

News story: Defence Secretary announces new Maritime Patrol Aircraft squadrons

Nine new P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft will be operated by number 120 Squadron and number 201 Squadron from RAF Lossiemouth in Moray.

120 Squadron was the RAF's highest scoring anti-submarine unit in the Second World War with 14 kills. 201 Squadron can trace its origins back to the formation of No 1 Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service in 1914. Wing Commander James Hanson will oversee the formation of 120 Squadron from April 2018. 201 Squadron will form in 2021.

The aircraft's key role will be to help protect the UK's submarine-deployed nuclear deterrent and its two new aircraft carriers.

The UK Government is investing £3 billion over the next decade in its Maritime Patrol Aircraft capability.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Our nine new Poseidon aircraft are part of our plan to monitor and deal with increased threats to our country. They can operate at long range without refuelling and have the endurance to carry out high and low-level airborne maritime and overland surveillance for extended periods, helping keep us safe. The P-8A aircraft will allow us to work more closely with our allies, improve our surveillance coverage and will provide value for taxpayers' money.

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

Today is an important milestone in the P-8A Poseidon programme which will bring to the Royal Air Force an unrivalled maritime patrol capability. The advanced state-of-the-art sensors aboard the P-8A will provide global protection to UK, NATO and our Allies' submarines and warships, and enhance and complement the UK's standing search and rescue responsibilities.

It is also a great pleasure to welcome back 120 and 201 Squadrons. Both have long and distinguished records serving in the maritime role and together they will help forge the next generation Royal Air Force.

Poseidon will add to the UK's surveillance capabilities and is designed to conduct anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, search and rescue and

intelligence gathering. They can carry torpedoes and anti-shiping missiles.

As a leading members of NATO, the UK Ministry of Defence has already signed agreements with the US and Norwegian militaries to cooperate closely on operating their P-8A aircraft across the North Atlantic.

With the first aircraft due to arrive in the UK in 2020, the RAF has maintained its Maritime Patrol Aircraft skills by embedding aircrew within MPA squadrons of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA.

Poseidon will bring wider economic benefits with an additional 400+ service personnel to be located at RAF Lossiemouth, where £400m is also being invested in new support infrastructure for the aircraft.

As the Poseidon P-8A is based on the Boeing 737, it will help support several hundred direct UK jobs, and create opportunities for UK firms to bid for training and support contracts.

[News story: RAF opens close combat role to women ahead of schedule](#)

Updated: picture

Speaking at the annual RAF Air Power Conference in London, Sir Michael praised the opening up of close combat roles to women, ahead of schedule, as a defining moment in the RAF's history.

The opening of the RAF Regiment to women means that from September 2017, every trade and branch in the RAF will be open to all genders.

The RAF Regiment is the Air Force's ground fighting force, protecting RAF bases, aircraft and equipment at home and abroad.

Announcing the opening of the RAF Regiment to women, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

A diverse force is a more operationally effective force. So I'm delighted that the RAF Regiment will be open to recruitment to women from September. Individuals who are capable of meeting the standards for the regiment will be given the opportunity to serve, regardless of their gender. This is a defining moment for the RAF, as it becomes the first service to have every trade and branch open to both genders.

In July of last year the Prime Minister and Defence Secretary announced that

all three services would open up recruitment to ground close combat roles to women.

The RAF Regiment was due to open its recruitment to women by the end of 2018, at the same time as the Infantry and Royal Marines. However the opportunity to invite women to recruit into the Regiment earlier than expected has become available due to a review of work practices which concluded that the Regiment was closer to the Royal Armoured Corps, which is already admitting women into their training ranks, in terms of risks.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

The RAF is committed to providing equal opportunity to all, so it's fantastic to be able to open recruitment to the RAF Regiment to women ahead of schedule. We want the best and most talented individuals to join the Air Force, regardless of their gender, race, or background. A diverse force is a more effective force, and we need the best people to deliver the important work we do, be it defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, or protecting Britain's skies.

