

UK military dog to receive PDSA Dickin Medal after tackling Al Qaeda insurgents

During a dangerous operation in 2019, three-year-old Belgian Shepherd Malinois Kuno and his handler were deployed in support of specialist UK and host nation forces on a compound raid against a well-armed and aggressive enemy when they came under attack.

Pinned down by grenade and machine-gun fire from an insurgent, the assault force was unable to move without taking casualties.

Without hesitation, Kuno charged through a hail of gunfire to tackle the gunman, breaking the deadlock and changing the course of the attack, allowing the mission to be completed successfully.

During the assault Kuno was wounded by bullets in both back legs. He was given life-saving treatment by his handler and by medics in the back of a helicopter.

His injuries were so severe he required several operations before he was stable enough to fly back to the UK. Sadly, part of one of Kuno's rear paws had to be amputated to prevent life-threatening infection.

But now he is thriving after becoming the first UK military working dog to be fitted with custom made prosthetic limbs.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Without Kuno, the course of this operation could have been very different, and it's clear he saved the lives of British personnel that day. This particular raid was one of the most significant achievements against Al Qaeda in several years.

Kuno's story reminds us not only of the dedicated service of our soldiers and military dogs, but also the great care that the UK Armed Forces provide to the animals that serve alongside them.

Kuno underwent extensive rehabilitation under the watchful eye of Army vets and is fitted with prosthetics that allow him to run and play

Kuno returned home aboard an RAF plane, receiving in-flight care from a Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) team. Back in the UK he was transferred to the Defence Animal Training Regiment in Melton Mowbray where he underwent

extensive reconstructive surgery, overseen by Professor Dick White, one of the world's leading specialists in canine surgery.

Under the painstaking care of Army vets, veterinary nurses and canine physiotherapists, assisted by staff from the University of Nottingham, Kuno then embarked upon an innovative and lengthy programme of rehabilitation to restore function to his nerves and muscles, just like injured service personnel.

Kuno was a friendly and enthusiastic patient throughout, he loves human interaction and especially enjoyed his sessions on the hydrotherapy treadmill.

Within months, he was strong enough to be fitted with a pioneering custom-made prosthesis to replace his missing paw, alongside an orthotic brace to support his injured limb.

Kuno, who was on his second deployment when he was injured, is the first UK military dog to be fitted with such devices. Lightweight and fully bespoke, they enable him to run and jump as he wishes, securing a great quality of life for many years to come.

Colonel Neil Smith QHVS, the Chief Veterinary and Remount Officer, said

It is important that Military Working Dogs receive a high level of care if they are unfortunately injured, and Defence has military vets and vet nurses to ensure animals receive the care and rehabilitation they deserve. Kuno is an amazing dog in many ways, and we are delighted that the PDSA have decided to award him their Dickin Medal.

Now retired and rehomed, Kuno will receive the PDSA Dickin Medal, the highest animal honour in existence for military animal valour, which will be formally presented by PDSA, the UK's leading veterinary charity who run the world's most prestigious animal awards programme, in a virtual ceremony in November.

PDSA Director General, Jan McLoughlin, said:

Kuno's heroic actions undoubtedly changed the course of the mission and saved lives. He took on the enemy without fear or hesitation, never faltering from his duty despite being seriously injured.

For his bravery and devotion to duty, he is a thoroughly deserving recipient of the PDSA Dickin Medal and we look forward to formally presenting his award later this year.

The world-renowned PDSA Dickin Medal was introduced by PDSA's founder, Maria Dickin CBE, in 1943. It is the highest award any animal can achieve while

serving in military conflict. Kuno will become the 72nd recipient of the PDSA Dickin Medal; previous recipients include 34 dogs, 32 World War II messenger pigeons, four horses and one cat.

