

Somali soldiers graduate from UK-led training course

134 Somali National Army (SNA) soldiers graduated on 7 November from a UK-led training course in Baidoa, the capital of South West State in Somalia. The training is part of the UK's ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity of Somali security forces.

During the graduation ceremony, held at a UK-funded training facility in Baidoa, the SNA soldiers demonstrated the combat skills that they have acquired over the past two months which will help them to deliver lasting peace and security in Somalia. The training has equipped the soldiers with vital skills, including training in field-craft, leadership, human rights, first-aid treatment, patrolling and the delivery of defensive operations to enhance their current capabilities.

The pass-out ceremony was attended by senior government officials from South West State, senior military officers and commanders from the SNA, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and UK officials.

Speaking during the graduation ceremony, British Ambassador to Somalia, Ben Fender said:

Congratulations to you all on successfully completing this important training. We hope the new skills you have learnt will be of great benefit to you as you join other men and women on the frontline to support long-term security in Somalia.

The UK is committed to helping build the capacity of the Somali National Army and Somali Police Force so that you will eventually be able to assume full responsibility for the nation's security.

The Commander of British Forces in Somalia, Colonel JL Baynham, said:

Today is an important day for this joint Somali and British project and I congratulate all those who have made this possible and in particular, the 134 soldiers who stand before us today on this parade. It is their professionalism and dedication that has made this possible and it is they who will help ensure the Somali people will experience peace and prosperity in the years to come.

In attendance was the South West President, Abdiiaziz Hassan 'Laftagareen' who thanked the UK for the ongoing support to the SNA. He said:

I urge all of you to work hard and protect our country, please

implement the lessons you have learnt during the training and pass on the knowledge to your colleagues. I would also like to thank the UK government for providing support to the Somali people.

The commander of the SNA in Baidoa, Brigadier General Osman was also present and thanked the UK government and Commander Baynham for his dedication in ensuring a training centre is established.

The UK is supporting efforts to build the capacity and capability of Somalia's security forces, ahead of transition to Somali-led security.

Since January 2017, the UK has delivered training to over 900 SNA soldiers. The training has focused on medical skills, leadership development, equipment care, logistics and the rule of law.

[UK solar company secures funding to build two major solar plants in Spain](#)

UK-based solar energy company, [Solarcentury](#), has secured new financing to build two of the largest solar plants in Spain demonstrating the UK's leadership on climate change.

UK Export Finance (UKEF), the UK's export credit agency, has today (7 January 2019) guaranteed £47.6 million worth of financing for Solarcentury, in a boost to UK solar exports.

Together, the developments will generate enough energy to power more than a quarter of a million homes each year with renewable energy.

The new banking facilities comprise a £24.7 million trade loan facility from NatWest and a £22.9 million guarantees line from HSBC UK, with both sources of funding supported by UK Export Finance. UKEF's support will allow Solarcentury to access the working capital and bond support needed to fulfil the contracts.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

British companies are taking the lead in developing solutions that tackle climate change and provide clean energy to thousands.

I'm glad to see that this – underpinned by the UK's legally binding commitment to end our contribution to climate change by 2050 – is bearing fruit on the international stage for exporters.

We must focus on a low-carbon future and my department is ready to

help what will become a very important part of the economy sell overseas.

The funding will secure the construction of two of the largest private subsidy-free solar developments in Spain to date:

- the 300MWp Talayuela Solar project in Cáceres, Extremadura, will be one of the largest solar projects in Europe when it is fully operational in the second half of 2020, capable of producing enough energy to power 150,000 homes every year
- the 200MWp Cabrera Solar project in Alcalá de Guadaira near Sevilla, comprising four 50MWp plants, which are expected to be completed and connected to the grid by September 2020, producing enough electricity to cover demand from 105,000 households in the region.

Solarcentury, headquartered in London, has been selling renewable energy solutions for 21 years. The company's continued focus on its overseas business strategy means that exports now account for 90% of all sales.

There are now approximately 400,000 people working in green collar jobs in the UK, increasing the national income while reducing emissions. This could climb to two million by 2030.

Neil Perry, Chief Financial Officer of Solarcentury, said:

Today's announcement is testament to the strength of our business, Solarcentury's unrivalled experience in developing and building large-scale infrastructure projects globally, and the significant investment potential of subsidy-free solar in Europe.

With the project financing in place alongside these new facilities, construction has now begun on the landmark Talayuela project. Together with Cabrera Solar, where building commenced in July, these are two of the largest solar energy generation plants ever to be developed in Spain and among the most important in Europe, generating employment, respecting the environment and boosting the regional economy.

Louis Taylor, Chief Executive of UK Export Finance, said:

We're seeing an increasing number of renewables projects around the world, and this deal highlights the strength of the UK's offer.

We've worked with the banks to ensure Solarcentury has the level of support required to deliver these two substantial solar projects. UKEF's support highlights that UK companies are well placed to win

overseas contracts and exports in renewable and clean growth projects.

Robert King, Head of Sustainability at HSBC UK, said:

HSBC UK has committed to being a leader in sustainable finance and we are delighted to have provided Solarcentury with facilities which will enable the construction of zero carbon solar power generation in Spain and help realise their continued growth ambitions.

Drew Hayes, Relationship Director at NatWest, said:

NatWest is delighted to support Solarcentury with this new banking facility. Our close working relationship with UKEF played a key role in enabling us to develop a bespoke funding package for this important project. We are committed to becoming a more sustainable bank and supporting our key customers in this sector is an important part of this.

