

[News story: UK extends support to peacekeeping in South Sudan](#)

Updated: Image

Defence Minister Lord Howe made the announcement at the 2017 United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver.

At the event, co-hosted by the UK and partners, which comes one year on from the meeting held in London, Lord Howe announced that the UK is extending its deployment of some 300 British Army engineers to the UN Mission in South Sudan for an additional year, until April 2020.

Defence Minister, Lord Howe, said:

We remain unwaveringly committed to international peace and security and this extension is a demonstration of that.

It's all part of the UK's efforts to deliver stability worldwide, which will help tackle issues like terrorism and mass migration, keeping us safe at home as well as improving lives internationally.

The UK is also cooperating closely with Vietnam's first UN troop deployment, as they prepare to take over the running of a field hospital in South Sudan from the UK next year.

The announcements came at the ministerial where representatives from around 80 countries and five international organisations met with the aim of improving the conduct of peacekeeping, including training, equipment, leadership and rapid response capability.

The defence ministerial built on the momentum of the 2016 conference in London, where the '3Ps of peacekeeping reform' agenda was launched, focusing on planning, pledges and performance.

Reflecting this year's additional focus on partnerships, Lord Howe also signed a statement of intent with Bangladesh to sell two RAF C130J transport aircraft to the Bangladeshi Air Force, with the revenue being reinvested back into UK defence. The C130Js will help Bangladesh play a leading role in UN Peacekeeping Missions in the coming years.

The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger, also joined with representatives from Canada and Bangladesh to launch the Women, Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network, to promote the integration of gender perspectives into armed forces and peacekeeping.

[News story: Completion of Longbridge accommodation for Royal Centre for Defence Medicine staff](#)

The ceremony to open the new mess, known as the Glenart Castle Mess, was attended by the military's Acting Surgeon General, Major General Martin Bricknell.

Service personnel at the RCDM, based at the nearby Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, provide care for the public and members of the armed forces returning from active duty around the world. They will be living in the new 6 storey building in Longbridge, which contains 180 ensuite bedrooms together with a dining room, gym and secure parking for military staff.

The work has been conducted for the MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Surgeon General's Headquarters by national developer St. Modwen, and forms part of the ongoing £1 billion redevelopment of the former MG Rover site in south-west Birmingham.

Sinead McGoldrick, DIO's Project Manager, said:

We're delighted to have completed the new accommodation for the military medics serving at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine. These purpose built facilities will be a comfortable home-from-home during their posting to the hospital and will contribute to a positive work-life balance.

Major General Martin Bricknell, Acting Surgeon General, said:

The ribbon cutting marks an important step in the relationship between the Defence Medical Services and the City of Birmingham. The ceremony has been an opportunity to recognise some the key contributions which have made this project possible, with St Modwen, DIO and the military working together to create a new home for RCDM personnel.

Colonel Katherine Richardson, RCDM's Commanding Officer, said:

The new accommodation at Longbridge, named the Glenart Castle Mess, provides excellent facilities for RCDM personnel. With all 3 Services and all ranks living under one roof, the mess will further enhance unit cohesion and community, an important part of being in

the military.



Flying Officer Niall Dowse in one of the new bedrooms provided for military medics at Longbridge. Crown Copyright MOD 2017. All rights reserved.

Mark Batchelor, Senior Construction Manager at St. Modwen said:

The decision to choose Longbridge for this incredible facility and the investment from DIO is testament to the success of the ongoing regeneration. We very much welcome DIO and the fantastic accommodation they have provided to help improve the lives of people working in incredibly serious and stressful situations.

We are soon to commence pedestrian footpaths and cycle links from The RCDM across the River Rae and under the A38 into Austin Park and the town centre, making for a more accessible and environmentally friendly community.

The opening of Glenart Castle Mess follows the announcement that St. Modwen was granted planning permission for a £20 million leisure scheme at Longbridge.

St. Modwen has been regenerating the former MG factory site since 2003, investing more than £300 million into the area, creating more than 4,000 new jobs.