Stepping up to support Allies

Sir Michael Fallon also announced that the UK will continue to provide Air Transport support to French counter-terrorist operations in the Sahel for at least the next six months. Working together with the UK's firm ally of France in tackling extremism, the RAF has been providing C-17 air transport flights supporting the 3,500 French personnel deployed as part of the French pan-Sahel counter-terrorism initiative, Operation BARKHANE.

France is one the UK's most important European Ally on defence and security matters and both nations aim to uphold the security of Europe through sharing capabilities in the most efficient way.

Investing in equipment

Today's announcements follow yesterday's investment, announced by the Defence Secretary, of around £40 million in cutting-edge technology to improve the defence of the RAF's Typhoon fighter jets that will sustain over 100 highly skilled British jobs.

[**News story: Ministry of Defence Police**](#)

awarded a gold banding in the Business in the Community Diversity Benchmark

This is the UK's most comprehensive benchmark for workplace gender and race diversity where organisations are assessed on a range of key areas, including:

- career progression
- recruitment
- supplier diversity
- senior management and board representation of ethnic minorities and women

Business in the Community (BITC) said:

Congratulations to Ministry of Defence Police on being awarded gold for both gender and race diversity in the workplace in the Business in the Community Diversity Benchmark.

They have demonstrated a strong commitment to creating inclusive workplaces where employees are valued and rewarded for their contribution to the organisation, regardless of gender or race.

I hope other employers will learn from their example and use it to drive real change within their own organisations.



Business in the Community Diversity Benchmark: Gender gold award. All rights reserved

The gold banding marks a significant leap in the force's progress as they were previously awarded a Bronze banding for their 2016 submission.

The Force's Gender Champion, Deputy Chief Constable Andy Adams is delighted with the result and said:

A gold banding recognises our achievements and commitment to diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. This benchmark helps us identify what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

Our workforce is the key to our success therefore it is critical we recruit and retain the best people. This accomplishment will support our efforts to further diversify the force and create an environment where all our staff can contribute to providing the best service.

The benchmark measures age, gender and race workplace diversity. It is a management tool to help organisations evaluate their performance, including peer comparisons, and inform evidence-based decision-making around workplace diversity.

BITC works with organisations to ensure that age, gender, race and wellbeing do not limit an employee's engagement and success in the workplace.

[News story: The Sun Military Awards 2017 open for nominations](#)

Nominations are now open for The Sun Military Awards 2017. Members of the Armed Forces and the general public have until 3 Sept to put forward individuals and units for an award.

The awards were first held at Hampton Court Palace in 2008 and the 10th ceremony will take place for the first time at the historic Banqueting House, in Whitehall in Central London. The star-studded evening will be an opportunity for the public to recognise some of the excellent work and outstanding achievements of our Service personnel over the last year both overseas on operations and across the UK.

Over the years, the Millies have been attended by HRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry, along with senior politicians and celebrities from the worlds of entertainment and sport.

Following the success of a number of new award categories in 2016, the Millies will again include the Inspiring Others Award – honouring individuals in the Services and Cadet Forces who have inspired others to achieve more through their awe-inspiring example. The Award organisers are also asking for nominations in the Innovation Award category, which recognises firms or individuals who have developed game-changing or life-saving pieces of equipment. Last year's winner was Trauma Simulation Ltd, a firm backed by the MOD that developed realistic, life-size models to help surgeons train on battle-casualty injuries.

Last year's winner in the Hero at Home category was Sgt Adam Threlfall, Airborne Delivery Wing, who provided vital first aid to two fellow parachutists who became entangled in an uncontrolled descent, and Best Reservist Lieutenant Ruairi Holohan, who was honoured for helping migrants rescued from the Mediterranean by HMS Bulwark.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

The Millies are a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate to the nation why we have the best Armed Forces in the world and show our heartfelt appreciation for all that they do. I would like to thank The Sun for hosting this event for the last 10 years to recognise the outstanding achievements of our brave Servicemen and women who help keep this country safe.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

Be it individuals or units, Reservists or Regulars, heroic acts or overcoming personal adversity, developing life-saving technology or inspiring others in their local community, this is your chance to nominate the Servicemen and women of the Armed Forces who serve on your behalf every day.

