

News story: Defence Secretary meets Australian defence minister following £20bn British warship deal

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson met with Australian Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne today, following the country's decision to buy a British warship design as part of a potentially record-breaking £20 billion deal.

The meeting between the two ministers, and Defence Minister for procurement Guto Bebb, came just a fortnight after British firm BAE Systems was chosen as the preferred bidder for Australia's 'SEA 5000' Future Frigate competition, securing the biggest international ship deal of the decade.

The agreement will see nine cutting-edge British Type 26 Global Combat Ships built in Adelaide, supporting 4,000 Australian jobs and boosting the two nations' military capabilities.

Discussing future cooperation between the two nations at the Australia–United Kingdom Ministerial Equipment and Industry Dialogue today, ahead of the annual AUKMIN talks later this month, Mr Williamson and Mr Pyne agreed to deepen their countries' equipment relationship and explore future industry collaboration.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

In the face of intensifying threats, it is more important than ever for great allies like Britain and Australia to stand together.

The £20bn Global Combat Ship deal struck between BAE Systems and the Australian Government marks the start of an exciting new era in our nations' defence and industrial partnership, creating jobs for generations and keeping us safe.

It is also a major vote of confidence in British design, British engineering, and British innovation at a vital moment in our history. It also highlights the importance of our Armed Forces having a presence all over the world.

From my meeting with Minister Pyne today, it is clear that both our nations have a shared desire to work more closely together to strengthen and equip our militaries to defeat the threats of a darker and more dangerous world.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb added:

Ensuring our forces have the cutting-edge equipment they need is extremely important and today's meeting with our Australian counterparts is part of our mission to do just that.

Innovation is at the heart of equipment capability and working with allies to develop world-leading military technology will be of huge benefit to both our nations.

During the dialogue, the ministers discussed the importance of working together to leverage the strengths of each other's industries while maximising access to cutting edge defence capabilities from both countries.

They also spoke about improving and driving down costs across the supply chain for naval ships, discussed defence industry up-skilling initiatives and agreed to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to support industry and equipment collaboration.

Mr Pyne expressed interest in gaining a greater insight into the United Kingdom's approach to growing a skilled workforce to support its shipbuilding programme.

The pair also reaffirmed their commitment to enhance capability, interoperability and innovation through deepening the countries' industrial base ties.

The talks follow the deployment of a third Royal Navy ship, HMS Argyll, to the Asia-Pacific region, following on from HMS Sutherland and HMS Albion, and marking the first time three British warships have been sent to the area. Australia offered to host the next Ministerial Equipment and Industrial Dialogue in January 2019.

[News story: British prosperity relies on defence according to independent review](#)

The review was commissioned by the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson after he launched the Modernising Defence Programme (MDP) to strengthen the Armed Forces in the face of intensifying threats, alongside the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.

The independent review of defence's contribution to national economic and social value by Philip Dunne looks right across the Armed Forces and industry to provide an in-depth picture to inform proposals for reform into the MDP.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Philip Dunne's review shows how vital defence is, not only protecting us from global dangers and safeguarding our national prosperity, but also to our economy by creating thousands of specialist and highly-skilled jobs and creating billions in exports.

He paints a clear picture of how defence and defence industry reaches every corner of the UK and is central to employment in so many cities and towns.

He lays down some key challenges to consider as our Modernising Defence Programme continues to ensure defence is the best it can be in a post-Brexit Britain.

The report also includes a number of recommendations for review, including: further research into the impact of significant procurements on national prosperity; building on the strong relationships with industry suppliers; and considering how the UK's world-leading institutions could be given greater entrepreneurial freedoms.

Philip Dunne said:

I am pleased to have been able to undertake this review and am grateful for the help of all those in and outside the Department who have contributed.

This is the first time for some years that an independent report has sought to look at the whole impact of Defence on the UK economy, its devolved nations and regions in England.

Defence has made a number of important steps in meeting its prosperity objective. It makes a major contribution to our economic well-being, with 500,000 people working directly and indirectly in Defence and over 25,500 apprentices developing skills. In several local communities Defence is one of the leading providers of high skilled jobs.

