

# News story: Defence Secretary announces £55m contract for UK bomb disposal robots at DSEI

Following an initial £4 million demonstration phase, the robots will be purchased from US robotics manufacturer Harris under the MOD's Project Starter for use by the British Army, and will be supported by engineers at Harris EDO MBM Technology in Brighton, where the contract will sustain 10 highly-skilled jobs.

[In a keynote speech](#), the Defence Secretary outlined how the Harris T7 robots use 'advanced haptic feedback' to allow operators to 'feel' their way through the intricate process of disarming from a safe distance, protecting UK personnel from threats such as roadside bombs.

## **Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:**

With our rising defence budget, we are investing in the latest equipment for our Armed Forces to tackle the growing threats we face. These state-of-the-art bomb disposal robots will be powerful and reliable companions to our troops on the battlefield, keeping them safe so they can help keep us safe.



Ministry of Defence 

Contract worth up to  
**£55m**

**56 robots**

- Advanced controls offer tactile feedback
- Fast datalink
- High-definition cameras
- All-terrain treads

In service by  
**2020**

Can disarm:

- **Conventional ammunition** 
- **Improvised Explosive Devices** 

Defence Equipment & Support

## The British Army's New Bomb Disposal Robot Harris T7 - MOD Project Starter



The British Army's new bomb disposal robot.

Equipped with high-definition cameras, lightning-fast datalinks, an adjustable manipulation arm and tough all-terrain treads, the robots are able to neutralise a wide range of threats.

The haptic feedback function is designed to provide operators with human-like dexterity while they operate the robot's arm using the remote control handgrip. The unit gives the operator physical feedback, allowing intuitive detailed control.

The announcement comes after a competition between the world's leading manufacturers, organised by the MOD, with the new fleet replacing the current Wheelbarrow Mk8b. All 56 robots are due to be delivered to the UK and in service by December 2020.

**Chief Executive Officer for Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, Tony Douglas said:**

This contract has been designed to deliver future-proof, world-leading technology at the best value to the taxpayer. Innovation is central not only to the success of this remarkable system, but also to the relationships across DE&S, Industry and the frontline commands which allowed this agreement to be reached.

With 141 international delegates from 60 countries, DSEI showcases British business and innovation across security and defence. The Defence Secretary toured the exhibition and announced the latest investment in advanced equipment for the UK's Armed Forces.

In addition to new bomb disposal robots, the Defence Secretary announced that UK personnel will be protected by a new lightning-fast protection system under development by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl). The new 'Icarus' system, involving a consortium led by Leonardo, will be able to detect and defeat threats to armoured vehicles within 100 milliseconds: many times faster than a human could respond.

The proof of concept Technical Demonstrator Programme is worth £10 million to the UK economy and will develop system sensors and countermeasures to defeat a wide range of current and future battlefield threats such as Rocket Propelled Grenades and Anti-Tank Guided Weapons, helping to protect the lives of the UK Armed Forces.

The Demonstrator Programme will initially secure 45 jobs across the UK and has the potential to create up to 250 jobs if the system is eventually deployed.

The Defence Secretary also pointed out that, for the first time, a full-scale model of the UK's future laser turret will be on display at DSEI. In January 2017 the MOD awarded a [£30 million contract](#) to the MBDA-led Dragonfire

consortium, to demonstrate the potential of Laser Directed Energy Weapons. The demonstrator will be tested on UK ranges from 2018 with in-service capability planned by the end of the 2020s.

Following Minister for Defence Procurement Harriet Baldwin's [announcement of the successful first firings](#) at sea of the Royal Navy's new Sea Ceptor system last week, the Defence Secretary also pointed out that the British Army is showcasing the new Land Ceptor air defence system launcher at DSEI. Developed by MBDA, Land Ceptor will replace the Army's Rapier system as part of the new Sky Sabre capability.

The Innovation Initiative and £800m Defence Innovation Fund aim to transform Defence to encourage imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship. From laser weapons to autonomous vehicles, the MOD is working with small firms, academics, industry, and the [new Defence Advisory Panel](#) to find Twenty-first century solutions to defence challenges.

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## [Speech: Defence Secretary Keynote Speech at DSEI 2017 – 13 September](#)

INTRO: PERIOD OF CHANGE

It's a huge pleasure to be back at the world leading DSEI.