Kuno has now been rehomed and is living happily with a new family

[Funding boost for artificial intelligence in NHS to speed up diagnosis of deadly diseases](#)

- Extra £50 million investment in diagnostic centres of excellence which will develop artificial intelligence to diagnose disease
- Centres will boost diagnostic capabilities, improve outcomes for millions of patients, and free up NHS staff time
- Funding will support our long-term response to COVID-19 as part of government commitment to detect three-quarters of cancers at an early stage by 2028

Patients will benefit from major improvements in technology to speed up the diagnosis of deadly diseases like cancer thanks to further investment in the use of artificial intelligence across the NHS.

A £50 million funding boost will scale up the work of existing Digital Pathology and Imaging Artificial Intelligence Centres of Excellence, which were launched in 2018 to develop cutting-edge digital tools to improve the diagnosis of disease.

The 3 centres set to receive a share of the funding, based in Coventry, Leeds and London, will deliver digital upgrades to pathology and imaging services across an additional 38 NHS trusts, benefiting 26.5 million patients across England.

Pathology and imaging services, including radiology, play a crucial role in the diagnosis of diseases and the funding will lead to faster and more accurate diagnosis and more personalised treatments for patients, freeing up clinicians' time and ultimately saving lives.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Technology is a force for good in our fight against the deadliest diseases – it can transform and save lives through faster diagnosis, free up clinicians to spend time with their patients and make every pound in the NHS go further.

I am determined we do all we can to save lives by spotting cancer sooner. Bringing the benefits of artificial intelligence to the frontline of our health service with this funding is another step in that mission. We can support doctors to improve the care we provide and make Britain a world-leader in this field.

The NHS is open and I urge anyone who suspects they have symptoms to book an appointment with their GP as soon as possible to benefit from our excellent diagnostics and treatments.

Today the government has also provided an update on the number of cancer diagnostic machines replaced in England since September 2019, when [£200 million was announced to help replace MRI machines, CT scanners and breast screening equipment](#), as part of the government's commitment to ensure 55,000 more people survive cancer each year.

69 scanners have now been installed and are in use, 10 more are being installed and 75 have been ordered or are ready to be installed.

The new funding is part of the government's commitment to saving thousands more lives each year and detecting three-quarters of all cancers at an early stage by 2028.

Cancer diagnosis and treatment has been an absolute priority throughout the pandemic and continues to be so. Nightingale hospitals have been turned into mass screening centres and hospitals have successfully and quickly cared for patients urgently referred by their GP, with over 92% of urgent cancer referrals being investigated within 2 weeks, and 85,000 people starting treatment for cancer since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

In June, 45,000 more people came forward for a cancer check and the public are urged if they are concerned about possible symptoms to contact their GP and get a check-up.

National Pathology Imaging Co-operative Director and Consultant Pathologist at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust Darren Treanor said:

This investment will allow us to use digital pathology to diagnose cancer at 21 NHS trusts in the north, serving a population of 6 million people. We will also build a national network spanning another 25 hospitals in England, allowing doctors to get expert second opinions in rare cancers, such as childhood tumours, more rapidly. This funding puts the NHS in a strong position to be a global leader in the use of artificial intelligence in the diagnosis of disease.

The knowledge PathLAKE will unlock, both in the short and long-term future, will completely transform cancer care in the NHS while embedding a world-leading life-sciences and technology sector across our health system.

Professor Kiran Patel, Chief Medical Officer and Interim Chief Executive Officer for University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) NHS Trust, said:

We are delighted to receive and lead this funding. This represents a major capital investment into the NHS which will massively expand the digitisation of cellular pathology services, driving diagnostic evaluation to new heights and increasing access to a vast amount of image information for research.

As a trust we're excited to be playing such a major part in helping the UK to take a leading role in the development and delivery of these new technologies to improve patient outcomes and enhance our understanding and utilisation of clinical information.

Professor Reza Razavi, London Medical Imaging and AI Centre for Value-Based Healthcare Director, said:

The additional funding will enable the London Medical Imaging and AI Centre for Value-Based Healthcare to continue its mission to spearhead innovations that will have significant impact on our patients and the wider NHS.