[News story: Xbox controllers, Hoverbikes and robotic trucks trialled by British and American Armies](#)

Continuing the MOD's investment in cutting-edge technology, the UK has been working with the US military on autonomous resupply, providing a glimpse into the future of getting much-needed supplies to the front line.

In a week-long exercise in Michigan, the UK MOD's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and organisations from the US Army's Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM) have been testing an all-terrain 4x4 vehicle controlled by an Xbox-style controller, driverless trucks in convoy and Hoverbike drones for delivering supplies in the most dangerous "last mile" up to the battlefield.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

One hundred years ago we pioneered tank warfare with our US allies, and today we remain right at the forefront of military technology together. This exercise has proven the success of our ongoing investment in science and technology as we see concepts becoming reality. This particular project is spearheading solutions to the notoriously dangerous operation of supplying our frontline on the battlefield. Delivering crucial food, fuel and ammo remotely will help save soldiers' lives.



A British Army MAN SV 6-tonne truck leading two US Light Medium Tactical Vehicle trucks in a driverless convoy.

This is a new way of coordinating and delivering vital supplies to front-line operations, aiming to reduce risk to those troops and provide on-demand delivery of food, fuel or ammunition to the front line. The Coalition Assured Autonomous Resupply (CAAR) demonstration, the first in a three-year project to bring concepts to life, marked initial demonstration of unmanned tactical resupply technologies in the three areas.

The line-haul convoy is the first time ever that a UK-US collaboration has joined together in this format, with a British Army MAN SV 6-tonne truck as a 'leader' vehicle in the convoy, followed by two US Light Medium Tactical Vehicles (LMTV) trucks. Travelling at speeds of up to 25mph, the vehicles used integrated robotics to make decisions about speed, steering and other driving functions.

The Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) demonstrated included the British-developed Malloy Aeronautics Hoverbike. An advanced prototype quadcopter drone, it can deliver more than 100kg of supplies, using a simple tablet controller. Unveiled for the first time, this version of the Hoverbike could also potentially be used for humanitarian aid and disaster relief missions.

The 4x4 vehicle tested was a tele-operated Polaris MRZR, fitted with advanced sensors, cameras and GPS, and operated by a joint UK-US trials team. Using an adapted Xbox game console controller, Corporal Mortimer and Lance Corporal Thorne remotely 'drove' the 4x4 around the area to simulate an off-road task.



A remote-operated 4x4 being tested by the British and US Armies out in Michigan.

Pete Stockel, innovation autonomy challenge lead for Dstl, said:

Following the communique signature between the two nations in 2014, we have been working closely with our American counterparts to develop effective demonstrations and assessments of important new autonomy technologies, which could one day reduce the burden on and risk to the military user, while improving logistics efficiencies and interoperability.

This is the first time that we have created a UK-US coalition semi-autonomous leader-follower convoy to bring to life concepts which will provide solutions to de-risk the Last Mile of logistics support to the front line.

We are enormously excited to be working with our US colleagues on this project, delivering on the commitment announced at the Farnborough Airshow in 2016. It has been an exciting challenge to drive this forward at pace. This could be a step-change in how operational risk might be managed, costs could be reduced and – ultimately – lives can be saved, as a result of harnessing this rapidly-evolving technology.

Under the Autonomous Last Mile resupply challenge, Dstl and the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) are bringing together a wide range of military

and industry partners to join commercial-off the-shelf (COTS) suppliers with novel ideas and tech start-ups in producing a futuristic demonstration of how UK and US forces' tactical resupply might one day operate.

Colonel John McCrann, from Army Headquarters, said:

The British Army is keen to work with its US counterparts through Dstl to identify where autonomous technologies can benefit UK military capability.

Jeffrey Ratowski, TARDEC's project leader for the Coalition Assured Autonomous Resupply (CAAR) effort, said:

We're using US and UK Soldiers to control multiple robotic assets including the convoy, the autonomous last mile- ground piece, and there's also an autonomous last mile- air piece.