Apart from the fact this exhibition has grown in size and scale, with some 141 international delegates here from 60 countries, it has remained a remarkably stable landmark in an otherwise turbulent world.

Since last time we were here the UK has had two elections and a referendum in which the British people decided to leave Europe.

Meanwhile, on the international front we've seen North Korea threatening nuclear Armageddon, Russia maintaining its aggressive posture, waves of cyber crime like the Wannacry virus hit our hospitals and businesses and, touching on our theme today, terror, which has spread across the globe hitting us here in the UK in London and Manchester and recently devastating innocents in Barcelona.

At the start of the year the Doomsday Clock moved thirty seconds closer to midnight it seems they weren't exaggerating. As the danger proliferates defence's stock rises and the demand for the best kit goes through the roof. And today you'll find us making maximum use of our capability; whether it's sending HMS Ocean, C-17 and Puma Mk2 helicopters to the Caribbean to support humanitarian efforts in the wake of devastating Hurricane Irma, dispatching our Typhoons to bomb Daesh and protect Black Sea skies or deploying Challenger and Warrior to Estonia to provide critical reassurance to our

Eastern European allies.

In an age of technological marvels and transnational threats this level of activity appears to be the new normal, which is why our response is evolving to meet new challenges.

It's based around three key elements:

### 1. CHOICE

The first is choice.

We've chosen to grow our defence budget by 0.5 per cent each year.

In 2015 our forces received some £34bn. In 2016 £35bn. This year it will be £36bn. And next year it will be £37bn. We're using that money to invest in the full array of high end kit across all domains.

In the past year you'll have seen a flood of announcements, from sailing new carriers to naming Dreadnought submarines, from buying Apache attack helicopters to testing Ajax armoured vehicles and from the arrival of more F35s, to last week's announcement about future frigates.

And our new fifth generation kit offers much more than firepower and protection. These are flying, driving and floating sensors able to soak up information and instantly relay it from the battlefield to the battle station.

More than that, capabilities like dreadnoughts and carriers give us both a strategic nuclear and a strategic conventional deterrent, ensuring that whatever the future holds in the 2040s, 2050s, 2060s, the next generation will have the tools to cope.

Innovative choices

But we're not just choosing to spend but choosing to invest in innovation, putting aside £800m so that by working with industry and academia we have the disruptive capability to keep ahead of the curve.

Take big data.

We've given 30 firms a share of £3 million pound to develop machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence so it can crunch all the big data collected by our vehicles and translate it into a four dimensional picture of the battle space.

Or there's the sort of ship's brain we tested last year. It's able to root through information and recognise threats in much the same way as a human being recognises fear, allowing the crew to predict where system failure might occur next.

Inevitably, such technology triggers dire warnings about the march of machines. But software isn't a substitute for soldiers, sailors or pilot, it's there to optimise our time. Computers are simply better at rifling

through data and doing mundane tasks.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT: ROBOTIC BOMB DISPOSAL

Just as robots are better suited to picking their way through bomb strewn battlefields.

That's why today I can announce we've signed a contract worth up to £55m with Harris Corporation for 56 bomb disposal robots. Equipped with high-definition cameras, lightning-fast datalinks, an adjustable manipulation arm and tough all-terrain treads, these sophisticated systems use advanced haptic feedback that allows operators to 'feel' their way through the intricate process of disarming potentially the terrorist's favourite weapon the Improvised Explosive Device from a safe distance.

Robots will never replace humans.

It takes a soldier to search a house, calm a villager, win hearts and minds in a war zone.

But we're letting the machines take the load so people can get on with hard work of saving lives.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT: ACTIVE PROTECTION SYSTEM

At the same time, we're making sure our troops have the tech to protect themselves in difficult and dangerous situations.

So today I can announce Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has placed a £10m contract with Leonardo to improve the survivability and protection of Land Armoured Vehicles, by fitting them with an Active Protection System.

This can detect and defeat threat missiles within 100 milliseconds less than half the time it takes a human to react to a visual cue.

Providing a shield against Rocket Propelled Grenades and Anti-Tank Guided Weapons.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT: DRAGONFIRE

When it comes to weapons we're also devising some of our own.

