

News story: MSPs discover more about Europe's largest military exercise

Exercise Joint Warrior includes more than 11,600 military personnel from 17 nations and is directed from the Maritime Operations Centre at HMNB Clyde, Scotland's largest military establishment.

The purpose of the visit today (April 27 2018) is to help MSPs to better understand the range of social and welfare issues relevant to Scots-based armed forces personnel, and their families.

Launched by the Parliament's Presiding Officer Ken Macintosh MSP and the Ministry of Defence in April 2017, the Armed Forces Visit Programme has already had successful fact-finding visits to the Army's Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik, RAF Lossiemouth, Moray and Royal Marine Condor, Arbroath.

The MSPs will find out how HMNB Clyde and military training areas across Scotland are used by the Royal Navy, Army and RAF to train together across air, land, sea and cyber domains, practicing "high-end" war-fighting between near-peer adversaries.

The Joint Warrior training scenarios involve multiple sovereign nations disputing resources and territories; counter-terrorism and anti-smuggling activity; information warfare; and evacuation operations. This year it is running from 21 April until 4 May.

The group also found out more about the developments at HMNB Clyde which will see it be the sole home of the UK Submarine Service from 2020 and their visit included time in a submarine control room simulator.

Naval Regional Commander Captain Chris Smith said:

The Armed Forces Visits programme helps MSPs find out more about the role and purpose of the military communities across Scotland and the issues that are important to them.

Although Defence is clearly reserved to Westminster, the Scottish Parliament's policies and decisions affect the day to day lives of all of our Scots-based service personnel.

In addition to being home to the Submarine Service from 2020, Scotland is home to an Army Infantry Operational, Engagement and Resilience Brigade, the RAF's Quick Reaction Alert interceptors (North) and submarine hunting Maritime Patrol Aircraft flying from Lossiemouth.

The MOD has around 10,000 sailors, soldiers and air personnel living permanently in Scotland, supported by 8,000 reservists and civilians. Scottish industry benefits from Defence spending £1.5bn with it each year,

supporting 10,500 private sector jobs in Scotland. The Defence Board confirmed in February 2017, that £1.7 billion would be invested to upgrade Scottish military bases over the next decade.

List of attending MSPs

1. Mr Richard Lohead, Scottish National Party Member for Moray
 2. Mr Lewis Macdonald, Scottish Labour Member for North East Scotland
 3. Ms Jackie Baillie, Scottish Labour Member for Dumbarton
 4. Mr Maurice Corry, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for West Scotland
 5. Mr Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for Central Scotland
 6. Ms Annie Wells, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for Glasgow
 7. Mr Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for Eastwood
 8. Mr Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for Mid Scotland and Fife
 9. Ms Michelle Ballantyne, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for South Scotland
 10. Mr William Bowman, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for North East Scotland
 11. Mr Brian Whittle, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for South Scotland
 12. Mr Gordon Lindhurst, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Member for Lothian
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News story: Sir Simon Bollom appointed Chief Executive of Defence Equipment and Support

Welcoming Simon Bollom's appointment, Stephen Lovegrove, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence said:

I am delighted to announce Simon's appointment as the new Chief Executive of DE&S. His previous roles, as Chief of Materiel (Air) and more recently Chief of Materiel (Ships), means that he will bring to the role a deep understanding and knowledge of DE&S and its business. I wish him every success.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

DE&S is responsible for delivering the substantial, complex and demanding Equipment Programme. I am delighted that Simon has been appointed to this role. I look forward to working with him on the organisation's important task of driving performance in the supply chain, building capability to support our armed forces and delivering value for the taxpayer.

DE&S Chair, Paul Skinner, said:

I would like to welcome Simon into his new role, and I am delighted that we have managed to secure somebody who already has great experience in delivering equipment and equipment support. I look forward to continuing to work with him as we carry on our important work to support the armed forces.

I should also like to thank Michael Bradley for his excellent oversight of DE&S since January following Tony Douglas' departure.

Simon Bollom said:

I am absolutely delighted to have secured this extremely important role. The work of DE&S is vital to our nation and I am proud to have been given the opportunity to lead such an important organisation.

Simon Bollom has held the role of Chief of Materiel (Ships) in DE&S since April 2017. He will take up his new post on the 21st May. The appointment

follows an external recruitment competition.

[Press release: UK gifts historic shipwrecks to Canada](#)

Ownership of the two shipwrecks, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, two of the most archaeologically important shipwrecks in the world, was formally transferred to the Canadian government with the signing of a Deed of Gift at a ceremony today. With this historic transfer, Inuit of Nunavut, who played a key role in their discovery, will also become joint owners of the wrecks and artefacts.

The ceremony at the Canadian Museum of History saw the Canadian Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, accept ownership of the wrecks on behalf of Canada from the UK government, represented by the British High Commissioner Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque CMG. Mr Torsten Diesel, from the Inuit Heritage Trust spoke of the importance of this transfer to Inuit.

The gifting is an historic milestone in the long-standing cooperation between the UK and Canada on the issue.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We have deep historic links with Canada and this gift is testament to our prospering relationship.

The story behind these vessels is both fascinating and incredibly important to the history of both our nations. The UK joined forces with the Canadian government and Inuit population to search for these ships for 172 years and I'm delighted they will now be protected for future generations.

The two ships, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin, set sail from England in 1845 on an ill-fated voyage through the Canadian Arctic to find the Northwest Passage. During the treacherous journey, the ships became trapped in thick sea ice. The crews abandoned the ships to trek overland to safety, but tragically none survived.

