

Speech: Statement from Rory Stewart: United Kingdom Minister for Africa

UK's Minister for Africa, Rory Stewart stated his excitement regarding his new appointment

Following his recent appointment, the United Kingdom's Minister for Africa Rory Stewart said: "I am so excited to have the role of Minister for Africa in both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

"Africa is an extraordinary continent with so much potential: An incredible number of young people, some of the most stunning landscapes in the world and extraordinary new businesses. There is also a great historical relationship between Africa, Europe and the world, which needs to be developed and deepened.

"I am really looking forward to learning from Africans, to listening to the experiences of people on the ground and building relationships, that, if we can get them right, should flourish over 30, 40, 50 years with mutual respect and learning between Africa and the United Kingdom."

News story: Angelina Jolie visits British military team in Kenya

This specialist instructional course hosted by the IPSTC is funded by the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and delivered with the support of the British Peace Support Team (East Africa). Ms Jolie's visit to the region has two distinct but complementary purposes: to highlight the continued plight of Africa's refugees, marked yesterday by World Refugee Day; and, to maintain momentum behind the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, with the day before (19 June) being the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Ms Jolie participated in training delivered to military and police personnel involved in African Peacekeeping Missions who are often first responders following acts of sexual violence in conflict. She spoke to peacekeepers, police and civil society experts about their experience in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings and in their communities. She participated in discussions about how personnel on the course can lead the way in changing attitudes and improving understanding of sexual and gender based violence in their organisations. The Special Envoy

also took part in a roundtable discussion on PSVI chaired by the British High Commissioner, Nic Hailey, before addressing students on the course.

Ms Jolie said:

It meant a lot to hear military gender advisors and officers say what they believe and what they want others to understand, that this is not simply about law and human decency. It is about military effectiveness. If civilians do not have confidence in you as peacekeepers your mission will not succeed. And while this training is clearly only a beginning, it is the only way that we will begin to address the problems: working nation by nation to raise standards and increase effectiveness.

Angelina Jolie visited the International Peace Support Training Centre. Crown Copyright.

During the visit the Special Envoy spoke to two of the UK military's gender experts, Major Cleo Bigwood and Captain Kezia Jukes, who are attending the SGBV training at the IPSTC. Captain Jukes is currently deployed to South Sudan as part of the UK's support to the UN Peacekeeping mission in country, and Maj Bigwood will deploy to the Democratic Republic of Congo in October as the UN Mission's Gender Adviser. Both are an example of MOD efforts to increase military Gender Advisers, gender focal points, and female peacekeepers, as part of international Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments.

Maj Bigwood said:

This is a fantastic opportunity to share experiences and develop our knowledge on this vitally important topic that affects all levels of society. The British Army is investing personnel and its global experience into this effort.

In September last year Ms Jolie spoke at the UK-hosted UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial about the need to stamp out acts of sexual abuse by peacekeepers and of the imperative for more female peacekeepers to enhance operational effectiveness and to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable, including women, are met by Peacekeeping Missions. The UK military's Gender Champion and lead for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Initiative, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger, welcomed the Special Envoy to London for the event and continues to work with her in the UK's efforts on WPS, PSVI and Gender.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

I am delighted that Ms Jolie has been able to visit this excellent training for African Peacekeepers and I am proud of the UK's

supporting role. I commend the work of all those committed to International Peacekeeping efforts and thank them for their compassion, dedication and bravery in seeking to prevent violence and restore peace in some of the most challenging parts of the world.

The UK continues to lead internationally on ending sexual violence in conflict and Defence is working hard in support of its partners, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, to refine and strengthen the UK's contribution to this most valuable work.

Angelina Jolie visited the International Peace Support Training Centre. Crown Copyright.

2017 marks five years since Ms Jolie and Lord William Hague founded the PSVI. Since 2012, over 17,000 Military and Police personnel have been trained on sexual violence issues, the PSVI Team of Experts has been deployed more than eight times. £40m in UK funding has been committed so far and we have supported over 70 projects across the world to help end sexual violence in conflict.

