

News story: Defence personnel embracing fourth industrial revolution by developing skills

Speaking at the UK's flagship defence equipment conference, Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), Mr Ellwood said that in order to tackle current and future threats, the Ministry of Defence was embracing the fourth industrial revolution and developing its skills base.

The Minister outlined the MOD's work on this in three areas:

1. Broadening the defence talent base.
2. Working with industry to attract the right people and jobs.
3. Collaborating across Government to reinvigorate interest in science, maths, engineering and technology.

Efforts to broaden the MOD's talent base includes increasing diversity, with a target of 10% of the workforce coming from ethnic minority backgrounds by 2020 and 15% of the workforce being women. The MOD is also the country's largest employer of apprentices and is stepping up its commitment by looking to increase that number by 50,000 in the next few years.

The Minister also stressed that in order to face down current and future threats and challenges, Government needed to redouble its efforts to reinvigorate skills in science, maths, engineering and technology. Mr Ellwood outlined work which was going on across Government in this area, including the MOD's collaboration with the Departments for Education and Business.

Speaking at DSEI the Commandant of Sandhurst also announced a new initiative which will allow Sandhurst cadets to earn a degree while going through their commissioning course. Officer Cadets attending Sandhurst have always undergone demanding leadership and management training, without previously having their efforts recognised with an academic qualification.

Working with experts at Henley Business School and the School of Politics, Economics and International Relations at the University of Reading, a course has been specifically designed in Leadership and Strategic Studies for the British Army which will allow them to earn either a Bachelors or Master's degree.

Tobias Ellwood's full speech will be available shortly.

[Press release: UK aid continues to arrive for Hurricane Irma victims](#)

[VIDEO: Jemone's story, a recipient of UK aid on the British Virgin Islands.](#)

Over 60 tonnes of UK aid has now reached the Caribbean to support the victims of Hurricane Irma, with another 60 tonnes on the way on board HMS Ocean.

British military troops along with DFID logisticians supported the restoration of electricity to the main power station on the British Virgin Islands as part of the ongoing recovery operation.

Six UK medical health experts have been deployed to Antigua to assess the capacity of healthcare provisions on affected islands in the region.

The team, made up of experts from UK-Med and Public Health England, will measure the current state of public health and any potential threat of disease breaking out.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The Government has been working non-stop to get vital assistance to the victims of Hurricane Irma in the last week.

Aid continues to arrive on the affected islands on a daily basis, and we'll continue to do all that is needed to get people back on their feet.

We are also looking at long-term recovery on the islands. We want to get families back into houses, and schools and hospitals working again as soon as possible.

Yesterday (Thursday), a flight carrying aid reached Turks and Caicos Islands delivering over 150 shelter kits and 720 litres of water.

Further flights carrying UK aid arrived in the affected areas earlier this week. Two of these flights, headed to Anguilla, delivered nearly five tonnes of food and water

A flight carrying three tonnes of food and water also arrived in the British Virgin Islands. This much-needed aid has already been distributed on Tortola alongside 40 shelter kits in Road Town.

Elsewhere, British aid experts quickly sorted and arranged for the delivery of 1 tonne of food aid including biscuits, fish, vegetables and sausages, in addition to 38 packs of water and shelter kits in BVI. The items were

distributed to 130 families using a school as a shelter after their homes were destroyed in the hurricane

A senior civil expert has been deployed to the Caribbean to coordinate the entire UK Task Force following Hurricane Irma. Chris Austin, recently based with DFID in Afghanistan, will oversee civilian and military operations as part of the UK's response.

This week, Prime Minister Theresa May announced an additional £25 million to support Hurricane Irma recovery efforts, on top of £32 million announced last week. The announcement takes the UK's support to the disaster to £57 million.

The funding will continue to meet immediate needs and early recovery.

Several hospitals, schools, roads and other public services remain affected following Hurricane Irma, and the support will help to get basic infrastructure and services up and running again.

Additionally, the UK government is doubling any public donations made to the Red Cross appeal for the hurricane's victims up to £3 million.

Aid also continues to be distributed by British military personnel and the Red Cross, coordinated by DFID.

The overall UK response today involves over 1,000 military personnel, 60 police officers, and 30 aid workers.

The aid on HMS Ocean includes over 5,000 hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and a torch, 500,000 water purification tablets and 10,000 buckets.

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[French military equipment delivered to](#)

Guadeloupe on RAF C-17 Globemaster

French military equipment delivered to Guadeloupe on Royal Air Force C-17 Globemaster

Urgently required vehicles and equipment have been delivered to Pointe-à-Pitre on the French Island of Guadeloupe aboard a Royal Air Force C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft.

Following a request for assistance from French President Emmanuel Macron the heavy-lift aircraft flew to évreux-Fauville Air Base west of Paris and collected 30 tonnes of equipment and supplies including a tipper truck, digger and specialist bulldozer. The vehicles will now be taken by sea to the island of St Martin which sustained severe damaged in Hurricane Irma.



