

[News story: Defence Minister and Prince Harry celebrate 200 year relationship with Nepal](#)

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster, who served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers himself, was at a special ceremony at the Nepali Embassy in London this afternoon to celebrate the end of the 200th year of UK-Nepal relations by the Nepali calendar.

The Minister and His Royal Highness Prince Harry met Gurkha families and watched Nepali cultural performances, including a traditional Khukuri dance by a Brigade of Gurkhas.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Having served in the Brigade of Gurkhas myself, I'm particularly proud of our brave Nepali Gurkhas and the key part they play in our Armed Forces and Britain's role on the world stage. This bicentenary year has been a unique chance to celebrate this and, as well as looking back, we can look forward our special relationship continuing long into the future.

With formal relations between the countries ratified in March 1816, the Brigade of Gurkhas of the British Army has recruited soldiers from Nepal since the 19th century. Gurkha soldiers fought bravely in both the First and Second World Wars, the Falkland Islands and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. Gurkha servicemen from Nepal have won 13 Victoria Crosses, the highest British award for gallantry.

They remain a fully integrated part of the British Armed Forces and, with a unique set of local knowledge, language skills and engineering experience, they also played a vital role in the humanitarian relief effort after Nepal suffered a devastating earthquake in 2015. They, along with the UK's C-130 RAF Hercules aircraft which delivered vital aid to vulnerable people, contributed to the UK's overall response to the disaster.

[News story: UK troops arrive in Estonia for major NATO deployment](#)

Soldiers from the 5th Battalion The Rifles Battlegroup (5 RIFLES), including

members of an Armoured Engineer Squadron, Military Police Detachment, Artillery Group and Port Task Group, arrived at Amari airbase last night.

They were welcomed by Estonia's Defence Minister Margus Tsahkna, having flown from RAF Brize Norton by Voyager aircraft.

The 120 soldiers are fundamental to setting up a UK headquarters in the country before the rest of the UK deployment arrives next month, increasing the total number of troops in Estonia to around 800.



Soldiers from the 5th Battalion The Rifles Battlegroup arrive at Amari airbase, Estonia.

The UK is taking a leading role in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence, alongside several other contributing nations. The deployments are designed to assure NATO allies of the mutual commitment to collective European security.

Working alongside the UK forces this year will be French personnel, and from next year, Danish partners. All are there at the request of the Estonian Government. The Battlegroup will provide a proportionate, defensive, and combat capable force to defend our NATO ally and deter any form of hostile activity against the Alliance.



An AS90 and a Challenger 2 tank being loaded onto cargo ship in the port of Emden, Germany, before deployment to Estonia.

The UK-led Estonia Battlegroup is one of four NATO multinational deployments to the eastern part of the Alliance. Other nations are deploying to Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the last of which will include 150 UK personnel, on a persistent, rotational basis.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

In the face of an increasingly assertive Russia, NATO is stepping up its commitment to collective defence. British troops will play a leading role in Estonia and support our US allies in Poland, as part of wider efforts to defend NATO.

Our rising defence budget means we can support those deployments in the long-term and strengthen our commitment to European security.

Commanding Officer of 5 Rifles Lieutenant Colonel Mark Wilson added:

The UK and Estonia have a long and proud history of serving together, including in Afghanistan, so it is an honour to lead 5 RIFLES on this deployment as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence. My soldiers are looking forward to again be working, training and exercising alongside their Estonian counterparts.

This week, around 300 UK vehicles have also departed to Estonia, including Warrior infantry fighting vehicles, Challenger 2 tanks and AS90 self-propelled artillery pieces. These vehicles, loaded onto a Roll-On-Roll-Off ferry, are currently on their way and set to arrive towards the middle of next week. French armoured vehicles, including tanks, are also due to arrive in Estonia via train after being loaded yesterday.



Personnel from the 5th Battalion The Rifles depart from RAF Brize Norton for Estonia.

[News story: Army's future is secure in Brecon](#)

Sir Michael confirmed that the Brecon Infantry Battle School will remain open, providing world-class training to 3,500 infantry soldiers each year who are preparing to become future Army leaders.

During the visit he also announced that the Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh is likely to remain in its current location for at least a decade as the Ministry of Defence discusses a long-term lease for the site.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Brecon has a long Army history. The Infantry Battle School and Sennybridge Training Area will stay and continue to be a vital location for training and exercises for thousands of soldiers every year.