The UK's PSVI priorities for 2017/18 include challenging the stigma survivors of sexual violence experience; delivering justice for survivors, ensuring better access to healthcare, psychosocial support and livelihood programmes; and improving how security forces around the world prevent and respond to these crimes.

British High Commissioner to Kenya Nic Hailey said:

The UK is committed to ending the use of rape as a weapon of war. I was delighted that Ms Jolie was able to experience some of the training we provide through our team in Kenya.

We have trained 17,000 military and police personnel in preventing sexual violence around the world since 2012. But there is more to do. The UK looks forward to working with Kenya and other international partners to put an end to sexual violence in conflict.

In addition to supporting PSVI work, the BPST(EA)'s mission is to coordinate UK military assistance to Armed Forces in Eastern Africa, supporting security and stability in the region.

So far this year the team has already trained more than 500 Armed Forces personnel from African partner nations, and this number is expected to double by the end of 2017. BPST(EA)'s Training and Defence Engagement takes place throughout the region at various locations, primarily at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya.

Commander BPST(EA), Colonel Richard Leahey said:

Today's event is a clear example of the UK's commitment to the PSVI, and the BPST(EA) is proud to play a part in that.

My team will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our African and international partners to support security and stability in the region. Our training and Defence Engagement activity help make communities here safer.

Press release: First new homes secured for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid today (21 June 2017) announced that the government has acquired the first tranche of permanent new homes to rehouse local residents affected by the fire at Grenfell Tower.

The 68 flats are all newly built social housing and form part of the Kensington Row development in Kensington and Chelsea.

Work is ongoing to identify the needs of those affected who have lost their homes and match them to suitable housing. The expectation is that these new properties will be offered as one of the options to permanently rehouse residents from Grenfell Tower.

The increase to local social housing is a significant step towards meeting the government's commitment that every family from Grenfell Tower will be rehoused in the local area.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The residents of Grenfell Tower have been through some of the most harrowing and traumatic experiences imaginable and it is our duty to support them.

Our priority is to get everyone who has lost their home permanently rehoused locally as soon as possible, so that they can begin to rebuild their lives.

The government will continue to do everything we can as fast as we can to support those affected by this terrible tragedy.

More than 110 housing needs assessments have been completed to date and offers will then be made to families and this process will continue until every family has been housed.

Extra construction staff have been committed by the developer St Edward and working hour restrictions will be relaxed so work can continue around the clock to fast-track completion of the development to meet the increased demand in the area following the fire at Grenfell Tower. The government has also provided additional funding to fit out the flats to ensure they are ready for people to move in to sooner.

The new permanent housing is expected to be completed by the end of July. The Department for Communities and Local Government has also already committed to finding suitable accommodation in the local area for victims who lost their homes within a maximum of 3 weeks.

Each home will be fully furnished and completed to a high specification and St Edward will provide liaison staff for each block so that residents are fully supported in settling in to their new homes. This will be in addition to the ongoing range of support being provided to those affected by the tragedy.

The homes will be a mix of 1,2 and 3 bedroom flats across 2 blocks.

St Edward is a joint venture between the Berkeley Group and Prudential.

[News story: Fathers Day bikers urged to ride safe](#)

Hundreds of motorcycle enthusiasts gathered to meet biking legend Charley Boorman at the iconic Ryka's Café at Box Hill in Surrey yesterday (Fathers' Day, Sunday 18 June) where there was a special focus on biker safety.

The bikers, many of them dads indulging their passion on their special day, were given tips by Charley, who has teamed up with Highways England to launch Be a Better Biker – a motorcycle safety campaign that aims to give experienced bikers practical riding tips when using the road network on areas such as unexpected hazards, cornering, overtaking and riding when tired.

One of the Highways England team speaking to a biker about motorcycle safety

Charley, the TV presenter, travel writer and actor, is well placed to support the campaign as 18 months ago he had a serious accident while riding his bike, which led to him nearly losing a leg. Charley was on hand to talk to bikers about the campaign and sign copies of his new book 'Long Way Back'.