The MOD spends 1.2% of its rising £36 billion defence budget on science and technology. In September Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin [announced the 25 winners of the Last Mile Challenge](#), up-and-coming tech startups and entrepreneurs hoping to bring innovative solutions to resupply the frontline.

Any entrepreneurs can apply to Pitch@Palace Series 9.0, the theme of which is "Data, Intelligence, and The Future of Security". A Defence themed On Tour Event is scheduled to take place in London on 31 January 2018. Find out more or apply to take part [here](#).

[News story: Defence Minister reaffirms UK commitment to European security](#)

Defence Minister, Lord Howe, met counterparts at the European Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels today. He reaffirmed the UK's commitment to European security and highlighted the role we play as a global foreign policy and security actor.

Defence Minister, Lord Howe, said:

We are leaving the European Union but not Europe, and regional security remains top of our agenda in the face of increased Russian assertiveness.

With challenges to our common security becoming more serious, our response must be to work together more closely.

Lord Howe discussed the important role the UK plays in European security matters as we prepare to exit the European Union, and highlighted our commitment to the region as a leading member of NATO in a session attended by NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg.

He reiterated that the UK is unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe's security in the face of an unprecedented range of internal and external threats to the safety and security of our citizens, from international terrorism to cyber threats. This follows the meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels last week, attended by Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, in which he committed four RAF Typhoons to the Southern Air Policing mission in Romania next summer as well as a Battalion that will be held at high readiness to respond to any situation in the Western Balkans.

[News story: UK and Australia step up defence relationship as ministers meet](#)

Amongst the discussions was a meeting with her Australian counterpart, Minister Christopher Pyne, who is responsible for procurement for the country's military.

Australia is the UK's 13th biggest export market, with £8.6bn of goods and services sold in 2015 and the Type 26 Global Combat Ship has been shortlisted for Australia's Future Frigate programme.

The Type 26 is an advanced Anti-Submarine Warfare frigate that will provide essential protection to Britain's nuclear deterrent and new aircraft carriers.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

From the first world war to defeating Daesh in the Middle East right now, the UK and Australia continue to fight side-by-side for the values we both share.

In the face of mutual intensifying threats, the strong relationship between our countries allows vital discussions over how best to protect ourselves. As the Australian Navy looks for a new frigate, the Type 26 is a very strong candidate and I hope to see it form the backbone of our Five Eyes partners' navies for decades to come.



Minister Baldwin touring Australian Navy Fleet Command facilities in Sydney.

The visit to Australia comes shortly after Minister Pyne came to London and met Minister Harriett Baldwin earlier this month.

During his visit, BAE Systems announced that they had awarded a further 15 manufacturing contracts to suppliers of the Type 26 programme. Not only did that increase the number of UK maritime jobs supported by the programme to over 4,500, but it also included contracts with two Australian companies, showing the deepening co-operation between the British and Australian defence industries.



The Australian Army show Minister Baldwin the Bushmaster vehicle.

On the flipside of the countries' export relationship, the UK was Australia's fifth largest export destination in 2016, valued at almost A\$15bn. Whilst in the country, the Defence Minister viewed a Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle demonstration.

The Bushmaster protected vehicle, already in service with the Australian Army, is manufactured by Thales Australia and is one of two potential solutions under consideration as the UK looks for another troop-carrying vehicle and protected battlefield ambulance. A decision on the procurement, package two of the UK 'Multi-Role Vehicle-Protected programme' (MRV-P), is anticipated next year.

Alongside Australian Defence Minister Pyne the Defence Minister announced the intention to look at the feasibility of fitting a cutting-edge Australian radar on future British warships. The pair announced that a capability study to fit CEA Technologies' 'CEAFAR' radar to British ships will begin early next year at the second Australia/UK Defence Industry Dialogue in Adelaide. The radar is already in-service with the Australian Navy.



Minister Baldwin at CEA with British High Commissioner to Australia, Menna Rawlings, looking at radar systems.

The Defence Minister also laid a wreath on behalf of the UK at a Remembrance Sunday commemoration event in Canberra on Saturday.