If you haven't seen it already allow me to point you in the direction of the naval stand where you'll find a prototype of Dragonfire a directed energy weapon or laser to the layman.

Science fiction has become science fact.

Even more remarkable we've come up with a bit of kit that will appeal as much to the accountant as the warrior because, instead of spending hundreds of thousands on missiles the energy in a high-intensity laser costs pennies.

I know you like to try out new capability but I'm afraid this one isn't a

working model.

Its state-of-the-art precision targeting system that can knock out a target up to six kilometres away.

I'm afraid we couldn't take the risk of over eager guests pressing the wrong button.

But don't worry Dragonfire will soon be tested on a British warship.

You come to DSEI to be wowed and I hope we've whetted your appetite.

But I don't want to overdo it so I won't mention our hover bike that's being tested on the water outside this building.

I've talked so far about innovative Defence decisions we've made that you can actually see here at DSEI.

But I haven't mentioned the way innovation is now influencing Defence below the surface, the way it's now woven into our tactics, honing our pioneering cyber techniques against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

Nor have mentioned how innovation is transforming our approach in the boardroom.

Since the 2015 SDSR international threats have intensified.

So, rather than resting on our laurels, we're currently conducting a National Security Capability Review.

Defence will be a critical part of this cross-government refresh led by the National Security Adviser.

Our aim, across Government, is to ensure that we are implementing the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The fact is, though our budget might be rising, so too are demands.

That's why we must keep asking searching questions, re-examining whether we are making the right choices, so we can prioritise the right things.

Critically, the UK isn't alone in going through this process. So too are our closest allies – the United States and France.

## 1. COLLABORATE

Choice is key to addressing the threat we face.

The second aspect of our approach is collaboration.

If we're going to make the most of all our resources we need to do more to work together across the Defence Enterprise.

Carrier is a case in point. Built in blocks by over 10,000 people across the UK, before being shipped to Rosyth for assembly, it is a truly co-operative nationwide enterprise.

Or consider F35, an innovative partnership between BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman working alongside our Defence Electronics and Components Agency in Sealand. So successful in its bid that it wasn't just chosen as the European repair hub for F-35 avionics and aircraft components, but as the global support provider, sustaining hundreds of jobs directly and thousands more high value jobs across the supply chain.

From the start the F-35 programme itself has been not simply an exemplar of domestic collaboration, but of international collaboration, where we're proud to be a Tier One partner with the US, and to build 15 per cent of each and every aircraft.

And as Britain's looks to go global we see our equipment as a platform for stronger partnership.

Consider P8 maritime patrol aircraft.

A few months ago we struck an agreement with our fellow P8 nations Norway and the US, to pursue closer co-operation on training, logistics, and support and address the changing security environment in the North Atlantic.

## 1. COMPETITION

International success brings me to the third element of our new approach to defence competition.

I'm a big believer in competition.

I know it's power not just to strengthen our industry and bring in the wealth that benefits the UK, but to bring down prices as well meaning we can afford to buy even more kit.

And as we look to life post Brexit and seek to spread our wings across the world, it's high time we do more to compete for a share of this international export market.

We've already got an enviable reputation in advanced manufacturing, we're leaders in intelligent systems, we already build wings for half the world.

And the UK continues to perform strongly in the international market, securing defence orders of £5.9bn in 2016, retaining its position as the second largest defence exporter globally over the last ten years

But now it's time to build exportability into our thinking from the off, aligning it with the requirements of international clients, allowing for the open architecture that can plug and play with different bits of capability.

In other words, the sort of pioneering approach we've adopted with Type 31e.

Government has laid out a clear challenge to the sector to design and build five new lighter, General Purpose Frigate to replace the General Purpose variants of our ageing Type 23 Frigates with a clear in-service – of 2023.

Type 31e will be flexible and adaptable.

The aim is in the name. E...stands for exports

Above all we've set the price we want each frigates to cost.

At no more than £250m.

That's the maximum price.

This is a competition.

And I want to see great companies competing to lower the cost

But it's also a pathfinder

We haven't built frigates for another country since the 70s

We're changing all that

This frigate will rock the exports boat and it's a model for the way we will approach shipbuilding in future

Yet we're not just focusing our export drive on ships but planes.

The UK and its European partners are fully focused on working with industry to maximise Typhoon's export potential in the worldwide combat air jet market.

