

# News story: Defence Secretary pays tribute to Sikh community

The Defence Secretary joined members of the British Sikh Association at a special Vaisakhi dinner at the Lancaster Hotel in London, where they put pen to paper to formally recognise the strong ties between the Sikh community and the Armed Forces.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

A diverse military is a strong military which is why we're committed to making sure our forces better represent the society they serve – this Covenant signing is yet another demonstration of this.

Sikhs have a rich history with the Armed Forces, from their unsurpassed courage at the Battle of Saragarhi 120 years ago, to the hundreds of thousands of Sikhs who fought for Britain during the First and Second World Wars. We will work with the Association to ensure that tradition continues.



During his speech at the British Sikh Association The Defence Secretary paid tribute to the rich history that Sikhs have with the Armed Forces

170 Sikhs currently serve in the Royal Navy, Army and the Royal Air Force, with many more around the UK serving as Reservists. The British Sikh report published on Tuesday also found that 69% of Sikhs would support their child taking a career to defend the nation.

This signing of the Armed Forces Covenant is a demonstration of the commitment to ensuring a more diverse force. The MOD is aiming to make sure 10% of recruits come from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds by 2020 and is making progress with BAME personnel currently making up nearly 6% of new recruits, an increase on the previous year.

Amongst others, the Association has made pledges to urge more than 2000 members, representing 24 employers across the country, to provide job opportunities for service leavers and promote the unique skills that they bring to the work place. They also agreed to support the Cadet Expansion Programme by promoting the benefits of becoming a Cadet Force volunteer and will link Sikh communities with personnel.

Dr Rami Ranger, Chairman of the British Sikh Association, said:

The Covenant demonstrates our commitment as citizens of the United Kingdom to our illustrious Armed Forces, whilst at the same time recognising their round-the-clock, 365 days a year commitment for our freedom.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment from the nation, enshrined in law, that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly and not disadvantaged due to their service.

Over 1,500 businesses and organisations across the UK have already signed, making practical pledges that have made a difference across the Armed Forces community.

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## **No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron Rolls out for Exercise Frisian Flag**

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**The Netherlands is the destination for No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron as RAF Wittering's famous drivers set off in support of Exercise Frisian Flag on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017.**

A blustery afternoon saw seventeen trucks loaded with enough equipment to support six tornado jets and 140 personnel leave Cambridgeshire's historic air station. During Exercise Frisian Flag the RAF will operate alongside many

European air forces and the United States Air National Guard.

Squadron Leader Rick Longworth is Officer Commanding No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron. He said: "Not everything can be moved by air; sometimes you need the economy and flexibility of surface transport, which helps us to keep our valuable transport aircraft available for tasking."



2MT, as the Squadron is known, provides the RAF with its only heavy-lift transport capability by road or sea, supporting operations and exercises across the globe. In addition to HGVs, the Squadron also boasts airfield support vehicles like aircraft towing tractors and fuel bowsers.

Squadron Leader Longworth continued: "This is not the sort of work you can just give to a haulage company. Trained airmen and airwomen are needed for this job; military drivers who understand how to work around an operational airfield and move aviation equipment."



The Squadron was formed during the Battle of Britain when spares for the Spitfires and Hurricanes, ammunition and equipment had to be urgently ferried from airfield to airfield. In Exercise Frisian Flag, the air forces of the world will practise defensive and offensive mixed-fighter operations.

In addition to the RAF Tornados, F-16s, F-15s, Mirage 2000's and the distinctive Typhoon will be operating in the Dutch skies for the duration of the exercise. When Frisian Flag ends, 2MT will be sent to recover all the UK equipment and return it in good order.

Group Captain Rich Pratley is the Station Commander at RAF Wittering and Commanding Officer of the A4 Force Elements, of which 2MT is a part. He said: "Frisian Flag is an important exercise; in deployments like these the Royal Air Force projects the UK's global influence by working in close partnership with our international allies."



Group Captain Pratley continued: "This is the second time in as many days that 2MT has been dispatched to support an exercise, this tells us that the Squadron offers Defence a very useful capability and one that the RAF is happy to showcase to our international partners."

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# HRH The Duchess of Cornwall joins 100 Squadron Celebrations

**Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall, Honorary Air Commodore of RAF Leeming joined in with centenary celebrations for 100 Sqn.**

The Duchess joined Squadron and Station personnel and families to watch a drill display by the renowned Queen's Colour Squadron, followed by a flypast of 100 Squadron's distinctive black Hawk T1A jets.



She said: "I'm honoured to be here on this historic occasion to celebrate the Centenary of 100 Squadron. When I presented their new Standard to them in 2010, who would have known that this generation of pilots would be conducting operations in the skies above Syria and Iraq, in the most intense and sustained air operation that the RAF has conducted in the last 25 years?"

