

# News story: British Army's rifle set for multi-million-pound upgrade

The SA80 A2 hand held assault weapon will be upgraded into the A3 model under the Mid Life Improvement (MLI) project, which will ensure the rifle has the enhancements needed to remain in service until 2025 and beyond.

An initial investment of £5.4 million for the project, which will be carried out by Heckler and Koch, will help sustain around 20 highly skilled jobs at the Nottingham Small Arms Factory owned by the company.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

This multi-million-pound upgrade will give our Army a lighter, more hardwearing, better-camouflaged combat rifle so our soldiers can perform on the frontline of some of the most dangerous locations across the world. This investment is also a boost to Nottingham's highly-skilled gun-makers who proudly support our troops in their task to protect our country in the face of intensifying threats.

The changes to the rifle include:

- A more durable hardwearing coating in a "Flat Dark Earth" colour offering better camouflage in a range of environments.
- The A3 is 100g lighter than the A2 and has a more streamlined fore grip making the weapon easier to handle.
- The A3 rifle has a bracket to secure new innovative low light sights which can clip on or in front of the day sight without the need to remove it. These sights are smaller, lighter and require fewer batteries whilst operating just as effectively in low light/night conditions.

Director Land Equipment at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Major General Colin McClean said:

The SA80 is a battle proven weapon used by the UK Armed Forces on operations all over the world. The upgrade will build upon the rifle's state-of-the-art features enhancing accuracy and consistency. The Mid Life Improvement project will ensure that our troops have the right equipment at the right time.

The MLI project will see 5,000 weapons upgraded initially with the intent to upgrade more weapons in the future. The fielding of the first tranche began in February.

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## News story: Royal Navy ships fulfil international duty in Asia Pacific

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has announced today that HMS Albion has deployed to North East Asia to safeguard free trade, partake in joint training and exercises, and support UN sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our Armed Forces are at the forefront of Global Britain, and the deployment of HMS Albion, Sutherland and Argyll demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our international responsibilities and to maintaining peace, security and prosperity in the region.

Until North Korea matches its words with concrete actions, the UK will continue working closely with partners and allies to keep up pressure and strictly enforce existing sanctions, ensuring not only regional security but that of the UK as well.

In the coming months HMS Albion, alongside HMS Sutherland, will be contributing to the international efforts to monitor prohibited trading at sea by the DPRK, which provides a major source of funding for its illegal nuclear programme.

While in the region, both vessels will visit several ports and take part in joint training with allies and partners, including the US, the Republic of Korea and Japan.

HMS Argyll will arrive in the region later in the year, when she will participate in a Five Power Defence Arrangements exercise with Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore before also travelling to North East Asia for further joint training and exercises.

The deployment of these three ships will mean that the Royal Navy will have a vessel in the strategically critical Asia-Pacific region for the first time since 2013 and will have an almost unbroken presence there this year.

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## [News story: Joint Forces Command seeks out innovation in Silicon Valley](#)

General Deverell met with academics, innovation units, tech startups and investors in San Diego, Los Angeles, Silicon Valley, and San Francisco. He also visited the US Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR).

As the Ministry of Defence's information command, Joint Forces Command (JFC) seeks to explore innovative new technology already being developed by partners, allies and the private sector. The mission for the trip was to explore how artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, data analytics and autonomy could be used to bring advantage to the joint force.

Accompanying General Deverell on the trip was Lieutenant Colonel Henry Willi, from JFC's innovation unit, the [jHub](#).

While visiting the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, they had a tour of its Simulation Center for Advanced Clinical Skills, an immersive environment equipped with the latest in human patient simulators and medical devices. Here, General Deverell took part in a simulated operation on a lifelike mannequin patient. He then met representatives from the Cedars-Sinai Health System accelerator, which aims to help technology innovators turn their ideas into practical solutions that can improve the lives of patients around the world.



CedarsSinai Simulation Center for Advanced Clinical Skills. Crown Copyright 2018.

In Silicon Valley, they met with the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx), a United States Department of Defense organisation focused on accelerating commercial technologies to the US military. Here they were briefed on DIUx's approach to developing innovation, including how its innovation ecosystem benefits from strong links that have been developed with investors.

General Deverell also met with tech startup companies, including Pilot AI, Shield AI and Orbital Insight.

Pilot AI has developed a platform to provide artificial intelligence to devices with low computing power, sufficient to detect people, vehicles, buildings and weapons.

Shield AI, have developed Hivemind, an artificial intelligence platform that enables robots to see, reason about and search the world. Shield AI's first product, Nova, is a Hivemind powered drone that searches buildings, whilst simultaneously streaming video and generating maps.

With more data than ever before being generated by satellites, drones, balloons, and other unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), Orbital Insight builds software that interprets this data to help businesses and governments to make better business and policy decisions.

