

100 Years of Aeromedical Evacuation

Lone Airman in Desert Rescue

A lone airman saved the life of a wounded soldier by flying him directly to a field hospital 45 minutes away – a journey by land that would have taken days across hazardous desert terrain. Remarkably, this flight took place 100 years ago on 19 February 1917 and was the first recorded aeromedical evacuation.

Lance Corporal MacGregor of the Imperial Camel Corps had been shot in the ankle as his unit advanced towards Bir-el-Hassana in Egypt. Forty four miles from the nearest medical facility in El Arish, it was felt that L/Cpl MacGregor's best chance of survival was to be flown there in the observer's seat of a Royal Flying Corps B.E.2c biplane.



One hundred years on, and still one year away from its own centenary, the Royal Air Force remains at the forefront of this life saving aviation capability.

The heroism of the RAF's Medical Emergency Response Teams (MERT) became synonymous with recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds of injured servicemen today owe their lives to the RAF helicopter aircrew, Flight Doctors, Flight Nurses and Flight Medics who risked their lives to recover them, sometimes while still under enemy fire.



Specially adapted RAF C-17s and Voyagers, manned by aeromedical evacuation (AE) flight doctors, nurses and medics, provide the next step of the journey home for injured and ill servicemen, wherever they may be in the world. Critical Care Air Support Teams (CCAST) move critically unwell patients, while general AE teams move general ward patients.



The RAF currently has one Regular AE squadron and two Reserve AE squadrons. Squadron Leader Sarah Charters ARRC, has served as a Reservist with 4626 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron for 27 years and has

deployed

to two Gulf wars and twice to Afghanistan. She said: "It is an absolute honour

to be a part of this fantastic service which has such a rich history of saving lives.

"My squadron's motto is 'Safely Home' and this neatly sums

up the role of Regular and Reserve aeromedical evacuation personnel. We provide

high quality clinical care in the air, all the way from point of injury on the

battlefield back to the UK."



Later this year, a re-enactment of L/Cpl MacGregors historic flight in a B.E.2c will further mark this milestone for aeromedical evacuation

services. More information on medical roles in the RAF, either as a Regular or

Reserve, can be found [here](#) or by searching 'RAF medical careers'.

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[News story: Defence Secretary meets Apprentices working on nuclear submarines as new Training Facility announced](#)

BAE Systems announced today that the new training facility will provide a tailored learning environment for an estimated 1,000 craft and technical apprentices currently in training.

Mr Fallon met apprentices working in a range of areas, and toured the Devonshire Dock Hall where Audacious, Anson and Agamemnon, the fourth, fifth and sixth of seven Astute class nuclear-powered submarines, are under construction.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

This investment demonstrates the benefits that our growing defence budget brings for highly skilled jobs in the North West and across the country.

It will ensure we have people with the skills necessary to deliver one of the most complex programmes in the world that will help modernise our fleet of nuclear submarines.

Apprentices at BAE Systems already work on our cutting-edge Astute Submarines, the most powerful attack submarines ever operated by the Royal Navy, as well the Dreadnought Programme, the new fleet of four Dreadnought Ballistic Missile submarines that will carry our nuclear deterrent.

The new modern facility is due to open next year and will include a teaching block, classrooms, offices, craft workshops and welfare facilities. It is planned that the facility will include to-scale 'submarine mock-up sections' which will allow apprentices to gain hands-on experience in a controlled environment and help them develop skills working to the tolerances required to build submarines.

Following a £1.3 billion [investment](#) by Defence, construction has started on the Dreadnought submarines. Backed by a rising Defence budget and £178 billion equipment programme, both Astute and Dreadnought programmes secure thousands of highly skilled jobs in Barrow and right across the UK.

Tony Johns, Managing Director of BAE Systems Submarines, said:

The design and build of a nuclear-powered submarine is one of the world's most complex and technically demanding engineering challenges. It's vital we have right people with the right skills to deliver these programmes and this investment underlines our commitment to the future. The new facility will provide a modern learning environment to supplement the training our apprentices already receive.

The MOD is committed to delivering more high quality apprenticeships and work experience for young people right across Defence, and encouraging our industry partners to do the same. As the largest provider of apprenticeships in the UK, the MOD successfully completes more than 10,000 apprenticeships a year and we are setting a target to deliver 50,000 military apprenticeships during this parliament.

Whilst in Barrow, the Secretary of State also visited Allan Webb Ltd, a specialist in Defence Technical Documentation and Supportability Engineering to review aspects of the support provided to the MOD. Allan Webb Ltd has a strong reputation in the Defence Sector for quality and innovation having over 50 years' experience in the industry.

Allan Webb Ltd works in conjunction with BMT Defence Services, to increase the MOD's capability with training and logistical support. BMT Defence Services has a strong reputation in the naval design market, having provided the winning designs for Royal Navy's MARS Fleet Tanker, the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) aircraft carrier, and the Astute submarine

The Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon said:

Allan Webb Ltd and BMT Defence Services operate a strong and efficient partnership that provides the MOD with world-leading service helping us to keep Britain safe.

During his visit, the Defence Secretary discussed the latest innovations in how technical equipment handbooks are produced for the MOD and the benefits of this modernisation in order to meet the needs of engineers across the Armed Forces.

Our work with companies of all sizes shows Defence's determination to do its part to deliver a bold, long term Industrial Strategy that builds on our strengths and prepares the UK for the years ahead. We are working with SMEs and businesses of all kinds to innovate and build mutual security to ensure an economy that works for everyone.

Defence investment supports high-wage, high-skills jobs across the UK and backed by our rising Defence budget, £178bn Equipment Plan, and £800m Innovation Initiative, we are delivering the jobs, apprenticeships, infrastructure, and economy of the future.

