News story: £400m deal signed for battle-winning Brimstone missile for RAF Typhoons

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has signed a £400 million deal to launch battle-winning Brimstone missiles from RAF Typhoon jets, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has announced.

The ultra-accurate Brimstone already has a successful track record, playing a critical role from Tornado fighter jets in the fight against Daesh in Syria and Iraq, and the deal will now see the missile upgraded to become compatible with Typhoons.

The £400 million Brimstone 2 Capability Sustainment Programme with MBDA UK will also build new equipment to support the capability and develop a stockpile of weapons available for operations, creating around 130 brand new jobs and sustaining hundreds more across the country.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

> Our world-class defence industry is a key foundation on which our great military is built, and the weapons it produces like the pinpoint Brimstone missiles have been crucial in helping our fighter pilots on missions such as driving down Daesh territory in the Middle East. This massive £400m investment is a huge boost to the proud workforce equipping our Armed Forces and will create and protect hundreds of jobs across the country, bolstering both the power of the Typhoon jet and British prosperity.

The new variation is being developed through the Brimstone 2 Capability Sustainment Programme will replace all earlier variants in 2022 and have an upgraded seeker, rocket motor, warhead and guidance system, making it an even more effective weapon.

The new missile will arm Typhoon when it takes over as the RAF’s principal ground-attack aircraft in 2019.

The work has created around 130 new jobs and sustains a further 270 existing jobs at MBDA’s sites in Stevenage, Bolton and across the company’s significant UK supply chain.

Brimstone is currently in use by the UK’s Tornado squadrons in Iraq and Syria as part of Operation Shader and has also been used on operations in Afghanistan and Libya.

Chief of Material Land at the MOD’s procurement organisation, Lieutenant General Paul Jaques said:

> The Brimstone 2 CSP contract enables us to continue to deliver a world class air to surface missile in support of the RAF's Typhoon Squadrons on operations worldwide.
>
> It is excellent news not only for our troops but also for the UK economy, with jobs and skills being sustained across the country.

The programme will also allow the weapon to be further developed for use on future aircraft. Brimstone is among weapons being considered for use by the British Army's new AH-64E Apache attack helicopters and the RAF's next-generation Protector unmanned aerial system.

Corporate report: Euratom exit: quarterly update, January to March 2018

This report is the first of a series of quarterly updates to Parliament on the government's progress on the UK's exit from the Euratom Treaty.

It covers:

- developments spanning EU negotiations
- international agreements
- the setting up of a domestic nuclear safeguards regime
- research and training
- stakeholder engagement
- wider issues in the period leading up to March 2019

News story: Evidence wanted on liabilities, insurance and charging for UK commercial spaceflight

The Space Industry Act became law on Thursday 15 March unlocking an exciting new era of British space innovation, exploration and investment.

The Government committed to issuing a call for evidence, to seek input on liabilities provisions following Parliamentary debates. The UK Space Agency

and Department for Transport are now leading that call to help inform future policy on liabilities and on insurance and charging arrangements as well.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

“We are ensuring the regulatory framework set out in the Space Industry Act leads to a safe, responsible and attractive environment for small-satellite launch and sub-orbital flight.

“This is a chance for interested parties to have their say on the important issues of liabilities, insurance and charging, as we take the next steps towards enabling launches from UK spaceports for the first time, as part of the Government’s Industrial Strategy.”

The Space Industry Act is the most modern piece of space industry legislation anywhere in the world and means UK businesses will soon be able to compete in the commercial space race from UK spaceports.

This will not only ensure Britain is capable of launching small satellites and scientific experiments from UK soil, but also enable the UK to take advantage of future developments like hypersonic flight and high-speed point to point transport.

The UK is already a global hub for satellite manufacturing, operation and application development. Access to space will allow companies to deploy satellites as well, making the UK a one-stop shop for satellites services and the best place in Europe to start and grow a space business.

The Government’s Industrial Strategy White Paper included £50 million to enable new satellite launch services and low gravity spaceflights from UK spaceports.

Press release: Foreign Secretary: West takes a stand to halt reckless ambitions

Never before have so many countries come together to expel Russian diplomats. By last night, the total stood at more than 20 nations collectively deciding to remove more than 100 Kremlin officials. In the process these allies of Britain have consciously placed themselves at risk of retaliation.

Their principled stand in the aftermath of the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury on March 4 may well carry a price, perhaps in the form of some of their own diplomats being removed from Moscow, so I am deeply grateful to all the nations who have resolved to act. And I believe that yesterday’s events

could become a turning point.

Do not underestimate the effect of these measures on Russia's networks of espionage. When the Foreign Office evicted 23 undeclared intelligence officers from the Russian embassy in London, we eviscerated the Kremlin's painstakingly assembled operation in Britain.

Yesterday's action delivers a further blow from which Russian intelligence will need many years to recover. But I will resist any temptation to proclaim that the response was all about us. Our allies have responded because they share our view of the threat posed by the Kremlin to their values and security.

The use of a banned nerve agent on British soil falls into a wider pattern of President Putin's reckless behaviour. In the past four years, the Kremlin has annexed Crimea, ignited the flames of conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, hacked the German Bundestag, interfered in elections across the world, sought to hide Assad's use of poison gas and joined his onslaught against the Syrian people.

The common thread is Mr Putin's willingness to defy the essential rules on which the safety of every country depends. Hence every responsible nation shares a vital interest in standing firm against him.

Our allies have not been deterred by Russia's usual tactics for avoiding pressure. Sure enough, the Kremlin began pumping out a deluge of lies almost as soon as Sergei and Yulia Skripal had entered intensive care.

So far, my colleagues at the Foreign Office have identified 21 theories broadcast by the Russian state media, ranging from the sublime (Skripal overdosed because he was addicted to novichok) to the absurd (America did it to "destabilise the world") to the offensive (The UK poisoned its own city to spoil the World Cup).

There was a time when this tactic of sowing doubt might have been effective, but no one is fooled any more. I believe yesterday was a moment when the cynicism of the propaganda machine was exposed for all to see. The western alliance took decisive action and Britain's partners came together against the Kremlin's reckless ambitions.

Originally published here

News story: Skills Minister calls on employers to join new T level panels

Leading businesses are being urged to grasp the opportunity of working with

the government to develop prestigious new T level qualifications.

Skills Minister Anne Milton has called on industry experts from agriculture, environmental and animal care; business and administration; hair and beauty; creative and design; and catering and hospitality to join the influential T level employer panels and help develop the outline content for new qualifications.

T levels are new courses, which will be on a par with A levels and provide young people with a genuine choice between technical and academic education post 16. The first subjects in digital, education and childcare, and construction will be taught from 2020.

Skills Minister, Anne Milton said:

> T levels are about giving greater choice to young people to get the skills they need to achieve good jobs. It is also about businesses – we know they are crying out for a skilled workforce and T levels will create the next generation of talented employees for them.
>
> We are already working with top industry leaders and want even more to join us to make this a success for individuals, businesses and the economy.

T level content is already being developed with the help of top firms like Rolls-Royce, IBM, Lloyds and Morphy Richards, among others.

The Department for Education wants business representatives to step-up and help design the new qualifications in T level routes which will be delivered from 2022:

- agriculture, environmental and animal care
- business and administration
- hair and beauty
- creative and design
- catering and hospitality

Businesses can apply to be part of the T level qualification panels. The closing date for applications is 5pm Tuesday 8 May 2018.