But there is more that can be done as Defence has to adapt to rapidly evolving technological threats, so too should it seize the opportunities to adapt and improve its own processes to help meet the challenges of the high-tech defence future.

I look forward to seeing how the MOD responds to this report and have confirmed to the Defence Secretary that I am willing to revisit in some months' time how the Department has considered and where it has decided to implement these ideas.

Defence makes a huge contribution across all regions of the UK whether as a major employer, a large investor or as a hub for local communities. Defence is the third largest landowner in the country with 220,000 hectares often benefiting remote and rural communities.

The report reveals that around 500,000 people support defence across the UK. It outlines that the UK's defence industry is one of the world's strongest with an annual turnover of £22 billion supporting 260,000 jobs, many of which are highly skilled and well-paid. Most importantly, he acknowledges that defence is a major contributor to the nation's skills and one of the largest employer of apprentices with over 25,500 currently enrolled.

Dunne also acknowledges that, in addition to the MOD budget of almost £37 billion, defence's direct contribution to GDP features over £7 billion of exports generated each year on average. Just recently a shipbuilding contract worth up to £20 billion was signed between BAE Systems and the Australian government for British-designed Type 26 frigates – the biggest Naval defence contract for a decade.

Defence's relationship as a customer and industrial partner with many high growth sectors in the economy generates more activity, particularly in the aerospace, space, cyber, and increasingly the knowledge economy and creative sectors.

Defence is also driving investment in British industry through the National Shipbuilding Strategy, which was launched last year to transform the UK maritime industry and boost the prosperity of regions, shipyards and maritime supply chains across the country. The MOD is also set to launch a Combat Air Strategy to ensure Britain maintains a world-leading combat air capability.

The MOD will now consider the findings of Philip Dunne's report as work continues on the MDP.

News story: MOD launches first ever Defence Domestic Abuse Strategy

The strategy builds on existing work by the military in this area, such as providing specialist training to welfare staff, and will include the launch of a campaign to raise awareness across the Armed Forces and enhancing support for civilian staff.

A national audit of current available support will also be undertaken, to ensure that help will be on hand for those suffering abuse, wherever they are.

The No Defence for Abuse Strategy aims to partner with specialist

organisations to help them understand the unique needs of the service community. It will also work to create a culture of safety and support for those experiencing domestic abuse and their children, taking steps to break down the invisible wall that can deter victims from asking for help.

While there is no evidence to suggest that domestic abuse is any more prolific within the service community than in the general population, UK figures show that at least one in four women and one in six men will be affected by domestic abuse in their lifetime.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Domestic abuse has no place within our communities, and this strategy highlights our commitment to creating an environment where abusive behaviour is simply not tolerated.

We have already made progress by ensuring our welfare staff receive specialist training, and by producing a domestic abuse policy. But there is more that can be done.

Through this strategy, we will work to ensure that the right support is available to those who need it.

The delivery of the new five-year strategy will be focused on three key areas:

- Prevention – raising awareness of domestic abuse and what it entails, encouraging a culture of openness and taking steps to better identify those most at risk
- Intervention – enabling appropriate responses through specialist training, ensuring that MOD policies do not serve as barriers to those seeking help, and providing consistent support
- Partnering – working with external organisations and expert bodies to provide services suitably tailored to the Armed Forces, and learning from best practice

As well as raising awareness and providing support to those affected, the No Defence For Abuse Strategy will work to provide rehabilitation options for perpetrators, and engage with specialist agencies to prevent future abuse. As an employer, the Ministry of Defence will continue to support the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse, and contribute to Government-wide work in developing the first Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill.

For more information and guidance on domestic abuse and the support available to the armed forces community:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-abuse-guidance-and-support>

-for-the-armed-forces-community

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing domestic abuse and need help or support you can find support through your welfare service, via the Police or from specialist organisations, via the National Domestic Violence Helpline, who exist to support anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

If you need help in an emergency, if you fear for your safety or that of someone else you should always call 999 or the relevant emergency number if overseas.