- You can find out more about Continuous At Sea Deterrence [here](#).
- You can find out more about MOD Apprenticeships [here](#).

[News story: Welsh company wins £82M contract on global stage](#)

The deal with Qioptiq in St Asaph, North Wales, will see battle-winning handheld equipment – including night-vision goggles and day and night weapon sights – maintained over the next six years, to ensure they are available to our personnel around the globe.

This good news for Wales, as the UK prepares to celebrate St David's Day, follows the recent announcement that North Wales will be a global repair hub providing maintenance services for F-35 components, in a move worth millions for the region.

Speaking at the IDEX trade show, Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett

Baldwin said:

It's a pleasure to announce this £82 million contract here at IDEX. This deal will provide our troops with the equipment they need to stay safe, while also delivering £47 million of savings.

This contract is made possible by our £178 billion equipment plan, supported by a Defence budget that will rise every year until the end of the decade.

Work under the new Surveillance Target and Acquisition Support (STAS) contract will create eight new positions at the company, which employs around 560 at its St Asaph and Bodolwyddan sites. By merging 20 individual support contracts into one deal, the MOD will save £47 million for the tax payer over the next six years.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

This massive contract for Qioptiq underlines Wales' reputation as a world leader in the defence technology sector, coming hot on the heels of the choice of DECA Sealand as the global repair hub for the F35 aircraft.

This enormous vote on confidence in the Welsh economy demonstrates that we offer the highly skilled workforce and facilities that investors need. It is also clearly great news for employment in the region.

The contract covers equipment used right across the Armed Forces, from frontline infantry and Royal Marine soldiers, to military specialists such as bomb disposal experts, including infantry periscopes, laser aimers and target locating equipment.

Chief Executive Officer of the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Tony Douglas said:

This new deal with Qioptiq has reduced costs by a third, demonstrating how we are constantly striving to build innovation and value into Defence procurement and support. Crucially, the STAS contract, will deliver improved support to Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

IDEX is a biannual international defence exhibition and conference dedicated to unmanned systems held in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The United Kingdom has supported IDEX since its inception and this year a Royal Navy Mine Counter Measure Vessel, HMS Penzance, will be attending.

Mrs Baldwin and the UK team will be working to develop closer links with a range of Governments and industrial partners in the Gulf. British companies are promoting a range of innovative world leading technologies, many suitable for armed forces in the region.

They are keen to share technology, offer value for money solutions supported by training and logistical support, and build joint venture partnerships on land and maritime border security; maritime mine detection and countermeasures; and chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear and biological and chemical defence.

[News story: Defence Secretary: Britain committed to leading European security](#)

Sir Michael told the annual Munich Security Conference that while Britain is leaving the European Union, the UK would not be stepping back from its role in European security.

Britain's leadership this year is demonstrated by two new major commitments to the NATO Alliance:

- Leading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, otherwise known as the 'spearhead force'. This UK-led NATO Brigade is ready and willing to respond to any threat the Alliance faces and shows how NATO is strengthening its collective defence and deterrence.
- Deploying a battle group of around 800 personnel to lead in Estonia NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, another way in which NATO is stepping up to deter threats. Britain will deploy as part of the battle group the United States is leading in Poland, with over 100 troops.

The Defence Secretary also met with his German counterpart, Ursula von der Leyen, where he discussed the unprecedented level of cooperation between the two countries. Sir Michael also welcomed Germany's commitment to increase its defence spending.

Sir Michael, along with the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, yesterday [launched](#) Britain's new strategy for engaging more internationally in defence activity.

The International Defence Engagement Strategy is the way in which all defence activity, short of combat operations, work abroad to prevent conflict, build stability and gain influence internationally.

Speaking at the Munich Secretary Conference, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Britain is committed to Europe's security, and we're stepping up our engagement internationally. Whether defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, deploying with our NATO Allies to deter threats, or engaging globally to help countries develop their security, Britain is playing a major role – and will continue to do so.

The Defence Secretary also confirmed that Britain would keep the momentum up in the fight against Daesh. In Iraq and Syria, the RAF are flying day and night to defeat Daesh.

The RAF hit over 300 targets as part of recent operations to liberate eastern Mosul, and is now focussing efforts on the approaches to the west of the city, where it is expected the liberation operation will begin within days.

[News story: Defence Secretary calls on NATO to be fitter, faster, more agile](#)

Attending the annual Munich Security Conference, Sir Michael said the Alliance should not wait for another crisis before it modernises itself.

Calling for an ambitious programme of change, the Defence Secretary outlined three areas for a fitter, faster, more agile NATO:

- Greater flexibility for NATO's top commanders, including the power to move more staff resources around to meet current and future threats.
- Less duplication – the Alliance has five financial control centres.
- Increased coherence – Sir Michael outlined that while improvements were being made, particularly in the merging of intelligence structures, more needed to be done to break down silos.

Describing Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 as a "wake up call" for NATO, the Defence Secretary said NATO members needed to invest more on defence and called on Allies to increase spending every year until the 2% Defence Investment Pledge, agreed at the UK hosted NATO summit in 2014, is met.

At the same time NATO should strengthen its relationships with other organisations, particularly the EU, while avoiding duplication.

Defence Secretary also called on NATO to project stability beyond its borders, by working globally to improve the security areas of fragile nations.

Speaking last night at the conference, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We want a fitter, faster, more agile NATO. This means more spending on defence by all the Allies, faster, more flexible decision making, and stronger partnerships.

Britain yesterday [launched](#) its International Defence Engagement Strategy, which contained a new plan for how the UK will strengthen cooperation with Allies and partners, allowing Britain to collectively pack a more powerful punch.