Today was an opportunity to review our plans for the Barracks and Regimental Museum with Chris Davies and others to ensure that we help attract jobs and investment when we leave the Barracks by 2027

With a brigade headquarters and combat units continuing to be based in Wales, Wales' long term future as a key defence location is secure.

The Armed Forces has a strong connection to Wales, and the Defence Secretary also revealed figures showing that Defence spent £870 million with Welsh industry in 2015/16, amounting to around £280 per person and supporting 5,250 jobs. Wales is also home to one of the Army's major UK training areas at Sennybridge, which is used for various exercises throughout the year.

As part of the MOD's Better Defence Estate strategy, Brecon Barracks will be released, opening up a prime town centre site for redevelopment with the potential to bring economic opportunities and job creation to the area. By selling sites such as these, the MOD is investing £4 billion over 10 years to provide accommodation and facilities better suited to our modern Armed Forces and their families.

160 Brigade will continue to be based out of Wales, as well as the RAF's fast jet pilot training school at RAF Valley. Around 2180 regulars are based across the country plus a thousand of MOD civilian staff, demonstrating Defence's continued long-term commitment to Wales.

Sir Michael's announcements came as he met Rangers and Riflemen from 160th Infantry Brigade and presented two members of the Royal Irish Regiment with St Patrick's Day shamrocks.

[News story: Accelerator face-to-face meetings: 4 April 2017 in Harwell](#)

[Book an Accelerator meeting at Harwell on 4 April 2017.](#)

These 30-minute face-to-face meetings give you the opportunity to discuss your innovative research idea with Accelerator staff in private.

The Accelerator funds innovative proof-of-concept research that could lead to a cost-effective capability advantage for UK armed forces and national

security. This is through the enduring competition or specific themed competitions.

Before you come to your meeting please prepare by thinking about:

- what is your research idea?
- what do you think is the military benefit?
- will it save time/costs, improve capability/performance/reliability?
- why should MOD invest in this work?
- what will your approach be?
- how will you structure your research?
- what will you deliver?
- what evidence will you produce?
- what will the impact of your research be?
- how will you demonstrate progress towards the claimed benefit?

The main purpose of this meeting is for you to ask questions, and most importantly, receive advice from the team, so please leave time for this during your 30 minutes.

Spaces will be on a first-come, first-served basis and an organisation should only register once.

The Accelerator is part of the [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory](#) (Dstl) and only funds novel, high-risk, high-potential-benefit research.

If your proposal is a product that is already used in the defence and security market, you should speak to the [Defence Suppliers Service](#), or see other ways of [how to sell to Dstl](#).

The Accelerator team hold regular regional meetings. Join our [Accelerator LinkedIn group](#) for notification of future meetings.

Defence and Security Accelerator

Building R103

Fermi Avenue

Harwell Oxford

Oxfordshire

OX11 0QX

Email accelerator@dstl.gov.uk

Telephone +44 (0)30 67704236

Please email for the quickest response.

[News story: Defence Secretary confirms 30,000 defence jobs in South West](#)

During the visit to Devon, Sir Michael revealed figures showing the significant contribution Defence makes to the region, with the Ministry of Defence spending billions of pounds with industry and supporting one in 70 roles or 30,000 local jobs.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Creating an economy that works for everyone means investing and supporting jobs across the UK. Backed by a rising defence budget, we spent more than £4 billion with industry in the South West last year to help keep Britain safe.

Our commitment to the future of defence in the south west is enduring, a region that is vital to the Royal Navy and for the many serving personnel that live and work there.

I welcomed the opportunity to review with Peter Heaton-Jones and others how we can work together to ensure that the future use of Chivenor in a decade's time helps create jobs and investment.

While at the base, the Defence Secretary met with personnel from 24 Commando who have recently been engaged in climatic training, including deploying to Belize on exercise and a winter deployment to Norway. He also awarded two Long Service and Good Conduct medals to 3 Commando's Lance Corporal Kenny McBain and Staff Sergeant Daniel Moseley, from the Army's Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in recognition of their hard work and 15 years of exemplary service.

24 Commando Royal Marines will remain in the South West when they relocate from RM Chivenor by 2027 as part of the Better Defence Estate strategy. The MOD is engaging closely with local authorities and other interested parties on the future of the base.

This visit allowed for further discussion with community members to make sure the release of the site will bring the best possible opportunities like jobs, housing and economic benefits to the local area.