

Chief of the Air Staff celebrates NZ Air Force 80th Anniversary

This year marks the Royal New Zealand Air Force's 80th anniversary and the RAF is proud to have been invited to take part in the celebrations at the Ohakea Air Tattoo.



The Airbus A400M 'Atlas', the RAF's cutting-edge tactical and strategic airlift aircraft, impressed the public, international air forces, and defence chiefs alike in New Zealand this weekend.

The highly-capable aircraft, which provides a wealth of options in both operational and humanitarian environments, played host to a meeting between the Chief of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Chief of the Royal Air Force. Later, gifts were exchanged and both thanked the crew and engineers for bringing the aircraft 11,600 miles from RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire, to Ohakea to celebrate a great partnership between the two nations.

Air Chief Marshall Sir Stephen Hillier, Chief of the Air Staff, said: "As Chief of the Air Staff I am delighted the Royal Air Force has been able to come to New Zealand to help celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. We have a long and rich history together going back over decades, going back over operations, and everything we do today.



"It's a fantastic new capability for the Royal Air Force, showing our ability to deploy all the way from the UK to the other side of the world really underlines the Air Forces Global Mobility capability in support of operations, wherever they might be. We get here quickly and effectively in this fantastic new aircraft."



The A400M Atlas is the newest aircraft in the RAF's fleet. It boasts cutting edge technology, combined with the ability to move outsized loads vast distances, making it a formidable strategic and tactical air lift platform. Able to deploy globally, it can transport a load of 25 tonnes over a range of 2,000 nautical miles.

Air Vice-Marshal Tony Davies Chief of the Royal New Zealand Air Force said: "I did get to see the aircraft and have a good introduction with it last July, when I was kindly hosted by 70 Squadron. I got to fly the simulator and go flying in the aircraft, which was really impressive. Great range and payload. I am really envious that you've got them. This one has a lot of capability and a lot of credibility."



“We have a huge shared history together, our roots are from the RAF. It is very meaningful that in our 80th year the RAF is first and foremost the prime guests at our own party. To take the time and effort to come out here, especially for your Chief of the Air Staff, is really meaningful.”

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[News story: Submarines to support economic and community growth](#)

The MOD is investing hundreds of millions of pounds in developing HM Naval Base Clyde as the Royal Navy Submarine Centre of Specialisation.

This will see all UK attack submarines based in Argyll and Bute by 2020, and the eventual arrival of the Dreadnought class of ballistic submarines.

The development is expected to increase the number of personnel at HMNB Clyde to an eventual population of 8,200, with many choosing to live in the area.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed today will see the signatories work together in delivering infrastructure and opportunities for Royal Navy families and local people to live, work and prosper together.

Witnessing the signing was Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell, who said:

The UK's entire submarine fleet will be based at Faslane by 2020. This will reinforce Scotland's vital role in protecting our country, and guarantee skilled, secure jobs on the Clyde for years to come.

We must ensure this investment in the base is also a catalyst for growth and regeneration in the wider community. Today's agreement will deliver new housing and improved infrastructure, ensuring people in Argyll and Bute benefit directly from hosting the base.

Minister for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel Mark Lancaster, said:

This agreement ensures the investment we are making to upgrade HMNB Clyde, as part of the £1.7bn we are spending to improve military bases in Scotland, will not only help provide our people and their families with more stability and a better environment to work in,

but will also help transform the local area, providing skilled jobs and better infrastructure.

Councillor Dick Walsh, Leader of Argyll and Bute Council and Chair of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership, said:

This agreement is about making the development of HMNB Clyde work for Navy personnel, their families and the communities in Argyll they will be joining. It's about delivering opportunities for new residents and local people to build happy, prosperous lives together. Helensburgh and its surrounding areas offer great benefits as a place to live, work and visit, and we very much look forward to welcoming new Navy friends and neighbours.

Work will focus on key themes which are set out in a Strategic Delivery and Development Framework (SDDF) and include education, economy, community facilities, communication, transportation and housing.

Naval Base Commander, Commodore Mark Gayfer, said:

The Royal Navy is keen to ensure that the local community better understands what it brings to Argyll and Bute.

