

News story: British troops continue support to UN South Sudan mission

Armed Forces Minister Mike Penning yesterday visited Bentiu and Malakal, where UK military personnel are deployed, and met those carrying out engineering tasks in support of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

With around 100 already in country, Royal Engineers are carrying out building tasks in preparation for the main deployment of nearly 400 troops over the coming months – making this one of the UK's largest operational deployments across the globe.

UK personnel are carrying out engineering tasks at the UN's camps in both Malakal and Bentiu to enhance UNMISS's efforts, and as more British troops arrive in South Sudan, focus will move to Bentiu where a temporary field hospital will be set up, followed by a permanent hospital.

Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mike Penning said:

The UN is working hard to protect civilians and promote stability in South Sudan, and the UK continues to support this important effort.

This will be the UK's single largest deployment to a UN mission with almost 400 of our troops carrying out vital engineering tasks on the ground and a number of key roles within the UN headquarters.

This permanent field hospital will support over 1,000 UN peacekeepers and staff, enabling them to continue working to improve conditions in South Sudan.

Armed Forces Minister Mike Penning arrives in South Sudan

Engineering tasks carried out by UK personnel could include a helicopter landing site in Malakal, facilities to improve water supply, drainage to prevent flooding. In addition to engineering and medical support, the UK also has a small number of staff officers in UNMISS's headquarters in Juba.

Lt Col Jason Ainley, Commanding Officer Royal Engineers said:

We are very proud to be part of UNMISS. We look forward to continued work with our military and civilian colleagues to support the mission, which aims to improve conditions for the people of South Sudan.

My engineers are working in a tough operating environment to ensure our mission will be a success.

As part of his visit the Armed Forces Minister also met Lt Col Ainley in Juba, as well as Defence Minister Kuol Manyang Juuk, and UN Special Representative David Shearer.

British military support in South Sudan follows a commitment made in 2015 by the then Prime Minister to double the UK's commitment to global peacekeeping initiatives, including by deploying troops to South Sudan and Somalia.

Alongside the UK-hosted Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in London in September, these contributions underline the UK's leading role in support to peacekeeping operations.

Mike Penning visits UK personnel in South Sudan

More widely, the UK Government has committed life-saving support to tackle the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, including matching pound for pound public donations up to £10 million to the Disaster Emergency Committee's East Africa Crisis Appeal.

The Government also recently announcement that £100m will be spent on life-saving support in South Sudan in 2017/18, including:

- Food for over 500,000 people;
- Life-saving nutritional support to more than 27,500 children;
- Safe drinking water for over 300,000 people;
- Emergency health services for over 100,000 people;
- Livelihood support for over 650,000 people;
- Vaccinations for over 200,000 livestock.

[News story: New penalties for breaching financial sanctions now in force](#)

From today (3 April 2017), the Treasury's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) will start to use powers to impose penalties for

serious financial sanctions breaches. These can be up to £1 million or 50% of the breach, whichever is higher.

This new power is one of a series of measures in the Policing and Crime Act which will strengthen the government's response to financial sanctions breaches. The penalty powers apply to offences committed after 1 April 2017. In 2016, just over one hundred suspected breaches were reported to OFSI, 95 of which were actual breaches, totaling around £75 million.

Economic Secretary, Simon Kirby, said:

Financial sanctions are a valuable tool against individuals, countries and terrorist groups who threaten UK foreign policy and financial services as well as our national security.

This government won't tolerate breaches of financial sanctions. We'll continue to place more emphasis on compliance and we will take tough action against those who deliberately flout the law.

Monetary penalties are a new way of responding to offences. The UK currently imposes financial sanctions in 27 sanctions regimes. Breaching sanctions is a criminal offence and the most serious cases could shortly incur prison sentences of up to seven years.

OFSI will normally publish summary details of penalty cases, to deter non-compliance and support compliance best practice.

In December 2016 OFSI consulted on guidance to support monetary penalties and [today publishes guidance](#) alongside a [summary of consultation responses](#).

Rena Lalgie, Head of OFSI, commented:

We'll continue to provide information and guidance to business, industry, the public and charitable sectors to facilitate compliance with financial sanctions. However, we will issue penalties for serious breaches and we won't hesitate in referring the most serious cases to law enforcement agencies.

OFSI, created on 31 March 2016, is the UK's Competent Authority for implementing financial sanctions. It works with a wide range of individuals, businesses and not-for-profit organisations who could be impacted by financial sanctions to: raise awareness of financial sanctions, improve compliance, and detect and address breaches.

News story: Now recruiting: Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs members

The Home Office is seeking 11 new members with expertise across:

- enforcement
- forensic chemistry
- neuropharmacology
- clinical psychology or general practice
- prison management
- offender management
- public health
- third sector
- pharmacy
- law

It is also seeking members from within these areas who have knowledge of the issues relevant to LGBT and BAME communities.

Speech: Ulster Farmers' Union Annual Dinner Speech

I would like to begin by congratulating President Barclay Bell and guests for this celebration of all that is good with Northern Ireland food and farming.

And it is right that we take the time to promote and celebrate the success of the industry given its vital contribution to the economy of Northern Ireland – not least as we approach the UFU's centenary year in 2018.

I may not know the ins and outs of a stripper sow or a well sprung heifer, but I do understand how fundamental agriculture is to Northern Ireland.

With a 48,000 strong workforce, agriculture is one of Northern Ireland's most significant employers.

Its 25,000 farms cover over 1 million hectares, with its farmers, food producers and traditional food crafts NI produce is renowned at home and abroad.

And you also play a key role in contributing to the £4.5bn annual turnover of the agri-food industry as a whole, helping to deliver a stronger, more secure economy in Northern Ireland.

