma explored how the UK and Bangladesh can work together to tackle climate change by highlighting three critical issues: getting finance flowing; improving the quality of that

finance and increasing sums for adaptation; and making finance more accessible. He highlighted practical ways to address those issues and noted that the UK has itself committed £11.6bn for international climate finance (over the next 6 financial years) and is advocating for other donors to make commitments too.

Mr Sharma said he hoped to visit Bangladesh in person as soon as possible, in order to witness first-hand the inspiring work Bangladesh was already doing to tackle the most critical climate challenges of our time.

Honourable Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr A.K. Abdul Momen, MP attended the virtual dialogue and reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to build resilience to tackle climate change. He also sought the UK's cooperation for making finance more accessible to build resilience and amplify climate actions. Apart from financing, the Minister stressed on transfer of technology, expertise and other relevant assistance to mitigate the impact of climate change.

The UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum virtual series has been chaired by Professor Saleemul Huq, Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD), and Simon Maxwell, Senior Research Associate at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). It is managed by Mott MacDonald in partnership with ODI on behalf of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the British High Commission in Dhaka.

Launched last November, this virtual series was designed to build on the growing collaboration between the UK and Bangladesh in advancing the climate agenda in the run-up to COP26, the UN's climate change conference, later in 2021. The virtual series has delved into four key COP26 themes: adaptation and resilience, nature, clean energy, and finance. Over the series, experts and leaders from Bangladesh and the UK have come together to identify innovative ideas, partnerships and initiatives to catalyse climate action.

In today's final session of the series Dr Atiur Rahman, former governor of the central bank of Bangladesh (2009-2016), shared Bangladesh's experiences in developing sustainable finance systems. Bob Buhr, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Climate Finance & Investment, Imperial College Business School and Professor of Practice, explored ways to unlock solutions within capital markets to address the challenges posed by global climate change. Moreover, case studies on global climate finance, funding models and finance mechanisms to deliver nature-based solutions in Greater Manchester were shared by Prof. Mizan R. Khan, Deputy Director, ICCCAD and Programme Director, LUCCC, and Sam Evans, Head of Natural Environment, Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

The session was opened by Judith Herbertson, Bangladesh Development Director at the British High Commission in Dhaka. The event concluded with remarks from Her Excellency Saida Muna Tasneem, Bangladeshi High Commissioner to the UK.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President-Designate, said

“Climate finance is a central priority for the COP26 Presidency and as hosts we are calling on all donors to increase their finance commitments and play their part in delivering on our shared \$100bn goal.

“Events like today’s UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum serve as important reminders of the challenges faced by many countries of the impact of the climate crisis.

“It is vital that those who can should step up support to help countries reduce emissions and adapt to the rising impacts of climate change.”

Honourable Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr A.K. Abdul Momen, MP, said

“Bangladesh seeks support from UK and other developed countries to ensure concessional finance and access to technology for all developing countries, and LDCs, especially due to the unprecedented socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

“We need another fund for climate migrants. Each year hundreds and thousands of people are being uprooted from their homes... country governments alone cannot cope with the costs of rehabilitation. Therefore the global leadership could come forward to create another climate migrant fund.”

As one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Bangladesh has experienced first-hand the devastating impact it can have on people, the environment and the economy. The country has become a global leader on adapting to a changing climate and since 2016 has invested more than \$6 billion dollars into adaptation activities.

The UK is already a key partner to Bangladesh on disaster management and resilience building. Since 2008, UK and Bangladesh jointly helped over 27 million people gain access to early warning systems for floods and cyclones, and provided emergency assistance and recovery support after disasters to more than 900,000 people.

Note to the editors

- The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021. The climate talks will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted; bringing together over 30,000 delegates including heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. In its role as president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, Bangladesh will be representing more 1.2 billion people living in 48 of the world’s most climate vulnerable countries at COP26.
- The UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum virtual series is managed on behalf of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the British High Commission Dhaka by Mott MacDonald, in partnership with ODI. It is delivered through the Expert Advisory Call-Down Service (EACDS) Lot B: Strengthening Resilience and Responses to Crises, managed

by a DAI Consortium. [Watch previous sessions and download resources](#)

Further information

British High Commission Dhaka
United Nations Road
Baridhara
Dhaka – 1212
Bangladesh

Email: Dhaka.Press@fco.gov.uk

Follow the COP26 President Alok Sharma on Twitter: [@AlokSharma_RDG](#)

Follow the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh on Twitter: [@RCDicksonUK](#)

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[Modified COVID-19 vaccines for variants to be fast-tracked, says MHRA and other regulators](#)

Authorised COVID-19 vaccines that are modified in response to new variants will not need a brand new approval or “lengthy” clinical studies, according to [new guidance from the ACCESS Consortium](#) – a coalition of regulatory authorities from the UK, Australia, Canada, Singapore and Switzerland. The guidance, developed by the MHRA and its ACCESS partners, lays out what information the medicines regulators would need to approve any modifications to authorised COVID-19 vaccines, should virus mutations make them less effective at preventing the disease.

According to the guidance, vaccine manufacturers would need to provide robust evidence that the modified vaccine produces an immune response, but time-consuming clinical studies that do not add to the regulatory understanding of a vaccines safety, quality or effectiveness would not be needed. This is because researchers are now better able to measure protection by looking at antibodies in the blood following vaccination, reducing the need to wait and see whether or not people in a trial become infected with the disease. This would significantly reduce the length of time taken for the modified vaccine to be ready for use.

Alongside data on the immune response, the vaccine manufacturer would also be

expected to provide evidence showing the modified vaccine is safe and is of the expected quality. In addition, data from the original robust clinical trials and the ongoing studies on real-world use in millions of people could be used to support any decision by the regulators.

This approach is based on the tried and tested regulatory process used for seasonal flu vaccines, for which annual modifications are needed to match the strains circulating each year.

MHRA Chief Scientific Officer, Dr Christian Schneider said:

“Our priority is to get effective vaccines to the public in as short a time as possible, without compromising on safety. Should any modifications to authorised COVID-19 vaccines be necessary, this regulatory approach should help to do just that.

“The announcement today also demonstrates the strength of our international partnerships with other regulators and how our global work can help ensure faster access to life-saving vaccines in the UK and around the world.

“The public should be confident that no vaccine would be approved unless the expected high standards of safety, quality and effectiveness are met.”

Notes

The MHRA [joined the Access consortium in October 2020](#). The consortium’s goal is to maximise international co-operation between partners in the consortium, reduce duplication, and increase each agency’s capacity to ensure patients have timely access to high quality, safe and effective therapeutic products.