There are tremendous opportunities for mutual benefit, such as our redevelopment of the Drumfork Club in Helensburgh, building new sports facilities and the UK Government £5m of support for the Council's waterfront redevelopment.

Through its redevelopment HMNB Clyde will grow its staff numbers from 6,800 today to an eventual population of 8,200. The construction phases are expected to support a further 1,000 contractor jobs.

Work on delivering benefits for new Navy families and Argyll communities is already in progress, for example:

- **Economy and regeneration:** On 18 January 17, Argyll and Bute Council and HMNB Clyde held the first joint economic forum in Helensburgh. Local businesses were invited to hear about the tremendous opportunities available from the expansion of the Naval Base. Following the event the Council is collating findings and developing a plan of action to take forward.
- **Housing and Accommodation:** The MOD and Council are working with private and social housing sectors to develop options for choice in the housing market.

- Education and training. Argyll and Bute Council has created the role of Service Pupil Adviser to provide advice and support for the large numbers of Armed Forces children in the Helensburgh and Lomond area. This temporary post is funded by the MOD Education Support Fund.

Community Facilities:

- The MOD owned Drumfork Club, situated in Churchill Estate in Helensburgh, is currently being renovated and due to be re-opened mid-2018. The refreshed facility will be open to the entire community and feature an area for registered childcare provision and five multi-purpose function rooms which can be used for organised and semi-organised activities by local community groups and organisations.
- Although many of the Royal Navy facilities in the area have been put in place for use by service personnel, base workers, and their families, the facilities are also made available on a regular basis to local community groups and organisations.
- Communications and engagement. The MOD and Argyll and Bute Council have produced an Armed Forces and Veterans' brochure which will provide information on Argyll and Bute and the various organisations and services available to support the Armed Forces community and their families.

[News story: Defence Secretary announces world class innovation panel](#)

Defence Innovation Advisory Panel

Addressing engineering students, academics, and apprentices, Sir Michael Fallon announced three members of the new Defence Innovation Advisory Panel. The Panel will be charged with driving forward the MOD's Innovation Initiative, which aims to encourage imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship, in pursuit of maintaining a military advantage in the future.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Backed by an £800M innovation fund, we want to transform defence and work with small firms, academics and others to find solutions

to the threats to our security.

This panel of world class innovators will bring their drive and expert insights to the vital task of keeping the UK ahead of our adversaries and boosting our prosperity.

Major Tim Peake, the first British astronaut at the European Space Agency, is one of the panel members to be announced. Businessman and former Chairman of McLaren Technology Group Ron Dennis, Innovate UK's Chief Executive Ruth Mckernan, and Robert Hannigan, retiring GCHQ Director, all join him.

Major Tim Peake said:

I'm delighted to be part of the Ministry of Defence's drive to place innovation at the heart of everything they do, and to bring my experience to the effort to improve the technology, organisation, and culture that keep the UK safe.

Ron Dennis said:

There can be nothing more important than our national security, and I'm enthusiastic to be among the first of those named to this world-class Panel, who have joined MOD to spearhead their efforts to innovate across the organisation, from technology to culture – challenging the status quo, staying ahead of the curve through change and innovation.

Innovative Unmanned Technology

During his speech, the Defence Secretary also announced the launch of a two year £8 million second phase of innovative research and development, exploring the future of unmanned air systems. Developed in partnership with Leonardo Helicopters, the Rotary Wing Unmanned Air Systems (RWUAS) Capability Concept Demonstrator will be a vital tool in discovering how unmanned air systems can support our personnel on the battlefield of the future by developing new concepts and technologies.

The jointly funded programme will utilise the specialist engineering skill base at Leonardo Helicopters by exploring emerging technologies and methods. The announcement comes after the Royal Navy led 'Unmanned Warrior' in 2016: a major international demonstration of autonomous systems which could transform the way in which the Armed Forces of the future help keep Britain safe.

SMEs at the heart of innovation

SMEs are at the heart of the Innovation Initiative, and earlier on Monday, the Defence Secretary visited two world-leading Oxfordshire-based small and medium enterprises. The Defence Secretary took part in an Innovation

Roundtable with industry representatives, academics, think tanks, and senior policy-makers. The goal is to work more effectively with businesses and academics across the UK – and particularly with SMEs which might not normally think of themselves as Defence suppliers.

