

News story: UK and Japan strengthen defence ties

The Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary met their Japanese counterparts at Greenwich Naval College, a building that symbolises the historic maritime links between the two countries, to strengthen security and defence cooperation.

During the meeting, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson confirmed that HMS Sutherland will visit Japan next year. HMS Argyll will also be sent to the country to take part in exercises next year, as announced by the Prime Minister Theresa May in August 2017.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Japan is one of our closest partners in the Asia Pacific region and as tension grows on the Korean peninsula, our relationship is vitally important.

2018 will mark the year UK and Japanese forces work even more closely together, with two of our Royal Navy frigates visiting the country and UK troops training on Japanese soil for the very first time.

Both countries agreed a 3-year defence cooperation plan, which will deliver on the commitment made by Prime Minister Theresa May and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in August 2017 to work closer together on defence issues. It demonstrates the UK's dedication to working with Japan as a long term security partner, including activity across air, land and sea in the Asia Pacific region. Alongside the Naval deployments the UK will:

- Send around 45 British Army personnel to train with Japanese soldiers next year, marking the first time ever that UK personnel have exercised on Japanese soil and the first occasion that non-US troops have exercised in the country.
- Continue to work closely with the Japanese Self-Defense Air Force, with plans for future joint-working after the successful deployment of RAF Typhoons to Japan last year.

Mr Williamson also confirmed that the UK will send a Royal Navy captain and five medics to the US-led Pacific Partnership deployment which will provide humanitarian and disaster relief training to military and civilian organisations.

Following the meeting, Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin will also take Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera to Portsmouth Naval Base for the first time on Friday, to embark on a tour of the world-class aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, which was formally commissioned into the Royal Navy just last week.

[News story: Defence Minister reveals new RAF Squadron at Qatar event](#)

[Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson was in Doha last weekend](#), where he agreed a package of training and co-operation between the British and Qatari Air Forces which will see them working together more regularly as part of the multi-billion pound deal to supply the country with 24 Typhoon aircraft.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin expanded on that agreement at a State of Qatar National Day reception in London today. She revealed that a new UK-based Typhoon joint squadron will be called No. 12 squadron, and that it will temporarily integrate Qatari personnel, including pilots and ground-crew based at RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

Qatar proudly becomes the ninth nation to buy the world's leading multi-role combat aircraft.

The formation of a joint squadron means our RAF will take the lead in providing training and support to the Qatari Emiri Air Force as it brings the Typhoon into service.

The Qataris will not be a permanent part of the squadron, but will be integrated ahead of the delivery of the Typhoon aircraft. The move will provide the country with valuable joint frontline experience on an RAF Typhoon Squadron and speed up their preparation for when their own jets are delivered.

The UK and Qatar already share a close defence relationship, with a joint-exercise between the Royal Air Force and Qatar Air force just last week seeing Typhoon aircraft fly over the Arabian Peninsula. Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin visited the country at the end of last month, where she met the pilots taking part in the exercise.

The two countries share mutual interests in countering violent extremism, and ensuring stability in the region, and this formation will further reinforce those ties by helping to prevent terrorism from spreading and protecting the

prosperity and security of the UK at home. The new 12 squadron is currently operating Tornados, and will transition to the future Typhoon force.

The biggest export deal for the Typhoon project in a decade, valued at around £6 billion and sustaining thousands of UK jobs, Qatar is the ninth country to purchase the Typhoon. This year also saw the first delivered to Oman, whilst the MOD is leading the offer to replace Belgium's F-16s with the jets and continues to discuss the prospect of a second batch of sales to Saudi Arabia, as it continues to bang the drum for Britain's world-leading aerospace industry around the world.

Notes to editors

- Qatar National Day is on Monday 18 December. Today's reception at The Savoy Hotel on The Strand was hosted to celebrate the occasion.

News story: The Sun Military Awards are back to salute the Armed Forces

Tonight, the milestone ceremony was attended by celebrities, entertainers and politicians who recognised the excellence of the Armed Forces.

The special ceremony recognised the hard work and bravery of UK servicemen and women. It was hosted by television presenter Lorraine Kelly at the historic Banqueting House in Whitehall, London.

She was joined by celebrities from the worlds of sport, entertainment and politics.

Earlier in the day, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson hosted the nominees at a special reception at 10 Downing Street.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This is our chance to honour all those who keep us safe. They truly are the best of British.

This year's nominees received awards such as Best Reservist – honouring individuals who have gone above and beyond from any branch, at home or abroad. Also featured was the Overcoming Adversity award which recognises an individual who has rose above substantial obstacles in their life and continued their exceptional service despite it.

