

[News story: Rededication and burial services for first world war soldiers](#)

Burial service for soldier of the first world war

A burial service will be held in the morning of Tuesday 27 March at Bailleul Road East Cemetery, France for 1 soldier of the first world war.

The remains of a soldier of the Royal Scots were discovered by a team of workmen near to Athiens. Given the location of where the remains were found it is a possibility that this soldier was killed during the Battle of Arras in April 1917. However there are still too many soldiers of the Royal Scots missing from that battle to identify this soldier.

The service has been organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and will be attended by British Defence Staff, regimental representatives from The Royal Regiment of Scotland and local dignitaries. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission will be providing the headstone.

Rededication service for Serjeant John MacKenzie MM

A rededication service will be held in the afternoon of Tuesday 27 March at Anneux British Cemetery, France for Serjeant John Mackenzie MM.

Serjeant John MacKenzie MM was just 21 years old when he died on 25 March 1918, a few days after the start of the German Spring Offensive. Having been wounded he was taken prisoner and died of his wounds in Inchy-en-Artois. Until recently the location of Serjeant MacKenzie's grave remained unknown and he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial. However research has shown that he is in fact buried in Anneux British Cemetery.

The service has been organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and will be attended by British Defence Staff, members of the family, regimental representatives from The Royal Regiment of Scotland and local dignitaries. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission will be providing the headstone.

Burial service for soldiers of the first world war

A burial service will be held on in the morning of Wednesday 28 March at Orchard Dump Cemetery, France, for soldiers of the first world war.

The remains of two soldiers of the Royal Scots were discovered by a farmer near to Haisnes. The location of where the remains were found makes it possible that these soldiers were killed during the Battle of Loos in September 1915. However there are still too many soldiers of the Royal Scots missing from that battle to identify these soldiers.

These 2 members of the Royal Scots will be buried alongside an unknown

soldier of an unknown regiment. His remains were found by a farmer near to the former Hohenzollern Redoubt, a German defensive position which was fought over several times.

The remains of a soldier of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were discovered by a farmer in Cuinchy. Again, given the location of where the remains were found it is a possibility that this soldier was killed during the Battle of Loos in September 1915. However there are still too many soldiers of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders missing from that battle to identify this soldier.

A burial service will be held on in the afternoon of Wednesday 28 March at Woburn Abbey Cemetery, France, for a soldier of the First World War.

The services have been organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and will be attended by British Defence Staff, members of the family, regimental representatives from The Royal Regiment of Scotland and local dignitaries. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission will be providing the headstones.

News story: Afghan security and stability remains top of UK agenda

The security, development and governance of Afghanistan remains crucial to reducing the terrorist threat to the UK, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed in his first visit to Afghanistan.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

A secure Afghanistan will help keep the streets of Britain safe. Building the security services that will be the foundation of stability and peace in Afghanistan remains top of our agenda and I have seen first-hand the crucial role our brave Armed Forces are playing in realising that vision.

In his meeting with Minister of Defence Bahrami, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed the UK commitment to Afghanistan, citing the continued funding for the Afghanistan National Security Forces, our support for the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) and the recent uplift of UK troops to around 650.

Mr Williamson also met with UK personnel who are based at ANAOA in Qargha, on the western outskirts of Kabul. They are helping to train the next generation of Afghanistan's military leaders through mentoring training staff and

instilling the Sandhurst ethos at the academy.

More than 3,000 officers have passed out of the academy since 2013, and, this year, ANAOA has nearly as many female cadets in training as have graduated in total since the academy opened.

The Defence Secretary also met UK troops who lead the Kabul Security Force (KSF), which provides force protection for NATO staff in Kabul. In last five weeks alone, the KSF have undertaken over 2,800 protection journeys and Mr Williamson experienced first-hand the vital role they play, travelling with UK personnel in a Foxhound armoured vehicle.

He also commended their efforts in responding to some of the recent terrorist attacks in Kabul, in which the KSF supported Afghan Security Forces by evacuating guests to safety extracted of guests following the Intercontinental Hotel terrorist attack and provided first aid to Afghan soldiers following an attack on an Afghan Army compound in January.

The UK has played an important role in supporting Afghanistan over the last 16 years and is committed to continuing this in the future. Through the NATO Resolute Support Mission, the support the UK provides on issues such as security, development and governance is crucial to building a stable state and reducing the terrorist threat to the UK.

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[News story: UK-US military links strengthened after ministerial visit to Washington DC](#)

Increased co-operation between the nations was agreed in key meetings with the American Secretary of the Army, Mark Esper, and Secretary of the Navy, Richard Spencer.

Russia, cyber warfare and the ongoing fight against Daesh were also on the agenda during discussions in Washington this week.

Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

British and American personnel are standing side by side, defending our shared values around the world. We are countering Russian aggression, defeating Daesh and strengthening NATO; and our special relationship will continue to strengthen as we face these evolving

threats together.

Both nations are undergoing significant upgrades in defence policy, with the UK currently consulting on its Modernising Defence Programme and the US publishing its National Defense Strategy in January. The two programmes are already closely aligned, with a strong emphasis on modernising forces to tackle the increasing shared threats faced on several fronts, while strengthening international alliances and forging new ones.

The US and UK are the two largest contributors to NATO, and among just five countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence. Both countries have been calling on other nations to match this contribution, ahead of the NATO summit in July.

The UK's defence trade partnership with the US is worth £3billion, including collaboration on several key projects such as the F-35 programme, Unmanned Air Systems and a Common Missile Compartment for UK-US Ballistic Missile Submarines.

An even closer bond is expected after Brexit, as the UK establishes new relationships and trade deals outside of Europe.

The Minister will head to the Arctic Circle this weekend to observe the annual Ice Exercise (ICEX) between the British and US navies, highlighting the capability of both nations' submarines to operate in the most extreme conditions.

Minister for Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, added:

From partnering on the F-35 programme, to training together in Norway, our Navies and Marines continuously build capability together, and ICEX is another important opportunity for our two nations to show what we can do.

[News story: Defence Minister outlines expanded mental health provision for Armed Forces and veterans](#)

Speaking at a conference on mental health at King's College London yesterday, Mr Ellwood also debunked several myths around veterans, saying that ex-forces personnel are not mad, bad and sad, but make a vital contribution to society.

The MOD recently increased funding for mental health provision for military

personnel by £20 million over the next ten years.

A new helpline for service personnel has also been established. The new number – 0800 323 4444 is backed up by a major internal communications campaign on mental fitness across the services.

Combat Stress – the leading veterans mental health charity – has been commissioned to run the new helpline service for serving troops 24 hours a day.

The extra £2-million a year for the next ten years to improve mental health services in the Armed Forces is on top of the £20-million per year that is currently committed. The additional money, which brings the total planned spending to £220-million over the next decade, will be put towards an increase in mental health specialists and bolstering existing provision.

The MOD currently has a network of 20 ‘hub and spoke’ mental health centres, comprising of 11 hubs and a further nine teams. Regular visiting clinics are also held at other military centres across the country.

Last year the MOD launched its [Defence Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) focusing on preventative measures to protect our personnel. MOD also partnered with the Royal Foundation, a charity setup by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, to improve training and education alongside the strategy to promote mental fitness.

There are a range of services provided by partners working with MOD and through the Armed Forces Covenant, including the NHS, other Government departments and charities which serving personnel, veterans, and their families can access.

You can read the executive summary of the strategy [here](#)

You can read the full strategy [here](#)