

News story: MOD submits final Typhoon proposal to Belgium

The proposal comes with the full support of the governments of the four Eurofighter nations – Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – as partners in Europe’s largest collaborative military aircraft programme.

The proposal includes 34 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, underpinned by the offer of a deep strategic, defence and industrial partnership between the Governments of Belgium and the UK.

Speaking in Brussels, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

These proven jets offer Belgium a formidable capability which forms the backbone of European air power, as well as a comprehensive long-term defence and industrial partnership with the UK. A unique partnership with the RAF and integration with our world-leading support service mean Belgium’s selection of the Typhoon would be a powerful demonstration of us working together to support security across the continent in the face of intensifying threats.

Speaking at the press conference in-country, Air Vice Marshal Keith Bethell said:

Our world-class Typhoon has led the way in combat air power and this demonstrates the continued confidence in the capability the Typhoon has to offer. With more than 20,000 flying hours on global operations to date, the Typhoon offers unparalleled reliability and proven interoperability with our allies

As well as the jets, the UK are offering Belgium the opportunity to benefit from the RAF’s experience of over ten years operating the Typhoon, and to further strengthen over 70 years of co-operation between the two forces. It proposes integration with the RAF’s Typhoon support arrangements which is considered the most cost-effective next generation combat aircraft support service. The proposal also includes a comprehensive package including a training partnership which would see personnel from Belgium and the UK jointly train and exercise together.

The UK MOD is leading the proposal on behalf of the Eurofighter Typhoon partner nations and companies. The invitation from Belgium to submit a final offer demonstrates the strong confidence in the jet. The proposal to Belgium represents the most inclusive international equipment partnership presented to another European partner by the Eurofighter Typhoon programme.

The proposal also offers Belgium the opportunity to establish a National

Network Cyber Centre, a Cyber Innovation Centre and a Cyber Research Partnership, all underpinned by a partnership between the UK and Belgian governments.

As 'the true European solution to meet Belgium's Air Combat Capability Program', the selection of the Typhoon would also act as a catalyst for greater aerospace and defence industrial cooperation across Europe. There would be opportunities for Belgian industry to work more closely with the Eurofighter Typhoon industrial partners which include some of Europe's largest defence companies. Through closer industrial cooperation Belgium and Belgian industry would also be positioned for partnership in the development of next generation combat air capabilities.

The Typhoon is a highly capable, combat proven, air defence and ground attack aircraft with full swing-role capabilities. In addition to supporting RAF operations protecting the UK in the skies above Britain and globally, the Typhoon has already been purchased by nine nations around the world. Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson was in Qatar at the end of last year to witness Qatar's purchase of 24 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft which will help sustain thousands of jobs in the UK and across Europe.

[News story: Defence Minister presents Nepalese President with Gurkha Annual Report](#)

The Minister for the Armed Forces – who served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers himself – handed the document, which provides an update on the state of the Brigade and their work, to the Right Honourable Bidya Devi Bhandari on Monday.

It shows that the Brigade currently boasts more numbers than ever before, and this year commemorated Gurkha troops reaching the summit of Everest for the first time in their history.

His visit coincided with the completion of local, provincial and parliamentary elections under a new constitution, helping to secure a more peaceful, united and democratic Nepal.

Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

Britain has long supported Nepal's stability and prosperity, and I am delighted to be here at such a pivotal moment in its history. I look forward to continuing the strong bond between our nations, which is underpinned by the magnificent work of our Gurkha troops.

For more than 200 years, Gurkhas have been an integral part of the British Armed Forces – fighting in the First and Second World Wars, the Falklands, Afghanistan and Iraq and winning 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest British award for gallantry.

They were also among the first on the scene when Nepal was hit by a devastating 7.8 earthquake in 2015, helping to rebuild communities and provide aid to those left homeless.

As well as President Bhandari, the Minister also met Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Defence Minister Bhimsen Das Pradhan, and other senior military and political figures to strengthen defence and bilateral ties.

[News story: Defence Secretary hails modern partnership with Australia](#)

In his first trip to Australia as Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Williamson met his counterpart, Minister for Defence, Marise Payne, in Sydney. They examined how both allies can continue to adapt in the face of cyber-attacks and nuclear threats from North Korea and how best to counter global terrorism.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Britain and Australia both face intensifying, complex and evolving threats to our way of life. That is why it is so important our two countries stand side-by-side to stay ahead of those who want to harm us.

Two Royal Navy warships, HMS Sutherland and HMS Argyll, are heading to the region to continue the pressure campaign on North Korea, demonstrating Britain's role on the international stage.

We have a long and historic relationship with Australia but today we are modern, equal, and global powers with shared values and a commitment to make the world a safer place.

As part of this modern partnership the UK and Australia:

- Have more than one hundred people from all three services on exchange programmes between our nations, working together and learning from each other;

- Are part of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing organisation and work together on tackling shared threats;
- Hold annual meetings of foreign and defence ministers (AUKMIN) to coordinate responses to shared threats, such as Daesh;
- Work together on the mission to establish stability in Syria and Afghanistan, to which Australia is the largest non-NATO contributor;
- Combine on humanitarian missions, such as: the two Malaysian airline incidents, Ebola in Sierra Leone and disaster relief in Vanuatu;
- Police the seas as part of the Combined Maritime Forces, to provide security and stability on the seas, including tackling drug and weapon smugglers;
- Work together on science and technology, and defence equipment;
- Additionally, Royal Navy ship HMS Sutherland will visit Australia in February and March, allowing further opportunities for the two naval forces to collaborate.

