

News story: UK Destroyer visits Ukraine after completing multi-national naval exercise

The Royal Navy Type 45 destroyer is leading NATO's Standing Maritime Naval Group 2 (SNMG2), providing reassurance and deterrence in the Black Sea, as well as commanding NATO's counter migration activity in the Aegean. For the next 12 months the Royal Navy is commanding two of the four NATO Standing Naval Forces, demonstrating the UK's commitment to and leadership within the alliance.

The visit follows the announcement last week by the Defence Secretary that the UK is expanding its training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces with new military courses on countering threats from snipers, armoured vehicles and mortars.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

HMS Duncan's visit to Odessa this week is a symbol of our unwavering support to our Ukrainian friends in the face of Russian belligerence and aggression.

We are also stepping up our work with NATO this year, leading half of NATO's standing maritime forces, one of the four enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroups and have deployed Typhoon fast jets to Romania, in a tangible demonstration of our commitment to European security.

Before docking in Odessa, HMS Duncan led the NATO task force through one of the largest naval exercises staged in the Black Sea near the Bulgarian port of Varna.

Exercise Breeze 17 tested naval forces from Bulgaria, Turkey, USA, Italy, Poland, Romania and Greece alongside UK military personnel in their ability to safeguard Black Sea shores and shipping, strengthening the Alliance's readiness and experience of joint operating.

This year, the UK is also leading Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (SNMCMG2). HMS Enterprise will be the flagship of the multinational force responsible for searching for and disposing of explosive ordnance. The group will be based mainly in the Mediterranean, and will be joined by HMS Pembroke in the second half of 2017.

Chief of the Air Staff visits RAF personnel on NATO mission

CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF VISITS ROYAL AIR FORCE PERSONNEL ON NATO MISSION

The Chief of the Air Staff has visited Royal Air Force personnel conducting the NATO air policing mission which safeguards the integrity of Allies' sovereign airspace.

On arrival at Mihael Kogalniceanu Air Base in Romania, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier was greeted by Wing Commander Andrew Coe, Commanding Officer 135 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) and given a tour of the detachment which operates four Typhoon aircraft.



The multi-role fighters have been based in Romania since May as part of wider NATO assurance measures designed to demonstrate the commitment of Allies to collective defence and deterrence.

After meeting personnel from the individual sections which comprise the EAW, ACM Hillier met with his Romanian counterpart, Lieutenant General Laurian Anastasof whom he thanked for the support afforded to the RAF detachment.

ACM Hillier said: "This is our first significant detachment into Romania, and demonstrating that commitment I know is reassuring to them. It's also an important message for the UK overall in NATO is to say that the breadth of our capability is significant."



"I think it very much demonstrates with air power, what the Royal Air Force can contribute for a relatively small detachment, we're really sending an important strategic message which is definitely heard by others."

The Chief of the Air Staff then visited the NATO Command and Air Operation Centre (CAOC) which monitors NATO airspace over an area greater in size than the continental United States.

Situated north of Madrid, CAOC Torrejón has been fully operational since October 2014 forming part of a new NATO command structure established following the Lisbon Summit in 2010.



The CAOC monitors NATO airspace from the Canary Islands to the Turkish-Syrian border, from the Azores to Romania, an area covering about 6,500 kilometres from east to west, including all the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and part of the Atlantic.

While receiving a brief from the CAOC Commander, Lieutenant General Ruben Servert, news came through that an RAF Typhoon had been scrambled in Romania in response to Russian military aircraft over the Black Sea. ACM Hillier was able to observe first-hand how the multi-national team, which includes 17 RAF personnel, controlled the launch of fighter aircraft from four different locations to intercept the Russian Tu-22 Backfire bombers.



In common with their colleagues in Romania personnel were then afforded the opportunity to put any questions regarding the RAF to ACM Hillier and the Chief of the Air Staff's Warrant Officer (CASWO), Warrant Officer Jon Crossley who said: "There is a real desire on my part and the senior leadership team to make people feel comfortable in being able to put forward their thoughts and opinions."

He added, "I firmly believe these opportunities allow people to feel empowered that they have a say in the future of their Air Force."

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[Press release: UK troops awarded medals for UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan](#)

85 UK troops from the Engineering and Medical Taskforce in South Sudan have been awarded UN medals by HM Ambassador Alison Blackburne in recognition of their unstinting service in South Sudan.

During their tour, the troops have undertaken projects including support of remedial works to a jetty on the River Nile and helicopter landing sites,

flood prevention and other infrastructure improvements, as well as the construction of a temporary field hospital in Bentiu. The field hospital will provide medical care for 1,800 UN personnel, and will be staffed by UK military clinicians for the next 12 months. This will enable other military and civilian staff to carry out the work of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), a challenging operating environment.

Speaking to the medal recipients, HM Ambassador Alison Blackburne said:

It is not only about what you have achieved, but also the way you have achieved it. You have conducted yourselves with incredible professionalism in a collaborative and humble manner. It is an honour to present you with such well-deserved medals.