And the MOD, in particular, are pleased to now be supporting and leading some of those campaigns in Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia, where we believe Typhoon meets the requirements of our international partners.

We've already seen the first plane delivered to Oman earlier in the year and more orders for Kuwait.

And today you'll see for the first time our Land Ceptor missile able to blast high speed, evasive, low signature and complex airborne targets out the sky

It's already in high demand with the Italian Army

Even as we look to sell more platforms, we'll continue banging the drum for British systems, from Scotland to Southampton, whether it's defensive aid suites, digital jammers or laser target designators, whether small satellites or secure communications.

So we've got high hopes for UK companies.

And what better place to bring the message home than DSEI, where the kit is the star of the show and where the globe's investors gather in one place.



All those looking to become exporters will find help at hand.

Not only is our Defence Growth Partnership now working with industry to anticipate future market opportunities, but we're now adopting a Team UK approach, packaging up the vast array of expertise our nation has to offer so that international customers looking for solutions into anything from subsurface systems and synthetic environments to persistent surveillance or information systems, needn't hunt around for the right contact, but can simply go to our Team UK representatives and get the details they requires.

There's a UK team stall in the hall here today waiting to work with you to face up to the challenges to come.

## CONCLUSION

So two years down the line Britain's transforming its approach.

And if you needed convincing that MOD really has changed its style look at the experts who make up our new innovation advisory panel.

The former owner of a racing car company and an astronaut.

The message is clear.

The UK's moving at pace.

And we're about to hit the heights.

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## [News story: Armed Forces Muslim Personnel Complete Hajj](#)

Led by Islamic Religious Advisor to the Chief of Defence Staff Imam Asim Hafiz, the Hajj was a chance for British Muslim Armed Forces personnel to reflect on the role of their religion as part of their service. Hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Armed Forces (KSA AF), the Hajj took place over the first weekend of September, around Eid celebrations.

Hajj, meaning 'to intend to journey', is the fifth pillar of Islam and requires all Muslims who are able to make a pilgrimage to Mecca and locations of historical significance related to the Prophet Abraham. The group, which consisted of personnel from the Army and Royal Air Force, visited the Holy Mosque in Mecca, Arafat, Muzdalifah, and Mina. In addition they visited the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

Captain Tim Rudkin, from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) said:

We have learnt a lot about ourselves and confirmed that Islam is not only compatible with military life, but supports the Armed Forces' values we strive to embody.

This journey has no rival to anything I have done before, with representatives of almost every country it is the largest gathering of people in the world, sharing common goals and values, coexisting peacefully.

During the group's visit to Medina, the pilgrims visited the Prophet's Mosque and toured the site of the Battle of Uhud. Afterwards they travelled to Mina where they stayed in a tent city and performed the daily stoning of the jamarat against three pillars where the devil appeared to the Prophet Abraham. The UK personnel also met with the KSA AF's Head of Religious Affairs Major Muhammed Al Sadan, who spoke of the importance of Hajj and Islam's compatibility of serving in the Armed Forces.

Sergeant Ahmed Dhalai, from MOD, said:

The military gives me the strength to become a better Muslim. My chain of command not only understand the significance of this journey, they actively encourage it as an opportunity to reflect and aim to be a better person, both in and out of the military.

The group also met with the Malaysian Chief of Defence Force General Tan Sri Raja Mohamed Affandi Bin Raja Mohamed Noor, Sudanese Major General (Pilot) Hussein Muhammed Othman, and Senior Bangladeshi officers who offered words of encouragement on religious tolerance and explained the importance of Hajj, not only as a religious obligation for Muslims but as an experience to reflect on as ambassadors to develop greater understanding of faith in our militaries.

Corporal Ceesay Ali, from 1 Medical Regiment, said:

Without doubt this journey I have made is going to make me a better Muslim, a better person, and a better soldier. It has provided me with personal and professional development, as well as allowing me to meet my religious obligation

The Armed Forces personnel entered a raffle across the three services to join the 25,000 pilgrims from the UK travelling to Mecca this year.

A diverse and inclusive force is a stronger force, and the MOD encourages and celebrates diversity, promoting an inclusive working environment. To achieve this a wide range of initiatives under a Defence-wide Diversity and Inclusion Programme have been established. While recruitment is an important element, the wider Defence Diversity and Inclusion Programme (DDIP) takes a much broader view of diversity and inclusion and is driving real change by

embedding D&I within the leadership and culture and taking steps to increase the retention and progression of people from underrepresented groups.