Speaking before the aircraft departed France, Colonel David Desjardins, the Base Commander of évreux-Fauville Air Base, said:

“Cooperation between the French Air Force and Royal Air Force has been in place a long time. Today we are working together to send engineers and equipment to support both the clean-up operation and the population affected by Hurricane Irma. We do often work together such as operations in Africa and the Middle East, we work well together”



The pilot of the 99 Squadron C-17 was Flight Lieutenant Mark Shepherd. He said:

“We work regularly with the French military transporting freight from France to Western Africa in support of their operations there. The level of cooperation between us and the French on this task has been excellent and this has been reflected in how smoothly the transport of this urgently required equipment has been achieved.

“As ever it has been a pleasure to work with our French colleagues and to help the people affected by Hurricane Irma.”



The flight is the latest example of the close relationship between the French and UK Armed Forces. The two nations, which have the largest defence budgets in Europe, continue to work closely on shared interests. British and French forces are deployed together in NATO, fighting against Daesh in Iraq and Syria and training together across the globe. RAF C-17s have also been used on a regular basis in recent years to transport freight from France to sub-Saharan Africa.

The RAF air transport fleet continues to directly support the UK aid effort

with further C-17s, A400M Atlas, C-130J Hercules and Voyager aircraft transporting personnel, aid and equipment to the Caribbean and between the islands struck by the hurricane.

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[Press release: PM meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak: 14 Sept 2017](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister welcomed Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak to Downing Street on 14 September with Defence Secretary Michael Fallon also in attendance.

The leaders spoke of the deep and historical ties between the UK and Malaysia and agreed on the importance of taking steps to enhance our bilateral relationship. They noted that that 2017 marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries as well as the 60th anniversary of Malaysian independence.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Najib discussed the ongoing crisis in Rakhine in Burma with the Prime Minister reiterating the importance of the Burmese authorities allowing unfettered access for humanitarian assistance in the country. The leaders agreed that the UK and Malaysia should co-ordinate on the provision of humanitarian assistance in Burma and in Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Najib also agreed on the continuing importance of Commonwealth values and spoke of the steps being taken to renew the organisation including at the Commonwealth Summit in London next year.

They discussed the importance of the existing defence relationship between the UK and Malaysia with both countries being party to the Five Power Defence arrangements.

The leaders spoke about the opportunities that the UK's exit from the EU will offer and committed to exploring ways to deepen the trade and investment relationship between the UK and Malaysia.

The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to personally express her condolences to Prime Minister Najib for the loss of life in the Darul Quran Ittifaqiyah Tahfiz school fire.

News story: Autonomy on the front line: Defence Minister announces world-leading UK innovation at DSEI

During her keynote speech on DSEI's Innovation Day, the Defence Minister announced twenty-five winners of the MOD's "Last Mile" challenge.

Earlier in the year, the Minister challenged industry and academia to design pioneering technology to get vital supplies to soldiers on the front line. Developing systems for unmanned delivery of combat supplies will reduce the risk to troops and improve efficiency.

The challenge looked to draw on the rapid progress of the private sector in the development of delivery drones and automated deliveries. More than 140 organisations from small-and-medium-size-enterprises (SMEs) to large defence companies submitted entries.

Winning ideas include disposable supply trailers, autonomous hover-bikes and airborne vehicle 'swarms'. Twenty five projects were chosen with a total contract value for this phase of almost £2 million, which will produce demonstrator models of the concepts for testing by UK personnel.

Part of the MOD's £800m Innovation Initiative, and led by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) with the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), the contracts are worth £3.5 million over three years.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

The Last Mile Challenge is a great example of how we are engaging with a real range of businesses and harnessing innovation to help our military right up to the front line. From these autonomous vehicles to next-generation body armour, we are investing our rising defence budget and £178 billion equipment plan in the technology that will keep our Armed Forces and the UK safe.

With 141 international delegates from 60 countries, DSEI showcases British business and innovation across security and defence on the world stage. The Defence Minister toured the exhibition and in a key note speech, announced the latest investment in advanced equipment for the UK's Armed Forces.

Building on ongoing work to cut red tape for SMEs, the Defence Minister also announced the launch of an overhauled Defence Suppliers Portal, which streamlines engaging and bidding for contracts with the MOD. Working more effectively with SMEs a key defence priority, and the MOD has committed to spending 25% of procurement money with SME suppliers by 2020

The Defence Minister also highlighted advanced combat clothing and body armour on display at DSEI 2017, as part of the Army's "Future Soldier Vision". Working with partners including the Royal College of Art, the project is developing advanced textiles, stronger and lighter body armour, and a new high-tech helmet with state-of-the-art communication systems. [Read more about that announcement here.](#)

And finally, the Defence Minister also announced the transformation of the Disposal Services Authority (DSA) into the Defence Equipment Sales Authority (DESA). DESA will generate revenue for the UK and build closer collaboration between UK industry and international customers, providing the best possible financial return to the UK taxpayer.

Today's announcements come after [a range made by the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon yesterday including bomb disposal robots.](#)