Artificial intelligence technology provides significant opportunities to improve diagnostics and therapies as well as reduce administrative costs. With machine learning, we can use existing data to help clinicians better predict when disease will occur, diagnosing and treating it earlier, and personalising treatments, which will be less resource intensive and provides better health outcomes for our patients.

The centres benefiting from the funding are:

- London Medical Imaging and Artificial Intelligence Centre for Value-Based Healthcare, which will use artificial intelligence in medical imaging and related clinical data for faster and earlier diagnosis and automating expensive and time-consuming manual reporting
- the National Pathology Imaging Collaborative (NPIC) located in Leeds, which will boost the city's reputation in digital pathology research further by creating a world-leading centre linking up 9 industry partners, 8 universities and 9 NHS trusts
- based in Coventry, the Pathology Image Data Lake for Analytics, Knowledge and Education (PathLAKE) will use NHS pathology data to drive economic growth in health-related AI

Alongside the clinical improvements, this investment supports the UK's long-term response to COVID-19, contributing to the government's aim of building a British diagnostics industry at scale. The funding will support the UK's artificial intelligence and technology industries, by allowing the centres to

partner with new and innovative British small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), boosting our economic recovery from coronavirus.

As part of the delivery of the government's Data to Early Diagnosis and Precision Medicine Challenge, in 2018, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) [invested £50 million through UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) to establish 5 digital pathology and imaging AI Centres of Excellence.](#)

The centres – located in Leeds, Oxford, Coventry, Glasgow and London – were originally selected by an Innovate UK competition run on behalf of UKRI which, to date, has leveraged over £41.5 million in industry investment. Working with their partners, the centres modernise NHS pathology and imaging services and develop new, innovative ways of using AI to speed up diagnosis of diseases.

[UK government provides over £140 million of support for exports to Ghana](#)

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has today announced it will provide over £140 million of financing to support UK exports to Ghana and help secure export opportunities for UK companies on major national infrastructure projects across the country.

This infrastructure support has helped to secure export opportunities for UK companies in healthcare, sanitation and transport across the country.

The support that UKEF has provided in Ghana includes:

- a direct loan of £27 million to the Ghanaian government will help UK-based Aqua Africa provide clean energy to sterilise drinking water for 225,000 people across the country. Aqua Africa will use solar powered technology to deliver 5 litres of water a day for less than a quarter of a penny.
- over £50 million will enable the construction of the new regional hospital in Koforidua. The project led by engineering companies Ellipse and Tyllium will provide 285 beds, a modern and fully functional hospital.
- over £70 million of financing in the form of direct loans and guarantees that will boost UK involvement in the redevelopment of a major commercial road between Tema and Aflao by construction company BHM International (UK) Ltd. This road links Ghana with close trading partners including Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Niger.

UKEF has also increased its country cover in 24 African nations this year, including for Ghana which has now doubled to £1.5 billion.

This announcement is part of HM government's ambition to cover 80% of the UK's trade with free trade agreements to strengthen the UK's position as the trading partner of choice for countries in Africa.

Minister for Exports, Graham Stuart, said:

Building on the UK Africa Investment Summit in January this year, I'm delighted to see British capability being exported to Ghana and improving people's lives across the country.

UK Export Finance supports UK exports at no cost to the taxpayer and has an important role in powering an export-led recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19) and giving UK exporters of all sizes a foothold in fast-growing markets across Africa and beyond.

Quotes from exporters

Aqua Africa's Managing Director Philip Foster said:

We commend the tri-partnership approach between the government of Ghana, UKEF and the private sector in securing agreement for this vital social impact investment project that will provide access to clean water to over 225,000 Ghanaians, in support of Ghana's 'Water for All' policy aligned with the SDG agenda.

We are looking forward to implementing this project and to developing the relationship that will deliver further projects that are planned to follow.

Bruno Schambacher, CEO of Tyllium, said:

UKEF's support is allowing EPC companies like ours to take full advantage of the new trading opportunities created by the rise of developing economies like Ghana. Their flexible finance was at the core of our successful bid.