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## [Press release: Hurricane Irma update](#)

Shelter kits provided by UK aid are being distributed in Anguilla to help those left homeless by Hurricane Irma.

The kits, transported by Britain's Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Mounts Bay, are being delivered to people in need by the Anguillan Red Cross.

Crews from RFA Mounts Bay are also today delivering UK aid including shelter, food and water to those affected on Gorda in the British Virgin Islands.

On the Island of Tortola, British military troops are delivering food and water having already helped to make the area secure, enabling aid to be delivered.

In addition, the UK has helped to distribute water bottles to 700 of the most vulnerable households affected by Hurricane Irma on the British Virgin Islands.

There are now 1,000 UK military troops in the region helping with the relief effort.

### **International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:**

The UK government continues to deliver UK aid to the victims of Hurricane Irma as a matter of extreme urgency.

We have over 40 tonnes of DFID aid in the region, and more aid is arriving every day.

Our military troops, police officers and aid workers are doing an amazing job on the ground, to get vital supplies to those who need it most.

To suggest the UK reacted slowly and is not doing enough is just plain wrong. We are leading the way, and other countries, are now coming to us for help.

In addition to providing support on the ground, the UK Government is working closely with affected governments to continue to understand what assistance is needed to ensure the right aid is getting to the right place.

Yesterday, International Development Secretary Priti Patel spoke to the

Governor of the Virgin Islands, Augustus Jaspert, to discuss emerging needs on the island. Earlier today she briefed the Cabinet on these latest developments.

HMS Ocean, which was loaded in Gibraltar with 5,000 hygiene kits, 10,000 buckets and 500,000 water purification tablets, is due this evening to be deployed to the region.

The government has made £2.5 million available to the Pan American Health Organisation to ensure critical health services are provided in the region, and to reduce the risk of disease spreading.

This is part of the £32 million it has so far pledged to the relief effort.

DFID has deployed 18 staff in total to the region, including to Turks and Caicos, using British expertise to provide urgent relief to those in need and support efforts to restore infrastructure.

The UK Government is being supported by companies in the private sector, including:

- Thomson and Thomas cook who have delivered over 8,000 buckets on commercial flights
- Virgin, who offered free transport to dispatch relief items including 1776 shelter kits, to Antigua yesterday.

Today, we expect another 288 kits to fly the same route with them.

### **Notes to editors**

- Videos and photos of aid being transported and distributed are available here:
- Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfid/sets/72157688805759935>
- Google Drive: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B8mjosL6ucd7TkRhdTgwT2s4aXM>
- For the latest up to date information and images, follow us on Twitter – @DFID\_UK

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# Speech: Hurricane Irma: Sir Alan Duncan's statement, 12 September 2017

At last Thursday's statement I undertook to update the house as appropriate and I thank you Sir for the opportunity to do so now. My Right Honourable Friend the [Foreign Secretary is on his way](#) at this very moment to the Caribbean to see for himself our stricken Overseas Territories and further drive the extensive relief efforts that are underway.

The thoughts of this House and the whole country are with those who are suffering the ravages of one of the most powerful Atlantic Hurricanes ever recorded. It followed Hurricane Harvey and was set to be followed by Hurricane Jose.

Over half a million British nationals – either residents or tourists – have been in the path of Hurricane Irma, which has caused devastation across an area spanning well over a thousand miles.

The overall death toll in the circumstances is low, but unfortunately 5 people died in the British Virgin Islands, and 4 in Anguilla.

At this critical moment, our principle focus is on the 80,000 British citizens who inhabit our Overseas Territories of Anguilla, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands.

Commonwealth Realms in the Caribbean have also suffered, including Antigua and Barbuda and the Bahamas, as well as other islands such as St Martin and Cuba.

We have around 70 British nationals requiring assistance on St Martin and are working with the US, German and Dutch authorities to facilitate the potential departure of the most vulnerable via commercial means today.

To prepare for the hurricane season, the government acted 2 months ago by dispatching RFA Mounts Bay to the Caribbean in July.