Sir Michael Fallon discussed the innovative collaboration between Reaction Engines, the MOD, and suppliers while touring the cutting-edge facility. The company is a global leader in aerospace propulsion and is currently designing and developing technologies for the next generation of air and space vehicles, with the potential to enable hypersonic flight and transform space access.

He also toured the Animal Dynamics facility, viewing their Skeeter intelligence-gathering micro-drone, which has tiny wings inspired by the dragonfly. Animal Dynamics' innovative research is focused on so-called "biomimetic technology": producing drones based on natural forms. The MOD has placed contracts with Animal Dynamics worth up to £1.5M since June 2015 as part of its Disruptive Capabilities initiative. The drone is part of a wider, innovative MOD Disruptive Capability project, which aims to significantly improve intelligence gathering in complex urban environments.

The infographic for the Skeeter micro-drone is divided into several sections. On the left, three views are shown: a 'Front View' of the drone's body with a 40-degree angle indicated; a 'Side View' showing the drone's profile with internal components; and a 'Top View' showing the flapping wings at a 45-degree angle and the tail section at a 15-degree angle. Three callout boxes provide technical details: 'Multifunctional composite structure with embedded smart electronics enabling advanced autonomous flight modes', 'Cutting edge sensing tech enables day/night intel gathering and high speed obstacle avoidance using bioprincipic design techniques', and 'Flexible dragonfly-inspired flapping wings enable revolutionary flight performance'. On the right, a photograph shows a hand holding a yellow scale model of the drone. Below the photo, the word 'SKEETER' is written in large white letters, followed by 'Scale model representation'. Further down, project details are listed: 'Project: Dragonfly Unmanned Aerial Vehicle', 'Requirement: Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance', 'Operation: Multiple environments, including Complex Urban Environments', 'Innovation: Bio-inspiration, Disruptive Capabilities', and 'Development: Developed for the MOD under the STRATUS Project by Animal Dynamics, UK SME'.

The Skeeter intelligence-gathering micro-drone manufactured by Animal Dynamics.

The Defence Secretary also visited the new Centre for Applied Superconductivity: a joint project between University of Oxford and local industrial partners and research centres that share an interest in the discovery and future applications of novel superconducting materials. These

include improved MRI healthcare scanners and in new quantum technologies for sensors and meteorology. This direct engagement between the research community and commercial application is precisely the kind of dialogue the Innovation Initiative seeks to foster.

Chief Scientific Advisor

As part of Defence's drive to transform its culture, the role of the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor has been expanded and is responsible for the MOD's commitment to spend 1.2% of its budget on science and technology. While in Oxford, the Defence Secretary announced that world-renowned scientist Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte has been appointed to lead the MOD's research and technology programme. As the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Durrant-Whyte will work across the UK and internationally to drive defence innovation, commission research, and use technology to keep our people safe in challenging environments.

[News story: SJFHQ undertake valuable maritime familiarisation visit to HMNB Devonport](#)

Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) was established under the last Strategic Defence and Security Review and is a new deployable, operational 2* Joint Headquarters intended to command Joint forces in response to a crises or contingency worldwide.

SJFHQ personnel come from all 3 services and the purpose of the visit to [HMNB Devonport](#) was to widen the experience of SJFHQ staff from the [British Army](#) and the [Royal Air Force](#) in particular, so they can better appreciate the significant contribution the navy can play in any future operations. This will help them to plan more effectively and understand how the Royal Navy can best be utilised in SJFHQ led Joint operations.



Lt Col James Fuller, RM, briefs SJFHQ personnel on the capabilities of HMS Bulwark. Crown Copyright/MOD 2017. All rights reserved

The team spent 2 days at HMNB Devonport, where they received briefs on a range of topics, from amphibious operations to naval logistics and the new [Type 26 Global Combat Ship](#). They toured the assault ship [HMS Bulwark](#) and travelled in Offshore Raiding Craft for a coxswain demonstration from [1 Assault Group Royal Marines](#). After a briefing from the Navy's Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) team, the SJFHQ team then split into groups to visit 2 vessels currently undergoing FOST training and assessments. The first group travelled to [HMS Duncan](#) and watched her crew on an air assault exercise, while the second watched a damage control exercise on Norwegian frigate HNOMS Otto Sverdrup.