Olivier Picard, CEO of Ellipse Projects, said:

Our company operates actively in Africa and is already present in Ghana in the health sector. We are pleased that UK Export Finance is supporting us as we secure these exciting contracts. UKEF's flexible finance demonstrates the government's true commitment to the growth of UK exports.

Phil Atkinson International Director of BHM Construction International UK said:

Securing this project has been dependent on the world class support provided by UKEF. It shows the commitment of the UK government in supporting exporters as they establish new trading relationships across Africa.

Through the combined assistance of the Ghana Ministry and Roads and UKEF, our team are committed to the development of this critical infrastructure to provide a safe, efficient and reliable road transport system and foster economic growth within Ghana and the region at large.

Ed Harkins, Managing Director of GKB Ventures, who acted as ECA Advisor to Tyllium and BHM, said:

We are delighted to have been appointed as ECA advisor by both BHM and Tyllium on these important infrastructure projects in Ghana. We were able to work with our clients, the banks and the team at UK Export Finance to ensure that the funding was closed in a timely manner in an extremely volatile funding market.

The support UK Export Finance provided through its direct lending facility was essential to ensuring that these vital projects could be funded through a long-term affordable funding solution for the government of Ghana.

GKB has now completed three UKEF supported projects for our clients in Ghana. In each case the support provided by UKEF was a key to ensuring our clients were able to unlock much needed new export contracts.

All possible measures to be taken before schools and colleges close

Today (28 August) the government has published detailed guidance for schools on contingency planning for areas with local lockdowns in place.

The guidance sets out that all possible measures should be taken before any restrictions are imposed on schools to maintain consistent education for children and young people.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our primary focus remains supporting all schools to welcome back all pupils for the start of term and we thank teachers and staff for their hard work in preparations

We hope that we won't have to implement the guidance set out today because the local lockdown measures we have introduced so far are working. Changes to school attendance will only ever be an absolute last resort.

However, it is important that both government and schools prepare for a worst case scenario, so this framework represents the sensible contingency planning any responsible government would put in place.

The updated [CONTAIN](#) guidance sets out four tiers of restrictions for education settings, for use as an absolute last resort in areas subject to local restrictions.

All schools, colleges and other education settings are opening for the start of term, with all those in areas subject to local restrictions currently at Tier 1 – fully open to all pupils full time, with face coverings required in corridors and communal areas for pupils in Year 7 and above.

Local authority leaders and directors of public health, alongside national government, would be at the centre of any decision making to move out of Tier 1 for education settings.

They would take all other possible measures, including implementing restrictions on other sectors, before considering restricting attendance in education.

If all other measures have been exhausted, Tier 2 would advise secondary schools and colleges in a restricted area to use rotas to help break chains of transmission of coronavirus, while primary schools remain open to all pupils.

Tiers 3 and 4 introduce remote learning full time for wider groups of pupils, with vulnerable children and children of critical workers continuing to attend.

The government asked schools in July to ensure they were able to provide high quality remote education that mirrors in-school education, in case any pupils were required to self-isolate or local restrictions were needed. These plans should extend to rotas if ever required.

All children are due to return to school for the autumn term and schools have been putting in place protective measures to reduce the risk of transmission.

School staff have been working to implement increased hygiene and handwashing

with children remaining in consistent groups, using measures such as staggered break times to keep groups apart.

To further reassure parents and teachers that all proportionate measures are being taken to make schools as safe as possible, the government has announced that in areas of the country currently subject to enhanced restrictions, staff and pupils in secondary schools should wear face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be maintained.

From this week, schools and colleges have begun receiving home testing kits, each receiving a pack of 10 tests, with more available to be ordered if needed. The home testing kits are to be used in exceptional circumstances such as an individual with symptoms who may have barriers to accessing a test elsewhere and the home kit would significantly increase their chance of getting tested. This will enable schools and colleges to take swift action to protect others if the test result is positive.