The UNMISS medal which has been presented to troops from Op TRENTON 2 in Juba, South Sudan. Crown copyright.

Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Jason Ainley has now handed over command to Lieutenant Colonel Katie Hislop, who will continue the valuable work of the UK taskforce. Medical staff will continue to provide high class healthcare whilst the Engineering troops now turn to building the permanent hospital, as well as to UN infrastructure tasks including improving supply routes. This work will enable UNMISS to continue to protect civilians in one of the world's most fragile nations.

Following a commitment made in 2015 by the then Prime Minister to double the UK's commitment to global peacekeeping initiatives, nearly 400 UK military

personnel are supporting UN efforts in South Sudan, making this one of the UK's largest operational deployments in the world.

Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Jason Ainley said:

It has been an immensely rewarding and humbling deployment. We have achieved far more than anticipated in January. The UK Engineering Taskforce and Medics are now firmly established in UNMISS and we are honoured to be able to receive our hard-earned UN medals from HM Ambassador.

[News story: Grave of Yorkshire born WW1 second lieutenant finally rededicated nearly a century later](#)

Verifying the research submitted was crucial in identifying the final resting place of Second Lieutenant (2 Lt) Bertie Swallow of the 18th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, who was killed in action due to the injuries he suffered on 31 October 1918. Almost a century after he was buried as an 'Unknown Officer of the Lancashire Fusiliers', a rededication service was held on 25 July 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Harlebeke New British Cemetery in Belgium.

The service, which was a fitting tribute to the sacrifice made by 2 Lt Swallow, was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, and was conducted by the Reverend Stuart Richards, Chaplain to 1st Battalion, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

It is thanks to a member of the public who has submitted all of his research that this grave has been able to be identified.

I'm delighted that we have been able to pay tribute to 2 Lt Bertie Swallow here this morning and to give him back his name.

2 Lt Swallow joined the Royal Field Artillery on 9 December 1915 before moving to the 18th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers on 5 September 1918. Although he was reported wounded on 31 October 1918, his family didn't receive the news that he had died on that date until 28 November 1918. At the

time, there was no burial location recorded or even any evidence that his body had been recovered and buried locally.

JCCC now know that Bertie Swallow was buried as an 'Unknown Officer of the Lancashire Fusiliers' in Harlebeke New British Cemetery in Belgium. Records from this cemetery show that the original burial location was just east of the village of Kloosterhoek, where there were no British forces until the 18th Lancashire Fusiliers arrived on 31 October 1918.

There are only 4 other Lancashire Fusiliers officers who were killed within a few weeks of Bertie Swallow's death and who have no known grave, all of them can be excluded as their battalions were between 30-100 kilometres away.

This proved to the JCCC that there is no other candidate for the unknown grave in Harlebeke. No other officer of the Lancashire Fusiliers is listed as missing or killed in the relevant place and time period. His field burial site was not the scene of any armed conflict until the arrival of the Lancashire Fusiliers on 31 October 1918. By elimination, this confirmed the final resting place of 2 Lt Bertie Swallow.



Reverend Stuart Richards delivers the rededication service for 2 Lt Swallow.
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Reverend Stuart Richards, said:

It is a privilege to tend the flame of remembrance and to ensure that those who made the supreme sacrifice a century ago have a memorial and a name for future generations.

Almost 100 years after he died, 2 Lt Swallow's grave has been rededicated and a new headstone bearing his name has been provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

[News story: Armed Forces Muslim Forum Celebrates Eid with the Muslim Community](#)

Defence Minister, Earl Howe, Chief of Defence People, Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, and Commander Home Command, Lieutenant General Bashall, hosted a dinner centred on the theme of being driven and united by common values and purpose.

Earl Howe gave the keynote speech, in which he highlighted how the Armed Forces and Muslim community often experience stereotyping and misconceptions.

Defence Minister Earl Howe said:

It is wonderful to be celebrating the end of Ramadan together, and in doing so celebrating the important role the Muslim community plays in our Armed Forces.

There is far more that unites us than divides us, and by working together we are building a diverse force which is therefore a stronger force, enhancing our cultural and linguistic skills for our operations at home and abroad.

In his speech, Earl Howe praised the Muslim community for their generosity and resilience in the face of recent events, including the devastating Grenfell Tower and the Finsbury Park attack. The Minister then turned to the "unknown" humanitarian efforts of our Armed forces, where personnel show the same values at home and on operations overseas.

Brigadier Peter Cameron, from the MOD's Operation Directorate, gave a presentation on the UK Armed Forces' recent humanitarian operations before Mr Aamer Naeem, CEO of UK based Muslim charity, Penny Appeal, highlighted their humanitarian activities overseas and endorsed the Armed Forces for the values they share.

Sergeant Ahmed Dhalai described his experience of helping to rescue migrants off the coast of North Africa, where he was able to use his linguistic skills and cultural background to carry out his tasks compassionately, showing the importance of building a diverse force.

Colonel Steve Davies spoke about his role in efforts to foster peace and security in South Sudan, and Major Naveed Muhammad spoke about his duties in the fight against Ebola in Sierra Leone.