Despite many attempts to locate the wrecks, they proved elusive for over 172 years. In 1997, the UK and Canadian governments signed an agreement giving custody and control of the wrecks and their contents to Canada, while still remaining property of the UK.

Thanks to Inuit knowledge of the area, along with state of the art technology, Erebus was finally located in 2014 and Terror two years later in 2016 in shallow Arctic Waters.

In recognition of this momentous discovery, the British and Canadian governments jointly settled a new agreement. As of 26 April 2018, ownership of the vessels has been formally transferred to the government of Canada, and by extension, the Inuit Heritage Trust.

Artefacts from the wrecks will be available for display at museums in both countries. Currently there are examples on display at the Canadian Museum of History as part of the "Death in the Ice" exhibit.

Canadian Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna said:

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the United Kingdom for this exceptional gift of the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror and all yet-to-be discovered artifacts. Moving forward, we will work with the Inuit Heritage Trust to ensure these historic treasures are protected, and that the intriguing and expanding story of the Franklin Expedition continues to be shared with Canada and the world.

Press release: Defence Secretary launches first ever Veterans Strategy and new cross-Government Veterans Unit

The ground-breaking strategy has been commissioned by the Defence Secretary and today it will be confirmed that a new Veterans Unit with input from across Whitehall will be created.

The Veterans Unit will champion the changing needs of the ex-service community and ensure action is taken to meet these.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We have a golden opportunity to ensure our veterans get a fair deal for their service and sacrifice to our country.

The vast majority of those leaving the Armed Forces go on to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives, which is a testament to their

professionalism and resilience. However, for those who need help it is right that we step forward, create new opportunities, and remind them that they are not alone.

Everybody across our society has a responsibility to make sure we protect those who protected us.

Mr Williamson today urged other departments and the devolved administrations to meet the evolving needs of former service personnel from across the UK.

The Defence Secretary announced his new initiatives during a meeting of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, which was established last year to get the whole of Government behind the Armed Forces Covenant.

Over the next decade, the veterans population will experience a dramatic generational shift from the Second World War and conscripted generation to the younger, all professional cohort both with vastly differing needs. A dedicated team will now begin engaging with stakeholders and the veterans' community ahead of releasing the strategy in the autumn.

The Defence Secretary has identified several key pinch-points that affect a small but significant number of veterans and asked the new team and Ministerial Board to prioritise these issues:

- Debt – How we can best help veterans meet the financial demands of civilian life. This issue represents the highest percentage of calls to the Veterans Gateway.
- Housing- How to offer the best advice for those leaving the Armed Forces. Whilst the Covenant already puts an obligation on local authorities to ensure they provide fair access to housing for veterans there are still a small number of individuals that require further support.
- Social Isolation – Supporting community integration for those who feel a loss of camaraderie upon leaving the Armed Forces. Younger veterans can struggle with a disassociation from civilian life so the new strategy will focus on connecting with the Loneliness Strategy to help address this.
- Mental and Physical Wellbeing – Ensuring this is maximised, especially for those with lasting physical or mental health issues as a result of their service.
- Public Perception – Improving how veterans are viewed, perceptions are often inaccurate, outdated or clichéd and do not recognise that most veterans are proud members of our society with a huge amount to offer.

At the inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Board last autumn each Department represented was asked to nominate a Minister to lead on veterans issues and the Armed Forces Covenant. These were announced at today's meeting and will help to ensure the new Veterans Strategy is implemented across Government.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Tobias Ellwood said:

I am pleased to have seen real progress made since the last meeting of the Ministerial Board, including a significant cross-government effort to ensure our veterans are in no way disadvantaged by their previous career.

Recent initiatives, such as the troops to teachers bursary, the new veterans ID cards and the growing popularity of the Veterans Gateway are all making a practical difference and I look forward to seeing how this new strategy can help build on the Armed Forces Covenant to show that our commitment to our brave men and women lasts long after they have left service.

News story: Defence Secretary honours allies Australian and New Zealand on Anzac Day

Veterans from both countries gathered to mark Anzac Day, which honours the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War.

ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. The soldiers in those forces quickly became known as Anzacs, taking pride in the name.

After laying a wreath at the Cenotaph the Defence Secretary attended a service of commemoration and thanksgiving alongside military personnel at Westminster Abbey.



Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson at Anzac Day memorial

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

On Anzac Day, we remember the sacrifice and courage of troops from Australia and New Zealand. Almost a century has passed since the end of the First World War and Britain is proud to have served side-by-side with them in many conflicts over the last 100 years. Our alliance is one of the most constant and enduring military partnerships in history, one which will continue to protect our shared values and commit to make the world a safer, more secure place.

Gavin Williamson has met with his counterparts from Australia and New Zealand earlier this year to examine how allies can continue to work together against evolving threats.

Currently the UK partners with both Australia and New Zealand in a number of ways, including the UN peacekeeping mission to South Sudan, uniting in the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh, committing to establish stability in Syria and Afghanistan, and combining on humanitarian missions such as Ebola in Sierra Leone.

To provide security to the seas, the UK works side-by-side with Australia and New Zealand as part of the Combined Maritime Force, to tackle drug and weapon smugglers. Additionally, as part of our strengthening relationship the Royal Navy ship HMS Sutherland visited Australia in February and March, allowing

further opportunities for our naval forces to collaborate.



Alongside the Foreign Secretary, Gavin Williamson laid a wreath to mark the wartime service of Britain's closest allies Australia and New Zealand.

Our shared values with Australia and New Zealand have facilitated more than one hundred people from all three services enrolling on exchanges programmes between countries, to encourage joint learning. Alongside this participation we continue to work together on science, technology and defence equipment.