

News story: Defence Minister hails UK-US transatlantic partnership

As part of the visit, the Minister met with the US Navy Under Secretary Thomas Modly and US Army Under Secretary Ryan McCarthy to discuss bilateral capability priorities and future areas of collaboration between the two armed forces.

This came as the Minister addressed the Heritage Foundation think-tank, where he highlighted the threats that both nations face and emphasised the vital role of Nato and the need for long-term planning and the depth of UK-US collaboration.

Addressing the Heritage Foundation, Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Over the years, the deep UK-US alliance has endured through two World conflicts, the chill of the Cold War, and the continuing struggle against extremist terror. Today our forces work highly effectively together across the globe – on land and sea, in the air, space and cyberspace. We are stronger together.

Just as our Armed Forces' capabilities are effectively intertwined, so too are our industries. We are now moving even nearer the goal of full interoperability, leveraging the talent, strength and innovation of both our Defence industries to meet the challenges of the future.

In a move to reinforce stronger industrial partnerships, the Minister also met with the headliners in the American defence industry, meeting with likes of Lockheed Martin, Northrup Grumman, Boeing and General Dynamics.

The UK and US are the biggest overseas suppliers to each other's militaries and have worked closely on numerous key projects.

The most prominent of these is the F-35 fighter jet programme, with the aircraft now embarked for flight trials on HMS Queen Elizabeth as she sailed into New York just last month. Other recent examples of collaboration are the Unmanned Air Systems programme and a Common Missile Compartment for UK-US Ballistic Missile Submarines.

Both nations also play leading roles in Nato, which is vital to the transatlantic partnership and have been calling for other nations to invest more in security and to increase the readiness of their forces. By the end of 2018, eight members will be meeting the commitment of spending 2% of their GDP on defence compared with just three in 2014.

In further display of solidarity, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson recently announced that the Red Arrows are set to carry out their largest ever tour of

North America in 2019 as the UK looks to strengthen ties and sign trade deals outside of Europe.

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Defence Minister Stuart Andrew was in Washington today to discuss the enduring UK-US defence present and future relationship and met with some of the biggest players in the US defence industry.

News story: Defence Minister praises First World War heroes at reburial service

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood has praised the courage and sacrifice of the First World War generation at a moving reburial service in Flanders.

News story: Defence Minister praises First World War heroes at reburial service

Ahead of the centenary of the First World War, Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood attended the burial of an unknown British soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, alongside current serving members of the Fusiliers. The service was organised by MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC, part of Defence Business Services) and held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Tyne Cot Cemetery, near Ypres, Belgium. Two unknown Australian soldiers who were found alongside their British comrade were also commemorated.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Tobias Ellwood said:

We owe these soldiers a debt of gratitude for their sacrifice and it is fitting that we can at last give them a deserved military burial here in Belgium.

As we approach the 100th Anniversary of Armistice Day, it is a poignant and timely reminder of the bravery of our Armed Forces. Throughout our country's history, they have given everything to keep us safe, and continue to do so today at home and abroad.

Tracey Bowers, JCCC said:

It is right and fitting that this Fusilier is finally laid to rest alongside his Australian comrades and they have been given a dignified burial. Although over 100 years since they paid the ultimate sacrifice we will always remember them.

The three soldiers were laid to rest by bearer parties formed from the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (for the British Fusilier) and the Australian Army, which included a firing party from the UK and Australia. A band from the Australian Armed Forces performed along with military buglers from both countries.

The Reverend Stuart Richards CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and Reverend Peter Friend, Chaplain (Group Captain) Royal Australian Air Force jointly conducted a moving service.

The remains of the three soldiers were uncovered during civil engineering works in May 2016, found lying side by side within what is believed to be a World War One shell hole along the Vifwegesstraat, a road leading to the Tyne Cot Cemetery. Artefacts found at the grave site included fragments from a winter coat, shoulder titles of the Lancashire Fusiliers, service buttons, British boots, a leather belt with four cap badges attached, a smoker's pipe and a pencil with inscription from Eagley Cricket Club near Bolton, Lancashire.

Despite extensive research undertaken the JCCC has been unable to confirm the identity of the British soldier due to the Regiment losing 200 men with only a small percentage with known graves. However, JCCC's research indicated that the Lancashire Fusiliers were in the location as they engaged in the Third Battle of Ypres – the Battle of Passchendaele, which took place between July and November 1917.

The battle lasted a total of 105 days and the capturing of the village of Passchendaele (now spelt Passendale) came at a terrible cost as it is estimated that there were over 500,000 casualties, 42,000 of which were never recovered. JCCC will continue to make enquiries about the case in the hope that an identification may still be made in the future and his grave rededicated to bear his name.

News story: UK cements position in Gulf with new joint base in Oman

As part of his visit to Oman for the culmination of Exercise Saif Sareea 3, the UK's largest exercise in 17 years, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson underlined the UK's enduring commitment to Oman and highlighted the importance of protecting peace and stability in the Gulf.



Omani tanks move towards a target, with smoke coming from missiles fired by UK and Omani forces during the Exercise Saif Sareea 3 firepower demonstration. Crown copyright.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our relationship with Oman is built on centuries of cooperation and we are cementing that long into the future with the opening of our new joint base.

We stand as a beacon of stability in the region. This has never been more important as malign activity by hostile states and violent extremist organisations seek to undermine stability and subvert the rules based order on which we all rely.

UK troops will deploy to the joint training base in March 2019 to work and train alongside our Omani partners, building on the successes of Exercise Saif Sareea 3. For decades to come, it will support a variety of combined and joint training activity in the challenging and austere environment that 5,500 UK personnel have experienced over the last month.



Typhoon aircraft lead a flypast during the Exercise Saif Sareea 3 firepower demonstration. Crown copyright.

The exercise also tested the interaction and collaboration between civilian and military structures, providing valuable lessons about ensuring we deploy the right combination of tools to tackle the complex threats we face today.

The Defence Secretary also attended the Exercise Saif Sareea Fire Power Demonstration which involved both UK and Omani personnel who have been living and exercising side by side for the past five weeks. The exercise's culmination saw thousands of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen from both nations execute a set piece battle across the desert.

Mr Williamson also met the Sultan of Oman and Omani Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs signalling his intent to sign an agreement of enduring defence commitment early next year, reflecting on wider cooperation beyond defence; and reaffirming the deep cultural links and economic ties.



RAF Chinooks take part in the Exercise Saif Sareea 3 firepower demonstration. One is seen carrying a 105mm gun.