"On this very special occasion we honour the heroism, and valour of our predecessors. But let's not forget that as today marks the passing of the baton to the new generation of Airmen, the next chapter of this Squadron is yet to be written."



The Duchess was then invited to meet with personnel and families from across RAF Leeming, as well as special guests including 100 Squadron association veterans.

For Wing Commander Andy Wright, Officer Commanding 100 Squadron, it was a personally special day. He said: "It's been a real honour to have the Duchess of Cornwall with us today – everyone has been walking around with a smile on their face. Before I arrived here, I knew I would be lucky enough to be here for this day. As I was writing my speech for the dinner I researched the Squadron history and there has been so much – on this day in 1917 the Squadron was days away from going to France to take on the Red Baron, for example.

"100 Sqn

has a really rich history, but we are also very proud of our current role as the RAF's sole aggressor unit, and carrying the baton into the future."



The first Royal Flying Corps squadron to be formed specifically for night bombing, Number 100 Squadron formed at Hingham, Norfolk on 23 February 1917. It continued its bombing role through World War II, operating Lancasters from RAF Grimsby. Now serving as the RAF's sole Aggressor Squadron 'The Ton' delivers a huge range of operational training, including support to the Typhoon force and JTAC serials for the British Army. In November 2010, 100 Squadron received a new Squadron Standard from Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall.

Editor: MCO RAF Leeming

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## [Duke of Edinburgh visits RAF Northolt](#)

His Royal

## **Highness Prince Phillip, The Duke of Edinburgh made an official visit to RAF Northolt on Friday 17 March.**

The Duke made the visit in his capacity of Honorary Air Commodore for the unit, which is home to 33 units from across Defence and wider Government.



As part of the visit programme The Duke received an update on operations on the unit and met 120 personnel from all three Armed Services and Civil Servants. Corporal Loz Prior, who works on the unit as a Physical Training Instructor was part of the group that met The Duke, he said: 'I felt immensely proud to be part of the occasion. A big part of my role is to ensure that our people are fit to do their job, and His Royal Highness was very interested in the various ways we manage to achieve that. It was a real honour to meet and speak with a member of the Royal family.'



The Duke last visited RAF Northolt in March 2015, when he awarded a new standard to 32 (The Royal) Squadron as part of the unit's centenary celebrations.

Editor: Squadron Leader James Tenniswood

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## **[News story: Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal names new jetty for Navy's giant aircraft carriers](#)**

The Princess unveiled a plaque at Portsmouth Naval Base this afternoon (Mon 20 Mar 17) officially naming the vast berth as The Princess Royal Jetty. It will be home to the Royal Navy's two new 65,000-tonne Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.



Formerly known as Middle Slip Jetty, the berth has been upgraded and strengthened to support the carriers as part of a raft of infrastructure upgrades taking place ahead of the arrival of the first ship – HMS Queen Elizabeth – later this year.



The Princess Royal Jetty from above

Her Royal Highness met some of the workers involved in the jetty's two-year refurbishment, as well as Royal Navy bomb disposal experts responsible for safely disposing of historic ordnance. A number of wartime devices have been recently uncovered by dredging work in preparation for the arrival of the two new aircraft carriers.

The Portsmouth Naval Base Commander, Commodore Jeremy Rigby, hosted the visit by The Princess Royal. As Commodore-in-Chief for Portsmouth, she is a frequent visitor to the naval base and takes a keen interest in activities there.

Cdre Rigby said:

It was a privilege to welcome Her Royal Highness back into the naval base to officially name this historic jetty.

Work continues at a pace to get our naval base ready for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth later this year and the excitement builds as we now enter the final stages of work, testing and training ahead of her arrival.

The jetty, parts of which date back over 90 years, has been refurbished in addition to the dredging of the approach channel, inner harbour area and berth in order to make them deep and wide enough for the new ships, moving three million cubic metres of clay, sand and gravel from an area the size of 200 football pitches.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

The work on The Princess Royal Jetty is a fantastic example of how we are investing in the future of the Royal Navy and is the culmination of £100m of infrastructure upgrades in Portsmouth in preparation for our two new aircraft carriers.

The Queen Elizabeth class carriers, together with our F-35 jets will transform our ability to project power around the world.

Bespoke navigational lights, a high-voltage electrical supply and specialist carrier-specific gangways, known as 'brows', are also being provided as part of the £100m programme of works. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has worked with VolkerStevin and BAE Systems to deliver the package of infrastructure needed for the carriers.

Last week, the giant American supply ship USNS Robert E Peary tested the strength of the new jetty by coming alongside in Portsmouth. The US ship, which despite its mammoth size is still 200ft shorter than the Queen Elizabeth carriers, was the first vessel to use the jetty since its completion.