And as tonight reminds us it is not just an industry committed to growing the economy but a social and cultural force too.

One that supports rural communities and networks, investing in the next generation so it can thrive – with projects like the Next Generation Forum and the Land Mobility Project, which will help the industry realize its ambitious plan for the next 20 years.

So tonight is a welcome opportunity to showcase the best of the industry, and to set out the importance of working together to reinforce and strengthen its opportunities for growth.

But people in Northern Ireland also need to have a stable base from which to seize those opportunities. And that means stable government.

As a Government we are doing everything we can to secure the resumption of the Executive and end the ongoing uncertainty and disruption.

And I hope that all here today will underline the need for constructive engagement to reach a positive conclusion as quickly as possible in the critical weeks to come.

But coming back to tonight, I want to acknowledge the many innovative and creative farmers here in Northern Ireland who are at the forefront of their sectors.

Whether that be the well-trusted Wilson's Country Potato range; the Forest Feast portfolio that sells in 36 countries worldwide; the innovative apple juices and ciders of the McCann family of Co. Armagh; or diversification projects like the Hillstown farm shop on the Logan family farm in Randalstown – the agri-food industry here punches well above its weight.

And it is essential that the industry as a whole will continue to innovate and to capitalise on growth opportunities, as it reaches out to new and existing markets.

I will continue to engage with the industry to do just that – including by looking at how to leverage new opportunities as we leave the European Union.

And it is perhaps worth me pausing to say a few words on that subject, because I am keenly aware – from my Business Advisory Group engagements and remarks again here tonight – of the strong interest there is about our way forward, especially now that we have triggered the Article 50 process.

As the Prime Minister set out in her letter to President Tusk, we are clear in our intent in wanting to secure tariff-free and barrier-free trade. We want to agree a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU, taking in both economic and security cooperation.

And as Secretary of State, I am fully committed to ensuring that the unique interests of Northern Ireland will be protected and advanced, and the UK's unique relationship with the Republic of Ireland recognised. It is notable that the Prime Minister included a specific reference to this unique

relationship as a priority in the Article 50 letter which also set out the desire to avoid any return to a hard border.

Those here today can be assured that we are going to make the most of the opportunities that our departure presents to Northern Ireland.

In particular we will prioritise an outcome that means the land border remains as seamless and frictionless as possible, recognising the particular issues for businesses, like many of those represented here tonight, with complex cross-border supply chains and distinct animal and plant health regimes.

Earlier this week we published the Great Repeal Bill White Paper to provide clarity and certainty for businesses, workers and consumers across the United Kingdom on the day we leave the EU.

As powers return from the EU, we have an opportunity to determine the level best placed to take decisions on these issues, ensuring power sits closer to the people of the United Kingdom than ever before.

In some areas, this will require common UK frameworks. Decisions will be required about where a common framework is needed and, if it is, how it might be established. The devolved administrations also acknowledge the importance of common UK frameworks. We will work closely to deliver an approach that works for the whole of the United Kingdom and reflects the needs and individual circumstances of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

And working together, we can deliver our vision for a world-leading, secure agri-food industry and a cleaner, healthier environment, benefiting people and the economy alike.

I know the Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom enjoyed her visit to Northern Ireland at the end of last year. I have had the opportunity to meet some representatives of the agri-food sector in Northern Ireland.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Lord Dunlop has also taken a keen interest in the local sector. I know many of you will have spoken to him in recent weeks.

At the recent National Farmers' Union Conference the Environment Secretary set out her priorities for building world-leading food and farming industries.

She is very clear that we have a significant opportunity to design new, better and more efficient policies for delivering sustainable and productive farming, land management and rural communities.

I am also pleased that the Treasury has provided a guarantee to the agricultural sector that it will receive the same level of funding that it would have received under Pillar 1 of CAP until the end of the MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework) in 2020.

It provides certainty and continuity while we develop a new approach to

supporting agriculture and protecting our precious countryside.

Mr President, there is much to acknowledge, much to be positive about, and much to celebrate this evening.

I would like to once again thank President Bell and guests for the hospitality extended to me, and look forward to continuing to celebrate the many successes of the industry now and in the years to come.

[News story: UK and US continue collaborative nuclear agreement](#)

On March 8 2017, the 16th Standing Committee Meeting was held on the fringes of the annual Waste Management Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

The meeting included members of the US Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management (EM), Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL), UK's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and its subsidiaries RWM and Sellafield Ltd along with the UK National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) and the UK Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. They discussed the current collaborative activities between the organisations under the DOE/NDA/NNL trilateral Statement of Intent (SOI).

The SOI has been in place since 2007 and was recently renewed for a further 5 years through to March 2022. Since its inception, numerous information and lessons learned exchanges have taken place under the auspices of the SOI on a wide variety of topics ranging from contracting strategies to plutonium management. Current activities are focused on start-up and commissioning, aging infrastructure management and robotics/remote technology development and implementation.

All participants agreed that, going forward, they will focus more effort on developing tangible collaborative projects to better leverage the excellent long term relationships that have been formed and maximise the financial and technical benefit of the arrangement on both sides of the Atlantic.

Adrian Simper, Director of Technology and Strategy at the NDA, said:

The intangible benefits of this relationship have been excellent in terms of the sharing of know-how and lessons learned but to get the greatest value out of the partnership, we need to identify some tangible projects where we can pool our resources and expertise.

Ana Han, Head of US Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management's International Program said:

The US/UK collaboration continues to set the benchmark for other government-to-government collaborative efforts but we both know that we can do better and that will be the focus of effort over the next 5 years.

The 17th Standing Committee Meeting is planned to take place in Manchester in November in the margins of the NDA Estate Supply Chain Event.