

Press release: Mark Field visits Brunei for business and bilateral discussions

Mark Field, Minister of State for Asia & the Pacific, is visiting Brunei today (19 August) on the third leg of a six-country tour of Southeast Asia.

In addition to bilateral discussions with government officials including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Energy and Industry, Mr Field will be received for an audience with His Majesty the Sultan.

Minister Field will also host a roundtable discussion with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which will cover the future of UK-Brunei and UK-ASEAN relations, trade and investment and explore further opportunities for foreign policy collaboration.

The Minister will also promote UK expertise in regulating and developing the Fintech sector in meetings with officials from Brunei's financial service sector.

Commenting, the Minister said:

The UK and Brunei enjoy a close, long-standing and unique relationship. I'm looking forward to strengthening our ties in traditional sectors such as oil and gas, and building relationships in new sectors such as financial services.

After Brunei, the Minister will travel on to Thailand for discussions with Deputy Foreign Minister Virasakdi Futrakul and representatives of political parties.

Further information

News story: HMS Queen Elizabeth sets off for F-35B fighter jet trials

Eight years since a British aircraft carrier last flew a fast jet from her decks, the 65,000-tonne carrier will embark two F-35B test aircraft, from the Integrated Test Force (ITF), based out of Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland.

Around 200 supporting staff, including pilots, engineers, maintainers and data analysts will be joined by two 'orange wired' test aircraft, belonging to the ITF, which are expected to conduct 500 take offs and landings during their 11-week period at sea.

The aim of these initial, or 'developmental' trials are to ascertain, through the specially equipped aircraft and sensors around the ship, the operating parameters of the aircraft and ship, in a range of conditions. Similar successful trials were conducted by HMS Queen Elizabeth at sea earlier this year for Rotary Wing aircraft.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

HMS Queen Elizabeth is a true statement of our national power, and the whole country can be proud to see this magnificent symbol of our engineering prowess and international ambition leaving port to sail onto the world stage.

Her voyage to America not only shows her global reach, but strengthens our special relationship with the US Forces who we have worked hand-in-hand with on this iconic programme. As she sails along the east coast of the USA, she will signal our determination to keep fighting alongside our allies in all corners of an ever more complex and uncertain world.

F-35B aircraft will join HMS Queen Elizabeth when she arrives in the USA. Crown copyright.

Four F 35B Lightning developmental test pilots, who are members of the ITF, will embark to fly the aircraft; three British, one American. The British personnel comprise a Royal Navy Commander, a Squadron Leader from the Royal Air Force and one civilian test pilot. They will be joined by a Major from the US Marine Corps.

The trials follow the recent arrival into the UK of the first joint Royal Navy, Royal Air Force F-35B jets, based at RAF Marham. 'Operational testing', utilising British F-35B aircraft are scheduled to take place on board HMS Queen Elizabeth next year.

The deployment, known as 'WESTLANT 18', will be the first-time HMS Queen Elizabeth will have sailed across the Atlantic. As well as the vital deck trials, it will also involve exercises to prove the ability to operate with other nations' maritime and aviation assets, as well as the landing of Royal Marines and their equipment ashore in the United States, to conduct training with their US counterparts.

HMS Queen Elizabeth Commanding Officer, Capt Jerry Kyd said:

This deployment to the United States will be another first for my ship. Crossing a major ocean with 1500 sailors, aircrew and Marines

embarked and the spectre of the first F-35B Lightning landing on the deck in September is very exciting for us all.

It has been an incredible journey since we left Rosyth just over a year ago and we are all looking forward to this next, seminal chapter in HMS Queen Elizabeth's life.

HMS Queen Elizabeth departs for the USA to land fast jets on deck for the very first time. Crown copyright.

As the ship's work-up continues, so too does the regeneration of the UK's Carrier Strike capability. Commander UK Carrier Strike Group (COMUKCSG), Cdre Andrew Betton, will take command of the ship and other units of his task group, embarking in HMS Queen Elizabeth with his Carrier Strike Group headquarters staff.

He said:

As a critical step towards delivering the UK's new Carrier Strike Group, this deployment demonstrates the astonishing collaborative effort that will enable the new F-35 jets to fly routinely from our Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

At the heart of the Maritime Task Group, the aircraft carrier is well protected and sustained, ready to operate around the world as a potent and exceptionally flexible instrument of our foreign policy. These first F-35B embarked trials in a UK aircraft carrier are not only key to future operational success, but represent an iconic moment for the modern Royal Navy.

The ship will conduct trials in UK waters over the coming days, before departing for the USA later this month. She will be joined by RFA Tiderace and Plymouth-based type-23 frigate HMS Monmouth, as well as Merlin Mk2 helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron, RNAS Culdrose, Mk 4 Merlins from 845 Naval Air Squadron, RNAS Yeovilton and a contingent of Royal Marines from 42 Commando, Plymouth.

News story: Strong public backing bolsters fight against blight of plastic waste

Individuals, businesses and campaign groups have expressed overwhelming support for action on tackling the impact of plastics on our environment.

The backing comes as HM Treasury publishes the [summary of responses](#) to its recent call for evidence on how tax can be used to reduce plastic waste. The call attracted an unprecedented 162,000 responses, the highest in the Treasury's history.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond, has reiterated the department's commitment to take action through the tax system to reduce the amount of single-use plastic waste. The views received will help inform and shape the government's approach ahead of this year's Budget.

Measures which received noteworthy public support and are being considered include using the tax system to:

- encourage greater use of recycled plastic in manufacturing rather than new plastic
- discourage the use of difficult to recycle plastics, like carbon black plastic
- reduce demand for single-use plastics like coffee-cups and takeaway boxes
- encourage further recycling as opposed to incineration

The Exchequer Secretary, Robert Jenrick, while visiting a plastic pollution clean-up operation on Perranporth Beach in Cornwall, said:

Tackling the scandal of plastic pollution is one of our top priorities and we know the public is right behind us. I've been overwhelmed by the public support and the responses we've received will be invaluable as we develop our plans for using the tax system to combat this.

Our duty to leave the environment in a better state than we found it is absolutely clear and what we've set out today is another important step to ensuring a cleaner, greener future for Britain.

Hugo Tagholm, CEO of Surfers Against Sewage, said:

Surfers Against Sewage is delighted with the huge public response to the Treasury's recent call for evidence on how the tax system could be used to reduce plastic waste, which many of our supporters responded to.

This is a clear indication of the public appetite for more fiscal interventions to help reduce plastic pollution littering our environment, from inner-city streets and countryside to our oceans.

The Treasury is also looking at how it could further support measures to fund

the development of new, greener products and innovative processes that will help ensure a more sustainable future for the country.

This work forms part of the government's overall commitment in its [25 Year Environment Plan](#) to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. It builds on the recently announced £20 million plastics innovation fund – to support the production of sustainable and recyclable plastics – and follows the £61.4 million announced by the Prime Minister to be invested in tackling plastic in the world's oceans.

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Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Khan: 17 August 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday.

The Prime Minister congratulated him on his party's success in

Pakistan's elections and on his new position.

They agreed to work together to build on the good relations between the UK and Pakistan in a wide range of areas, including security cooperation, anti-corruption, and bilateral trade.

Prime Minister Theresa May noted the importance of Pakistan delivering on its commitments to strengthen institutions responsible for upholding the rule of law, and to advance the rights of women and minorities.

They looked forward to meeting in person soon.