An awards ceremony will be held at Banqueting House, Westminster on 13 December. Do you know of an individual or unit that has performed with distinction between 1 Sept 2016 and 31 Aug 2017? This is your opportunity to give them the credit they deserve by visiting [The Sun's website](#). Nominations will close on 3 Sept 2017.

The Sun Military Awards categories are:

1. Hero at Home (Individual): Awarded to an individual from the Royal Navy, Army or RAF for an act of inspirational heroism inside the UK whether in the course of their work, outside of their work or on an operation. Nominees should include those who have truly gone above and beyond in a single act of bravery or dedication.
2. Heroes at Home (unit): Awarded to a unit from the Royal Navy, Army or RAF for an act or continued effort in the UK in the highest traditions of the Armed Forces. The unit can be of any size and nominees must have proved themselves on an enduring mission or single response which is worthy of national recognition.
3. Hero Overseas (individual): Awarded to an individual from the Royal Navy, Army or RAF for an act of inspirational heroism outside the UK in the course of their deployment. Nominees should include those who have truly gone above and beyond in a single act of bravery or dedication.
4. Heroes Overseas (unit): Awarded to a unit from the Royal Navy, Army or RAF for an act or continued effort in outside the UK in the highest traditions of the Armed Forces. The unit can be of any size and nominees must have proved themselves on an enduring mission or single response which is worthy of national recognition.
5. Best Reservist: Awarded to an individual Reservist from any branch of the Reserves for an act of bravery or exceptional service at home or abroad. Nominees should have gone above and beyond in their role as a committed reservist and be worthy of recognition for a single act of heroism, or for exceptional dedication.
6. Inspiring Others: A new award for 2016 honouring individuals from the Royal Navy, Army or RAF, but also the Cadet Forces including cadets and adult volunteers who, through their

awe-inspiring example, have inspired others to go further and achieve more. Individuals could be nominated who have inspired others to greater heights in their work, but also outside their day job.

7. **Overcoming Adversity:** Awarded to an individual from the Royal Navy, Army or RAF who has overcome personal adversity in any area of their life. Traditionally this award had gone to those who have overcome injury in conflict, and while this category is still very much open to those who have beaten the odds to survive and thrive, it is also open to those who have overcome any kind of adversity, whether that be an underprivileged background, or disability, to go on to exceptional service.
8. **Innovation Award:** A new award for 2016 open to an individual or company of any size which has designed, developed and delivered a piece of life-saving or game-changing equipment that is transforming the work of our Armed Forces at home and abroad. This award is not restricted to a piece of kit but can be a system, scheme or employment programme that is a true innovation.
9. **Support to the Armed Forces:** Awarded to a civilian charity, group or company that has delivered unrivalled support to the Armed Forces community, to sustain and encourage them in any facet of military life, and life after service.
10. **Judges' Award:** Awarded at the Judges' discretion to any individual, group or unit, to honour exceptional service worthy of recognition.

[News story: Defence Secretary welcomes Iraqi Victory in Mosul](#)

Updated: update

Welcoming Prime Minister Abadi's statement on Mosul, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

I congratulate Prime Minister Abadi, and the Iraqi forces who have been fighting on the ground with great bravery and care against a brutal opponent. Daesh has total disregard for innocent civilian life and we should welcome their defeat in a city that was ground zero for their so-called caliphate.

Britain has played a leading role in the Coalition that has helped bring about the removal of the death cult from Mosul. The RAF has struck more than 750 targets as part of the campaign to liberate Mosul – second only to the United States. While these pin point strikes have brought an end to Daesh in the city, there is still more to do. This barbaric group remains dug in west of the Euphrates and clearing operations in and around Mosul will be needed because of the threat from improvised explosive devices.