This 16,000-ton landing ship from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is one of the most capable vessels at our disposal.

And before she left the UK in June the ship was pre-loaded with disaster relief supplies; facilities for producing clean water; and a range of hydraulic vehicles and equipment.

In addition to the normal crew, the government ensured that a special disaster relief team – consisting of 40 Royal Marines and Army personnel – was also on board.

This pre-positioning of one of our most versatile national assets – along with an extra complement of highly skilled personnel – allowed the relief effort to begin immediately after the hurricane had passed.

By Friday night, the team from RFA Mounts Bay had managed to restore power supplies at Anguilla's hospital, rebuild the emergency operations centre, clear the runway and make the island's airport serviceable.

The ship then repositioned to the British Virgin Islands, where its experts were able to reopen the airport.

Meanwhile in the UK, the government dispatched 2 RAF transport aircraft on Friday – carrying 52 personnel and emergency supplies for over 1,000 people.

On Saturday, another 2 aircraft left for the region to deliver a Puma transport helicopter and ancillary supplies.

This steady tempo of relief flights has been sustained – yesterday it included a Voyager and a C-17 – and I can assure the House this will continue for as long as required.

And already 40 tonnes of UK aid has arrived, including over 2,500 shelter kits, and 2,300 solar lanterns. Nine tonnes of food and water are being procured locally today for onward delivery. Thousands more shelter kits and buckets are on the way from UK shortly. HMS Ocean is being loaded with 200 pallets of DFID aid and 60 pallets of Emergency Relief Stores (ERS) today. Five thousand hygiene kits, 10,000 buckets and 504,000 Aquatabs, all DFID funded, are going onto the vessel.

As I speak, 997 British military personnel are in the Caribbean. RFA Mounts Bay arrived in Anguilla again yesterday at dusk as 47 police officers arrived in the British Virgin Islands to assist the local constabulary.

We should all acknowledge and thank the first responders of the Overseas Territories' own governments, who have shown leadership from the start, and are now being reinforced by personnel from the UK.

And many people, military and civilian, have shown fantastic professionalism and courage in their response to this disaster, and I hope I speak for the whole House in saying a resounding and heartfelt thank you.

Now this initial effort will soon be reinforced by the flagship of the Royal Navy, HMS Ocean.

The government has ordered our biggest warship in service to leave her NATO task in the Mediterranean and steam westwards with all speed.

HMS Ocean loaded supplies in Gibraltar yesterday and will be active in the Caribbean in about 10 days.

Within 24 hours of the hurricane striking, my Right Honourable Friend the [Prime Minister announced last Thursday a £32 million fund](#) for those who have suffered, but in the first desperate stages, it is not about money – it is about just getting on with it.

And the Foreign Office Crisis Centre has been operating around the clock since last Wednesday, coordinating very closely with DFID and MOD colleagues.

They've taken nearly 2,500 calls since then and are handling 2,251 consular cases. The government has convened daily meetings of our COBR crisis committee.

Over the weekend, my Right Honourable Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Governors of Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands – along with Governor Rick Scott of Florida, where Irma has since made landfall over the weekend.

I have spoken to the US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe about the US Virgin Islands in respect of logistics support for the British Virgin Islands.

As well as those affected across the Caribbean, some 420,000 British citizens are in Florida – either as residents or visitors – and UK officials are providing every possible help.

My Right Honourable Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to our Ambassador in Washington and our Consul General in Miami, who has deployed teams in Florida's major airports to offer support and issue Emergency Travel Documents to those who need them.

The House will note that Irma has now weakened to a tropical storm, which is moving north west into Georgia.

And on Friday, I spoke to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda. The hurricane inflicted some of its worst blows upon Barbuda and a DFID team has been deployed on the island to assess the situation and make recommendations. Put starkly, the infrastructure of Barbuda no longer exists. I assured the Prime Minister of our support and I reiterate that this morning.

On Saturday, my Right Honourable Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Prime Minister of Barbados to thank him for his country's superb support, acting as a staging post for other UK efforts across the Caribbean.

Mr Speaker, we should all be humble in the face of the power of nature. Whatever relief we are able to provide will not be enough for many who have lost so much. But hundreds of dedicated British public servants are doing their utmost to help and they will not relent in their efforts.

Find out more about the [government's response to Hurricane Irma](#).