Schools are also receiving packs of PPE to use in the very limited circumstances it may be required, such as when it is not possible for a staff member to maintain 2m distance from a pupil with a suspected case of coronavirus.

This week the Chief Medical Officers from all four nations in the United Kingdom made it clear that the risks to children contracting Covid-19 in school or college is extremely low and that the risks associated with not being in school or college outweighs that of not being there.

The Department for Education has also published further [guidance](#) to help schools plan for potential Tier 2 restrictions, which will involve secondary year groups operating a rota system in order to reduce pupil numbers on-site.

[Restrictions lifted in parts of Greater Manchester, Lancashire and West Yorkshire](#)

- Positive progress means 2 households can mix again in areas including Bolton, Stockport, Trafford, Hyndburn and Burnley
- Some improvements in Leicester, with current restrictions remaining in place for a further 2 weeks as cases remain high

Following discussions with local leaders, the Health and Social Care Secretary, NHS Test and Trace, the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), and the Chief Medical Officer for England have agreed this week's changes to local restrictions in some parts of England.

From Wednesday 2 September restrictions on 2 households mixing introduced last month will be lifted in:

- Bolton
- Stockport
- Trafford
- Burnley
- Hyndburn
- parts of Bradford excluding Bradford city and Keighley town
- parts of Calderdale excluding Halifax
- parts of Kirklees excluding Dewsbury and Batley

It means next week over 1 million people will be able to mix with family and friends outside their household, in line with national social distancing rules, for the first time since restrictions were announced on 30 July.

Businesses and organisations that opened elsewhere in England on 15 August, including bowling alleys and indoor play areas, will also be permitted to reopen in the areas listed above, bringing these areas in line with the rest of the country.

The easements have been agreed thanks to the outstanding local efforts to halt spikes in the virus, through local interventions, increased targeted testing and avoiding mixing with other households indoors.

Data shows cases per 100,000 decreased during the week ending 20 August in Burnley, where cases have more than halved from 52 to 24.6, and cases in Bolton and Stockport fell from 25.6 to 18.9, and 23 to 15.1 respectively, and Trafford fell from 27.1 to 17.8.

To maintain this good progress, it is important local residents continue to wear face coverings where necessary, practise good hygiene and adhere to national social distancing rules.

This week local areas have been encouraged to take a new, collaborative approach to advise on the geographical boundaries of local restrictions, with councils, public health leaders and MPs making proposals to the Gold Local Action committee based on the latest data available.

It means restrictions in some areas will only apply to certain wards, rather than the entire local authority area. This is a key part of the government's enhanced Contain Strategy, which was [announced last week](#), and will deliver more targeted action to drive down rates of COVID-19 at a hyper-local level.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We brought in measures to protect people in these parts of Northern England, and I want to thank residents who have worked so hard to get on top of this virus.

We're seeing the positive results of our local approach, and are able to bring in increasingly targeted measures.

It is vital we can maintain this good progress. I have every faith people across the county, especially in areas where we are seeing higher numbers of cases, will continue to play their part by following local rules, and self-isolating and requesting a free test as soon as they get any symptoms.

The weekly Local Action Gold Committee, chaired by the Health and Social Care Secretary, agreed local restrictions will continue in the following areas.

Greater Manchester:

- a ban on 2 households mixing indoors will continue in City of Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Bury and Tameside
- in Oldham, in addition to a household mixing ban indoors, residents will continue to be advised to avoid mixing with anyone from another household anywhere. Cases per 100,000 in Oldham reached 67.1 during the week ending 20 August, the second highest in England

Lancashire:

- in Pendle and Blackburn residents will continue to be advised to avoid mixing with anyone from another household anywhere. Some businesses and organisations remain closed in Blackburn and Darwen. Pendle had the highest number of cases per 100,000 anywhere in England during the week ending 20 August, reaching 67.8
- the ban on 2 households mixing indoors will continue in Preston

Leicester:

- on top of the indoor gatherings restrictions, some leisure sector businesses will continue to remain closed
- the next review of these measures will take place by 11 September

West Yorkshire:

- in urban areas of Bradford, the ban on indoor household gatherings remains in place and some businesses and organisations remain closed
- in Kirklees, the ban on indoor household gatherings will continue in Dewsbury and Batley
- the ban will also continue in parts of Calderdale

Shielding advice for clinical extremely vulnerable individuals remains in place across all of Blackburn with Darwen, and Leicester.