Speaking about JFC's appetite for innovation, General Deverell said:

Joint Forces Command aims to provide the UK Armed Forces with an edge over adversaries for wars in the information age. This trip to one of the world's innovation capitals helps us secure advantage for the joint force.

He added:

By speaking to individuals who are already developing some of the most advanced technology in the world, we are closer to understanding how this can be applied in a military setting. We are preparing JFC and wider UK Defence for a future that counts technology such as AI, machine learning and autonomy as part of our armoury, both to deter our enemies and to protect our people.

The jHub, was created to enhance and improve the operation of the UK armed forces through innovation. This trip has reinforced my view that innovation is fundamental to Joint Force Advantage.

DIUx is an impressive player in the innovation ecosystem, so the jHub will forge closer bonds with them through a new liaison officer position.

JFC's [jHub](#) is keen to speak to companies who have solutions which could be adapted and adopted by the military customer in months rather than years. If you would like to get in touch with the jHub, please email [jhub@official.mod.uk](mailto:jhub@official.mod.uk)

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## [News story: Pan-London Launch of Project Servator](#)

On Thursday 5 April 2018, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) hosted a formal launch event at the Tower of London to mark the London wide introduction of Project Servator. The Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) Whitehall Project Servator team attended the launch, which was followed by a joint Servator deployment with officers from the MPS and British Transport Police (BTP) in and around Parliament Square.

Project Servator is a policing tactic that is designed to deter, detect and disrupt all forms of criminal activity, including terrorism. Project Servator sees the deployment of specially trained highly visible and covert police officers, supported by other resources such as dogs, firearms officers, marine police units, plain clothes officers, vehicle checkpoints, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and CCTV.



Joint Project Servator deployment at Westminster. MOD Crown Copyright.

The MDP has had a fully trained Project Servator team operating from its Whitehall station since February 2018 and work in partnership with colleagues in the MPS and BTP on Servator deployments in and around the Whitehall area.



MDP Deputy Chief Constable (right) with colleagues from Metropolitan Police Service and City of London Police. MOD Crown Copyright.

The MDP Deputy Chief Constable Peter Terry, who attended the MPS Servator launch event, said:

The Ministry of Defence Police is delighted to be working together with our colleagues in the Metropolitan Police Service, British Transport Police and the City of London Police on the implementation of Project Servator in London. Our joint Servator deployments in and around Whitehall add an extra dimension to the existing security arrangements that are already in place and provide a highly visible and reassuring police presence for the public.

The positive feedback we have received from our customers and the public testifies to the positive impact of Project Servator in providing reassurance and encouraging community engagement.

In addition to Whitehall, the MDP also has Project Servator teams operating at the Atomic Weapons Establishment sites in Berkshire and at Portsmouth

Naval Base. We are also preparing to launch Project Servator on the Clyde in conjunction with Police Scotland.

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## [News story: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle meet Invictus Games UK Team hopefuls](#)

His Royal Highness Prince Harry and Ms Meghan Markle met Invictus Games hopefuls today at the University of Bath Sports Training Village, ahead of the fourth Invictus Games being held down under in Sydney, Australia this October.

The Invictus Games, which have previously been held in London, Orlando and Toronto, set out to harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for our wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women.

Defence Minister, Tobias Ellwood, also met 2018 hopefuls today to see how they are using sport as part of their recovery journey.

Across the weekend, 5 – 8 April, hopefuls who have suffered a life-changing injury or illness will trial in nine different sports including Athletics, Archery, Wheelchair Basketball, Road Cycling, Powerlifting, Indoor Rowing, Wheelchair Rugby, Swimming and Sitting Volleyball. Last week (28-29 March), hopefuls also trialled in a new sport for the 2018 games; Sailing.

More hopefuls than ever before (451) have applied to take part in the 2018 Invictus Games and all hope to be selected as part of the 72-strong UK team that will head to Sydney. The UK team will be selected based on the benefit the Invictus Games will give an individual as part of their recovery, combined with performance and commitment to training.

The UK delegation to the 2018 Invictus Games is once again being delivered by a partnership comprising the Ministry of Defence, Help for Heroes and The Royal British Legion.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I wish all our serving troops and veterans taking part in this year's trials the best of luck. The Invictus Games demonstrate the positive impact of sport in the recovery process, and provide inspiration and opportunity to those that have suffered life changing injuries and illnesses whilst serving their country and keeping Britain safe.

The MOD is a partner in the [Defence Recovery Capability](#), a programme which helps wounded, injured and sick Service personnel either return to duty from injury or provides a mechanism to help them back into civilian life – link. A key activity of the Defence Recovery Capability is the Battle Back programme, an MOD initiative that delivers an adaptive sport and adventurous training programme.

The [Invictus Games Sydney 2018](#) will take place from 20 – 27 October.