SJFHQ personnel ready to experience a ride on Offshore Raiding Craft, courtesy of 1 Assault Group Royal Marines. Crown Copyright/MOD 2017. All rights reserved

Lt Col Nick Morton RA, SJFHQ, said:

As a Joint Headquarters, it's essential that we all have a good understanding of the capabilities and specialisms of each of the 3 branches of the armed forces, not just our own. Visiting Devonport has really helped me to develop and embed my knowledge of the Royal Navy and the reality of how it operates.

SJFHQ also has embedded staff officers from the UK's partner nations in the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and the Anglo-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, several of whom took part in the visit. The visit to HNOMS Otto Sverdrup therefore also provided an opportunity to see a JEF partner nation in action.

Captain Peter Olive RN, Assistant Chief of Staff (Operate Branch), SJFHQ said:

Our visit was enormously valuable to the team, especially those from the army and RAF. It has really brought the Royal Navy to life for the staff and helped them to understand more about the limitations and difficulties of maritime operations, as well as the

enormous benefits maritime power can provide to any future deployments.

Everyone here at HMNB Devonport and on HMS Bulwark, HMS Duncan and HNOMS Otto Sverdrup has been extremely helpful and accommodating, so thank you to them.

The visit followed an earlier familiarisation visit to the Army's Land Warfare Centre and plans are underway for a similar event with the RAF.

[News story: UK troops on NATO mission join Estonian national celebration](#)

Ahead of the deployment of 800 British troops to lead part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia, an advance team from 5th Battalion the Rifles already in country today joined the Estonia Independence Day Parade, marching through the capital of Tallinn to a crowd of thousands.

The event marks the Estonian Declaration of Independence in 1918, after Britain played a key role in helping the Estonians to gain their independence.

The UK and Estonia have a long history of working together across Defence, including standing side by side in Afghanistan, and next year marks 100 years since the earliest co-operation between the Royal Navy and Estonia.

In November 1918, to support the independence of the Baltic States, a Royal Navy Squadron was deployed to the region. This close relationship continues today, and in January this year, HMS Ramsey joined NATO's maritime group, commanded by ENS Admiral Cowan, an Estonian ship named after the Royal Navy commander in the Baltic in 1919.

The ENS Admiral Cowan, a former Royal Navy mine hunter, was formally handed over to the Estonian Navy in 2007, and is now the lead vessel of its division.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Today's landmark in Estonia's history is an opportunity to celebrate our defence ties that stretch back over a century to when they gained independence.

Britain is playing a leading role in European security by deploying forces to Estonia, alongside our allies, to defend NATO.

Backed by a defence budget rising every year, our deployment will be defensive but fully combat capable, from armoured fighting vehicles to communications specialists who can deal with cyber threats.



Photo Source: EESTI KAITSEVAGI Credit:TKE

At the NATO Warsaw Summit last year, the UK committed to leading one of four battlegroups in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland. In addition to the 800 UK troops, France and Denmark will also deploy personnel to Estonia.

The main body of UK troops are due to arrive in April and will arrive with Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicles and Challenger II tanks. British personnel have been exercising with Estonian, French and Danish colleagues in Germany recently to prepare for the deployment. The UK will also be deploying troops to Poland in support of the US-led battlegroup there.

The Defence Secretary discussed the deployment with NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels recently and also called on NATO to modernise its structures to be able to deal more effectively with current and future threats, including the threats from terrorism and cyber.

Earlier this week, Colonel Giles Harris, Commander British Forces in Estonia, met with Prime Minister Juri Ratas, who personally welcomed him to Estonia. During their meeting Col Harris and the Prime Minister discussed the historic deployment of a multinational NATO contingent to the region.

Col Harris said:

It is great to have NATO troops parading here on Estonian Independence Day. It reminds us of our shared history and values.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid also attended the celebrations, which in addition to the parade, included a formal flag-raising ceremony at the Tall Hermann tower, wreath-laying at the Monument of War of Independence on Vabaduse Square, and a church service.



Photo Source: EESTI KAITSEVAGI Credit:TKE

To find out a bit more about the NATO enhanced Forward Presence mission, watch the short explainer video below:

[NATO eFP answered](#)