The UK Defence Secretary also met Minister for Defence Industry, Christopher Pyne, in Canberra today (Monday 12 Feb) to discuss exciting new defence export opportunities as Britain prepares to leave the European Union.

The Type 26 Global Combat Ship is a key example of this and has been shortlisted for Australia's Future Frigate Programme. The cutting-edge warship would not only boost the partnership between the two countries, but would bolster Australia ballistic missile defences and give them an unrivalled anti-submarine warfare capability to face growing underwater threats.

Mr Williamson went on to meet Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Michael McCormack, to talk about issues impacting and sharing research on Veterans and the successes of the British Armed Forces Covenant.

Australian forces recently solved a 103-year-old mystery when they discovered His Majesty's Australian Submarine AE1, the first Allied submarine lost in World War One, off the coast of Papua New Guinea.

News story: New plans for military flexible working become law

The measures, which achieved Royal Assent on Thursday, will allow some military personnel to serve part-time for defined periods.

Consultation within the Armed Forces has found that personnel want more choice over the way they serve when their personal circumstances change, such as having young children, needing to care for elderly relatives, or taking on further training and education.

Personnel will also be able to restrict the amount of time they spend away from their home base and their families.

The plans, which will come into effect in 2019, are part of a range of measures the Armed Forces are implementing to become more modern and diverse.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This change will make it significantly easier for our dedicated Armed Forces to raise their children, care for elderly relatives, or look after an ill family member.

This will ensure we are able to retain and recruit the brightest and the best from all backgrounds to keep Britain safe.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Flexible work is key to retaining our expert personnel who we've invested in during their military career.

Personnel have told us they want more flexibility and we have listened – that's what this Act delivers.

The flexible working measures are designed so that they won't impact the military's ability to deliver its core tasks of defending the country. Applications for part-time service and restricted separation will be assessed against the need of the Armed Forces and personnel would be required to deploy on operations should the need arise, such as in cases of national emergency.

Internal MOD surveys have consistently reported the impact of service on family and personal life is the most important factor that might influence

them to leave.

Flexible working will help retain personnel, and a recent survey found that 70% of respondents were supportive of more opportunities for flexible working, with 71% interested in taking up such opportunities in the future.

The measures are part of military modernisation, aiming to retain personnel who have been trained and have gained important experience, particularly on operations, rather than having them leave for civilian life.

96% of UK employers already offer flexible working for some of their employees and research has found that offering flexible working encourages people to stay with their current employer.

News story: Improvements to Mare Harbour jetty in Falklands complete

Work to upgrade the jetty in Mare Harbour was officially opened recently by Geoff Robson, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Chief Operating Officer.

The improvements to the roll on roll off jetty are part of a £19 million contract with VolkerStevin for design and construction.

The new facility will enable larger 20,000 tonne Point Class vessels to berth in the harbour, delivering up to 85% of the military supplies such as hardware, food, building materials and commercial freight needed on the Islands. The new berthing facilities on the jetty will allow goods to safely roll on and roll off from the Falkland Islands Resupply Ships (FIRS). The deliveries made by these ships are vital to military capability, maintaining life on the Islands and to ensuring the complex schedule of building and development works continue as planned.

In addition to the jetty, VolkerStevin has also replaced walkways along the berth, lighting improvements, capstans and a PA system. Firefighting capabilities have been upgraded as well.

This £19m contract is part of a £180 million overall investment by DIO to improve facilities on the Islands over the next 10 years. Additional works include improvements to the power station at Mount Pleasant Complex as well as new services accommodation at the 3 Remote Radar Heads on the Islands. There are currently around 1,200 military and civilian personnel based in the Falklands supporting defensive air, naval and land assets, including RAF Typhoon aircraft, helicopters, Royal Navy patrol vessels and an Army infantry company.

Minister for Defence, People and Veterans, Tobias Ellwood said:

The opening of this new jetty is an important milestone in our 10 year programme to modernise defence infrastructure on the Falklands. We're investing £180 million on the Islands that will benefit its residents, as well as service personnel and their families who live, work and train there.

David Graham, Deputy Head of International Projects at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, said:

This new jetty will improve military capability in the Falklands as the previous harbour berth was unsuitable for the new Point Class ships. This significant investment by DIO will modernise defence infrastructure in the Falklands for years to come as well as enhancing life on the Island for our personnel and their families.

Commander Bill Dawson, Queen's Harbour Master, East Cove Port said:

Improving our RoRo facility here has been vitally important, and allows us to safely berth the much larger vessels needed to sustain our military capability here in the Falkland Islands. We were delighted that DIO appointed the experienced maritime company, VolkerStevin, as their prime contractors, a clear investment in proven quality. In particular their safety and environmental awareness has been excellent, and the opportunity to work with Falkland sub contractors has been a really important initiative. Delivery of the new facilities here at East Cove Port, to time and very high quality, is the outcome of good project management by the prime contractor, and an excellent relationship with myself and the port as clients. We now have a really robust facility that will last for many years to come.

Terry O'Connor, operations director and DIO account director for VolkerStevin said:

We are delighted to have handed over the Ro-Ro berth a month early, this latest berth upgrade continues our successful relationship with the DIO and the Royal Navy.