

# 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.

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## [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.

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## [Press release: Trade Minister visits New Zealand and Australia](#)

- Minister for Investment Graham Stuart visits New Zealand and Australia, the first Department for International Trade minister to do so since the opening of consultations on future trade relationships
- Minister promoted opportunities for UK firms in NZ infrastructure and launches a joint UK-Australia investment report which shows UK is now second largest destination for Australian investment
- He'll also visit China to promote UK smart cities expertise as UK-China trade reaches all-time high of £66.5 billion

With consultations over future trade relationships with New Zealand and

Australia now open, Trade Minister Graham Stuart has become the first government minister to visit the countries since the consultations began.

Earlier this week, Graham Stuart was promoting UK businesses at New Zealand's biggest infrastructure event and today (Friday 17th August) launches a joint UK-Australian investment report alongside Steven Ciobo, Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment.

The report shows that the investment relationship between the UK and Australia grew by 22 per cent from 2010 to 2017 to more than £50 billion, meaning that the UK is now the second-largest destination for Australian foreign direct investment (FDI).

Over 500 Australian companies operate in the UK, while more than 1,200 UK companies are in Australia, employing 95,000 people. This includes BAE Systems, which landed a £20 billion contract to build nine British-designed warships in Adelaide, creating 4,000 jobs.

Combined trade between the UK and both New Zealand and Australia was worth £18.8 billion in 2018 (£2.8 billion and £16 billion respectively).

Graham Stuart, UK Minister for Investment, said:

We've taken a major step towards building our bilateral trading relationships with Australia and New Zealand – 2 of our closest international partners – by opening consultations on our potential future agreements. Combined, their investment into the UK delivered 95 new projects last year, creating almost 2,500 British jobs. These consultations will examine new possibilities for British exporters in the region, especially in technology and infrastructure.

The Department for international Trade is determined to help UK businesses take advantage of opportunities these, and maintain the UK's position as Europe's top destination for FDI.

Steven Ciobo, Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment said:

Across diverse industries ranging from defence to education, technology and infrastructure, Australia and the UK continue to invest in ways that increase prosperity and create jobs in both countries.

Both countries offer large, open and flexible economies as well as an ideal location from which to access other regional opportunities, be it in Europe or Asia.

Following his visits to New Zealand and Australia, the Minister will head to the Chinese city of Shenzhen next week, where he will promote the UK's smart cities capability at the China Smart City Expo.

Non-EU countries make up the bulk of the UK's services exports (60.6% as of May 2018), with demand for world-class British expertise in countries such as China expected to propel this proportion higher in the years to come.

He will also visit telecommunications giant Huawei, who recently committed £3 billion of investment to the UK over the next 5 years, with a UK workforce already of 1,500 people.

UK trade with China is now at an all-time high of £66.5 billion as of the first quarter of 2018.

### **More information**

The visit comes after the fourth meeting of the UK-Australia trade working group in July, with Prime Ministers Theresa May and Malcolm Turnbull reiterating the shared goal of a free trade agreement once the UK leaves the EU.

The Department for International Trade offers a range of export and investment support including through its new global network of HM Trade Commissioners.