

# Armed Forces mark 50 years since the start of operations in Northern Ireland

The event, hosted by The Royal British Legion at the National Memorial Arboretum, commemorated the sacrifice of personnel from the Armed Forces and civilian services who helped bring peace and stability to Northern Ireland during the UK's longest continuous troop deployment in history.

Some 1,441 service personnel died while on deployment to Op Banner or in related incidents. At the Staffordshire Arboretum, their names are listed on the Armed Forces Memorial as a lasting record of their selfless sacrifice and many of their relatives were present at the commemoration.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, who deployed to Northern Ireland with the Scots Guards in the 1990s, attended the Arboretum today. After the service, the Defence Secretary laid a wreath at the Armed Forces Memorial beneath the names of his lost comrades, Guardsman Andrew Wason and Guardsman Damian Shackleton, who died on his tour in 1992.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Such a significant number of our Armed Forces community were involved in Op Banner across four decades. It was a challenging and complex operation, and their dedication and sacrifice must not be forgotten. The men and women of the armed services should be proud of what we achieved for Northern Ireland. The peace process and the vast majority of the population's rejection of terrorism and violence is testament to their efforts. We remain grateful for their service on the nation's behalf.

More than 300,000 members of the UK armed forces were deployed on Op Banner over 38 years.

The commemoration involved a fly-past by a Puma helicopter and music from The Band of the Royal Logistic Corps. Personnel from all three services provided support to guests at the event.

In 2017 the government awarded The Royal British Legion £1.5 million to host national commemorative events, including the Op Banner commemorations.

---

# UK aid to provide vital food to hundreds of thousands of people living on the edge of famine in South Sudan

Minister for Africa, Andrew Stephenson announced an extra £18 million of UK aid on his first visit in his new role, which will be given to trusted partners to help vulnerable families in desperate need.

There are currently 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and nearly 2 million people on the brink of famine in South Sudan, where food insecurity is at its worst level in the past 8 years.

Minister Stephenson called on the Government of South Sudan and other parties involved in the conflict to stop obstructing the delivery of aid and step up efforts to help the millions of malnourished children, families and communities get access to vital supplies.

He also called on the Government to accelerate progress on the peace process, including security sector reform, establishing an open dialogue with opposition leader Riek Machar and delivering on the \$100 million they pledged to help achieve peace.

Minister for Africa, Andrew Stephenson said:

South Sudan is a humanitarian catastrophe and vulnerable people face the daily threat of starvation.

I have seen first-hand that UK aid is saving lives and today's step up in support will deliver urgently needed food, water and health services to hundreds of thousands of people.

We call on the Government of South Sudan to immediately lift all humanitarian access restrictions and to commit more resources to provide basic services such as health and education to give people hope for the future.

With just three months until the formation of the transitional government, time is running out. Significant effort and compromise are required to fully implement the peace agreement.

While in South Sudan, Minister Stephenson visited the World Food Programme's warehouse in Juba to see first-hand how UK aid is helping save the lives of people who have fled conflict.

He also visited the Juba Protection of Civilian's camp to learn about the key challenges of displacement in the country, as well as meeting with British soldiers deployed to the UN Peacekeeping mission there.

## Notes to Editors

1. No DFID money is given directly to the Government of South Sudan.
2. Last year UK aid reached over 220,000 people with food assistance, over 100,000 children with nutrition support, over 142,000 people with emergency water, hygiene and sanitation, and over 83,000 families with emergency livelihoods kits.
3. The extra support announced will help deliver vital food, medicine and water to those who need it most. DFID will work in partnership with the World Food Programme, UNICEF, International Committee of the Red Cross and other NGOs to deliver this aid.
4. The UK has deployed around 300 troops to provide important engineering and medical assistance to the UN Mission in South Sudan which is supporting the protection of civilians, ensuring appropriate conditions for humanitarian access, monitoring and investigating human rights abuses, and supporting the peace agreement.
5. The £18 million announced today is allocated from DFID's central crisis reserve and is new money that would not have previously been spent in South Sudan.
6. DFID's total UK aid humanitarian support to South Sudan for 2019/20 is projected to be up to £91 million.
7. Today's announcement of UK aid support will help:
  - At least 160,000 people experiencing food insecurity with food assistance and small cash transfers to buy food for their families so desperately in need.
  - Provide 500,000 people with emergency livelihoods support which includes seed kits and fishing tools to help the poorest people continue to earn an income and feed themselves.
  - Support at least 32,000 severely acutely malnourished children with ready to use therapeutic food.
  - Provide health services in the most conflict affected and inaccessible parts of the country.

---

## [Detailed guide: Contact Defra](#)

Information to help you answer your query before you contact us.

---

# Autonomy in a dynamic world



## Autonomy in challenging environments

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) is launching a new competition to seek ideas and innovations that could improve autonomous systems across defence. Funding of up to £4 million is available to fund multiple projects over multiple phases.

In society, we are becoming increasingly dependent and trusting of unmanned, autonomous and semi-autonomous systems to operate our machinery, cars and even our home deliveries. Similarly, in defence, autonomous systems are driving a revolutionary change in military operations, transforming the battlespace with improved intelligence and mobility.

Future conflicts and military operations are anticipated to be in ever more challenging environments. Autonomous systems will be required to continue operating effectively and efficiently regardless of the environment. The challenge for autonomy is to mature autonomous systems with the capability to operate on demand, under all conditions that may be encountered. This includes natural conditions such as rugged landscapes, dense vegetation, dynamic wind speeds or high sea states; and manmade conditions such as congested and contested electromagnetic spaces.

All these factors affect the military effectiveness of current autonomous technologies.

We are seeking proposals for novel and innovative technologies to improve the capability of autonomous military systems in such challenging environments.

Full details are available in the [competition document](#).

Due to popular demand, an additional date has been added for the dial in event and 1-1 slots. Please register using the Eventbrite links in the [competition document](#).

The competition closes on Thursday 10 October 2019 at midday (BST).

Queries should be sent to [accelerator@dstl.gov.uk](mailto:accelerator@dstl.gov.uk).

Published 14 August 2019

Last updated 30 August 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 30 August 2019 An additional date has been opened for the dial in event and 1-1 slots.
2. 14 August 2019 First published.

---

## **Detailed guide: Protecting plant health: topical issues**

Current issues related to protecting plant health and trade of plants, fruit, vegetables or plant material including *Xylella fastidiosa*.