UK Export Finance is the [UK's export credit agency](#) and a government department, working alongside the Department for International Trade as an integral part of its strategy and operations.

It exists to ensure that no viable UK export lacks for finance or insurance from the private market. It provides finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and ensure they get paid for export contracts.

Sectors in which UKEF has supported exports include: infrastructure, aerospace, healthcare, telecommunications, transport and industrial development.

UKEF has a regional network of 24 [export finance managers](#), who support UK businesses export their goods and services.

UKEF support exporters with a range of products that include:

- Bond insurance policy
- Bond support scheme
- Buyer & supplier credit financing facility
- Direct lending facility
- Export insurance policy
- Export refinancing facility
- Export working capital scheme
- Letter of credit guarantee scheme

The latest information on UKEF's country cover positions can be [found here](#).

If you're a business owner and want to learn more about how UKEF could help

you, [tell us about your business](#).

Dean Beale appointed Chief Executive of the Insolvency Service

Following an open competition, Dean Beale has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Insolvency Service. He took up post on 2 December 2019.

Dean has been acting as interim chief executive since September. Prior to this, he was Director of Strategy and Change, overseeing policy development, regulation of the insolvency sector and leading the department's transformation programme.

Dean has worked in the insolvency field for over 20 years in a variety of roles. He has been an official receiver, acting as a trustee in bankruptcy and liquidation cases, and has undertaken many insolvency-related investigations.

In addition to his public sector experience, Dean has also spent time in the private sector as a forensic accountant investigating fraud and managing commercial disputes.

Struggling schools set for specialist support

Over one thousand schools are set to receive expert support from some of the country's highest performing schools as the Department for Education announces six new Teaching School Hubs today (7 January).

Schools will benefit from a three-year programme of support, with each of the six successful schools acting as a regional hub and will receive funding to support between 200 to 300 other schools in the local area.

This will give struggling schools direct access to the expertise from school leaders with a track record of improving challenging schools. Support could include delivering tailored professional development for teachers, hosting observations and visits or deploying system leaders to offer advice and guidance to local schools.

This forms part of a new scheme, launched by the department last year, to simplify and strengthen how the government drives up school standards, building on the successes of the Teaching Schools and National Leaders of Education programmes.

It also underlines the government's determination to back teachers by attracting and supporting the best talent into the classroom and rewarding the great work they do. It has already announced plans to raise teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 as well as announcing an extra £14 billion funding over three years for schools.

The six new hubs will be based in five areas of the country, including North Yorkshire, Sheffield and Devon, building on the Government's ambition to drive up school standards in areas of the country most in need of support.

Schools Minister Lord Agnew said:

It is vital that we back our best school leaders and help them to support struggling schools so that we can continue to drive forward the high standards we are already seeing in schools across the country.

These new Teaching School Hubs will make it easier for the best school leaders to share expert advice and help schools in their local communities, ensuring that those schools facing the greatest challenges are supported as simply and efficiently as possible.

The six new hubs will help struggling schools to boost professional development opportunities for teachers, improve school-to-school support and strengthen staff recruitment and retention and will initially be tested in five areas, from February 2020.

The newly reformed system forms part of the government's commitment to revamp the current system of school leadership support, building on the department's first ever integrated recruitment and retention strategy launched last year.

Notes to editors

The six new hubs are:

- North: Harrogate Grammar School and Red Kite Alliance
- Lancashire and West Yorkshire: Copthorne Primary School and Exceed Teaching Schools Alliance
- East Midlands and Humber: Silverdale School and Sheffield Teaching School Alliance
- East of England and North East London: Harris Academy Chafford Hundred and Harris Federation
- East of England and North East London: Saffron Walden County High School and The Saffron Alliance
- South West: Kingsbridge Community College and South West Teaching School Alliance

Chancellor launches Budget process to usher in 'decade of renewal'

- Chancellor says Budget will set out ambitious plans to unleash Britain's potential, level up across the UK and usher in a decade of renewal
- Budget will start a new chapter for the economy, seizing the opportunities that come from getting Brexit done

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, has today launched the beginning of the Budget process and announced that it will take place on Wednesday 11 March 2020.

During a visit to the new £350 million Trafford Park tram line project in Manchester, the Chancellor set out plans to use the Government's first Budget to deliver change – unleashing Britain's potential, delivering world-class public services and levelling up the whole country. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, said:

People across the country have told us that they want change. We've listened and will now deliver.

With this Budget we will unleash Britain's potential – uniting our great country, opening a new chapter for our economy and ushering in a decade of renewal.

The Chancellor will today provide an economic update to Cabinet colleagues before updating Parliament during Treasury oral questions. He is expected to set out plans in the March Budget to:

- open a new chapter for the UK's economy and prepare it for the decade ahead
- deliver on the Government's promises on tax, to help tackle the cost of living for hard-working people
- make good on the commitment to level up and spread opportunity, including by investing billions of pounds across the country

At the Budget, the Chancellor will update the Charter of Fiscal Responsibility with new rules, taking advantage of low interest rates to invest properly and responsibly, while keeping debt under control.

The Budget will prioritise the environment, and build on recent announcements to boost spending on public services and tackle the cost of living. These include investing in new hospitals, training thousands of new police officers, funding vocational education and the biggest ever cash increase to the National Living Wage.

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