During tonight's awards, the RAF Reaper Force won the Hero Overseas Unit award for its commitment to defeating Daesh and saving countless lives.

Alongside this, members of SPEAR 17 were awarded the Inspiring Others award for becoming the first all British military team in history to complete a full unsupported traverse of Antarctica.

SPEAR 17, said:

We are blown away. It's so nice to have the recognition ourselves and everybody else for all the dedication and hard work we all do. Thank you to everybody.

Prime Minister Theresa May presented the Award for Special Recognition to Operation Ruman where service personnel helped to provide relief to the British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean following the devastation of Hurricane Irma.

Also awarded was Lieutenant Jared Bambridge who displayed exceptional gallantry in June when a terror attack struck in London, by treating 11 casualties and saving multiple lives off duty.

Lieutenant Jared Bambridge said:

I don't consider what I have done to be the exception or anymore than what anyone else would have done with the training that I have, so I am honoured to accept it on behalf of everybody.

In the military we work hard and we do a lot of thankless tasks, so at the end of the day to have such an event as this put on is a real honour for those thanked few who receive awards or just get nominated for the evening.

Corporal Phillip Keogh received the Best Reservist award after he volunteered to go into the aftermath of the terror atrocity at Manchester Arena. He used his skills as a paramedic to deliver life-saving care and his dedication and bravery saved multiple lives.

Corporal Philip Keogh said:

I was obviously questioning my ability whether I would be able to achieve what we thankfully did achieve on that night. And definitely the training you receive both as a reservist and then as a civilian paramedic, that kicked in. I've never been prouder to be from Manchester

The recognition this award is bringing is a little bit uncomfortable for me. I was one of nearly 300 staff deployed that day from the ambulance service. For me this belongs to everybody.

And its not just the people in my uniform as a paramedic but there were civilian guys there, police, British Transport Police, and Greater Manchester Police. They all chipped in.

Details of The Sun Military Awards 2017 winners:

Hero at Home – Individual

Lieutenant Jared Bambridge, 1st Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment, Army

Best Reservist

Corporal Phillip Keogh, 355 Medical Evacuation Unit, Army

Hero at Home – Unit

Southern Diving Unit 2, Royal Navy

Overcoming Adversity

Former Senior Aircraftman Luke Wigman and former Captain Ibi Ali, RAF Regiment, RAF, and The Yorkshire Regiment, Army

Hero Overseas – Individual

Leading Seaman Sally Hughes, HMS Dragon, Royal Navy

Hero Overseas – Unit

UK Reaper Squadron, RAF

Inspiring Others

SPEAR 17, Army

Innovation Award

Warrant Officer Paul Moonan, Royal Navy

Judges' Award for Special Recognition

Operation Ruman

Support to the Armed Forces

Veterans with Dogs

[News story: Defence Secretary congratulates NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg](#)

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I congratulate Jens Stoltenberg on the extension of his term as NATO Secretary General, he is a great friend and ally of the UK. NATO is the cornerstone of our defence and the UK a leading member of the alliance, one of just a handful of nations to meet the commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence.

Next year, our current Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, will take over as Chairman of the Military Committee – the most senior military officer in the alliance. I look forward to continue working closely with the Secretary General to ensure that NATO is in the best possible shape to tackle the threats facing us all.

[News story: 2017 post-season air display symposium](#)

On the 8 and 9 of November 2017, the Military Aviation Authority (MAA) in collaboration with the Civilian Aviation Authority (CAA) and the British Air Display Association (BADA) delivered the 2017 Post-Season Air Display Symposium at the Tech School, Shrivenham, to 250 people from the Military and Civilian Air Display Community.

The symposium was mainly workshop based, focusing on lessons identified from the previous season and facilitated by experienced subject matter experts from the display community rather than by the regulators and BADA. These included previous and current RAF Aerobatic Team (Red Arrows) display pilots, event organisers and Flying Display Directors from the UK's largest events. This method of delivery proved to be hugely popular with the attendees and will be the model used for the forthcoming Air Display Symposia.



Front of the Technology School, Shrivenham

The dates for the Pre-Season Air Display Symposium were agreed for 14/15 February 2018 and will be delivered at the Tech School and the Eisenhower Lecture theatre, Centre of Air Safety Training, Shrivenham. The date for the next Flying Display Director course was also announced for the 27/28 March 2018 and will be held at the Eisenhower Lecture theatre.