National Domestic Violence Helpline

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk – 0808 2000 247

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's

Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

For advice in Northern Ireland: 0800 917 1414, Scotland: 0800 027 1234 or Wales: 0808 80 10 800

[News story: The Veterans' Gateway records over 10,000 enquiries as it celebrates its first year in service](#)

Designed to offer a one stop shop through which veterans can access advice on a vast range of areas, from housing to health concerns, the Veterans' Gateway has seen over 37,000 click throughs to external sites, with the majority of users requesting advice on finance.

With requests coming from as far afield as Thailand, South Africa and St Maarten in the Caribbean, the service caters to veterans of all ages and backgrounds. 81% of users are under 65 years old, and 56% of web visitors access the site via mobile phones.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are committed to delivering for our veterans, and the Veterans' Gateway is making sure those who served our country are getting the support they and their families need.

This £2m project has helped 10,000 ex-service men and women in its first year, making the transition between service and civilian life

as smooth as possible.

Every day our troops and veterans inspire our nation and it is right we deliver for them in return for the sacrifices they have made.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood today visited the Veterans' Gateway service centre near Cardiff in South Wales. He met with veterans who now work as call handlers, using their experiences in the Armed Forces to benefit others, and giving back to the service community.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

The vast majority of veterans go on to live healthy and fulfilling lives, and most find employment within six months of leaving the military. But we need to offer support to those who find the transition more challenging.

I'm proud to see the great work that goes on behind the scenes of the Veterans' Gateway, and I've been inspired by the community spirit of all who dedicate their time and knowledge to supporting those in need.

The 24-hour service is delivered by a Royal British Legion-led consortium with Poppyscotland, Combat Stress, Connect Assist, the Ministry of Defence and SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity.

Charles Byrne, Director General of The Royal British Legion, on behalf of the Veterans' Gateway consortium, said:

The number of people contacting the Veterans' Gateway continues to grow and we are reaching new groups of people including young veterans who need our support in finding the right information, advice and help.

We have also seen increasing numbers of users being able to self-refer and gain better access to the services available to them. The Veterans' Gateway can become a key resource for veterans and their families seeking support. With over 30 referral partners, it is truly a team of teams.

News story: New equipment helps crack down on illegal activity on Salisbury Plain

The marked 4x4 vehicles will be used later this month during Operation Aston, a joint operation run by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Wiltshire Police and the Royal Military Police to help educate people about the impact their actions have on the Plain and to deter them from taking part in illegal, dangerous and damaging activity.

The vehicles form part of an ongoing project to reduce the number of illegal incursions taking place on the Plain, and to ensure that it remains a safe place for the military to train and for those wanting to use it for legal leisure and recreational activities.



Lt Col Stewart Andrews, DI0's Senior Training Officer hopes that the vehicles will act as a deterrent. Crown Copyright, MOD 2018.

The newly branded vehicles have also been introduced to make staff more visible and prominent and to standardise vehicle livery across the MOD estate.



The new 4x4 vehicles are easy to spot. Crown Copyright, MOD 2018

The fleet, which includes both new vehicles and rebranded older vehicles, will rationalise vehicles and as a result will save the MOD thousands of pounds.

Lt Col Stewart Andrews, the DIO's Senior Training Safety Officer for Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA), said:

The impact that illegal incursions have on the training estate is huge. Not only does it cause environmental damage, but it can disrupt planned military training activities which can impact on the MOD's operational capability and readiness.

We take our responsibility for public safety seriously and we want people to enjoy the Plain, but it can be a dangerous place if you don't follow the rules.

We're hoping that the newly branded vehicles will stand out on the Plain and act as a deterrent, helping us in our attempts to better monitor activity on the Plain and educate people about what they can and can't do.



New hi-vis vest and body camera aimed at identifying repeat offenders. Crown Copyright, MOD 2018.

In addition to the new vehicles, DIO staff on Salisbury Plain have also been issued with new hi-vis vests and body cameras. The cameras have been issued to deter aggression against staff and to record illegal activity, making it easier to identify repeat offenders and provide evidence for prosecutions.