The announcement on this week's changes to local restrictions comes as the Health and Social Care Secretary has signed new national regulations formalising penalties for people who repeatedly do not wear face coverings on public transport, shops and other areas where it is mandatory.

Fines for not wearing face coverings start at £100, which can be reduced if paid within 14 days. Repeat offenders on public transport or in indoor settings will now have their fines doubled at each offence. After the first

offence, there will be no discount. This means a second fine will amount to £200 and a third fine will be £400, up to a maximum value of £3,200.

The full changes will be published on GOV.UK at [Local restrictions: areas with an outbreak of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

PHE's [weekly surveillance report](#) includes changes to the watchlist of local authority areas with higher-than-average incidences of COVID-19.

The changes are:

- Sandwell and Swindon move up the list and become 'areas of enhanced support'
- Luton becomes an 'area of concern' following a drop in cases
- Trafford, Bolton, Stockport, Burnley, Hyndburn, Burnley, parts of Bradford, parts of Kirklees and parts of Calderdale are moved down the list, becoming areas of 'enhanced support'
- Stoke-on-Trent is being added to the list for the first time as an 'area of concern'

This week's PHE surveillance report also included data on rates of COVID-19 by ethnicity and age in each major region in England. This will allow the public and local leaders to more easily see how the pandemic is affecting different ethnic groups across the country, and to inform action to protect our most vulnerable communities

The 3 definitions for JBC and PHE's watchlist are 'areas of concern', 'areas of enhanced support' and 'areas of intervention':

- for 'areas of concern', upper tier local authorities will work with partners, supported by regional PHE and NHS Test and Trace resource, to take additional actions to manage outbreaks and reduce community spread of the virus to more normal levels. Actions taken may include additional targeted testing at high-risk areas or groups, for example care homes, enhanced communications around the importance of social distancing, hand hygiene and other preventative measures, and more detailed epidemiological work to understand where clusters of the virus are occurring so that appropriate action can be taken
- areas deemed for 'enhanced support' will be provided with increased national support, capacity and oversight, including additional resources deployed to augment the local teams where this is necessary. Actions taken may include significant additional widespread testing deployed to the upper tier local authorities, national support for local recommendations put in place to manage outbreaks, and detailed engagement with high-risk groups and sectors to help increase the effectiveness of testing and tracing in these areas
- 'areas of intervention' are defined where there is divergence from the lockdown measures in place in the rest of England because of the significance of the spread of COVID-19. There are a range of non-pharmaceutical interventions available to local and national leaders, from extensive communications and expanded testing, to restrictions on businesses and gatherings

See the [Contain Framework](#) for more information.

Area-specific changes

Areas in Bradford where restrictions are being lifted:

- Worth Valley
- Craven
- Ilkley
- Baildon
- Bingley
- Bingley Rural
- Shipley
- Wharfedale
- Windhill and Wrose

Areas in Calderdale where restrictions are being lifted:

- Brighouse
- Calder
- Elland
- Greenland and Stainland
- Hipperholme and Lightcliffe
- Luddendenfoot
- Rastrick
- Ryburn
- Todmorden

Areas in Kirklees where restrictions are being lifted:

- Golcar
- Greenhead
- Heckmondwike
- Holme Valley South
- Lindley
- Liversedge and Gomersal
- Mirfield
- Newsome
- Cleckheaton
- Dalton
- Denby Dale
- Almondbury
- Colne Valley
- Crosland Moor and Netherton
- Holme Valley North
- Kirkburton
- Ashbrow
- Birstall and Birkenshaw