Charley said:

We are all riders, some of us experienced and some of us not too much. What I like about this campaign is it aims to give practical and good tips on how to be a little safer on the roads. As we know as bikers, roads can be challenging and the people on them frustrating. As roads are getting busier we have to be more careful. So I'm happy to be involved in this launch on Father's Day of highlighting that it's important to stay safe on bikes. As they say rubber side down!

Richard Leonard, Head of Road Safety, (Safety, Engineering & Standards) at Highways England added:

We understand the pride and the passion that goes into biking, but we're concerned about the persistently high casualty rate – put simply far too many bikers are still coming to harm on our roads. This campaign will help give bikers some practical tips that they can use to protect themselves and continue enjoying the unique freedom of the open road that biking offers.

The campaign will run in the South East for four weeks from today, and includes digital and print advertising in key motorcycle and trade publications, advertising in motorway service areas and petrol stations at key areas on our network, and social media using the hashtag #beabetterbiker.

We are also producing a toolkit for partners to use to communicate campaign messages. The toolkit includes the artwork for display advertising, posters, videos and imagery for social media.

Today is also the start of Ride to Work Week, the industry led week which highlights the benefits of commuting by motorcycle or scooter.

News story: Grave of brave Nottingham born WW2 airman finally rededicated

Flight Sergeant (Flt Sgt) Frank Edward Reed's final resting place has been identified after his aircraft, RAF Stirling Bomber EH945, part of 620 Squadron, was shot down in Germany on 27 September 1943. To honour the bravery and sacrifice of Flt Sgt Reed, a rededication service was held on 20 June 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Hanover War Cemetery, Germany.

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by The Reverend Father (Flight Lieutenant) James Mealy, Station Chaplain RAF Coningsby.

(left to right) Flt Lt Adam Jux, RAF Association; Group Captain Roland Smith, Defence Attaché; Nigel Reed, son of Flt Sgt Reed; and Gary Reed, nephew of Flt Sgt Reed (Crown Copyright) All rights reserved

Flt Sgt Reed was a Flight Engineer and part of a 7 man crew onboard the Bomber aircraft which took off from RAF Chedburgh in Suffolk at 7.55 pm on 27 September 1943. Research undertaken by JCCC and Air Historical Branch showed that Stirling EH975 was shot down and crashed later that evening. Subsequent reports stated that some of the crew were taken as prisoners of war, including Flt Sgt Reed who was badly injured, others were unfortunately killed during the crash. Flt Sgt Reed was taken to a hospital in Hanover where it is unclear how he died but most probably from his wounds.

Flt Sgt Reed was just 1 month short of his 21st birthday when he was killed.

Tracey Bowers, JCCC said:

This has been an incredibly rewarding case to work on and to be able to bring closure after such a long search for answers by Frank's son, Nigel, who has travelled from New Zealand to be with us today, is a real privilege.

Unfortunately we may never know exactly how Flt Sgt Reed died but we know he ultimately lost his life serving his Country. Now finally, his grave can bear his name and we're very lucky to have his son and members of his RAF family here with us today.

Reverend Father (Flt Lt) James Mealy delivers the service of rededication (Crown Copyright) All rights reserved

Rev. Fr (Flt Lt) James Mealy said:

By God's grace it is right and proper that we gathered today in prayer and thanksgiving for the sacrifice of Flt Sgt Reed. It was a privilege for me as an RAF Padre to lead this rededication service for the family and representatives today.

This is the first rededication service I have had the honour of leading and I will remember this day for the rest of my life.

Nigel Reed attending his father's service of rededication (Crown Copyright) All rights reserved

Flt Sgt Reed's son, Nigel Reed, said:

Today has opened up a new chapter in my relationship with my father whom I now feel a real connection and closeness to. I would like to thank all those who made this ceremony, and the one held in Chedburgh, possible, it has meant so very much to me.

The moving ceremony rededicating the new headstone bearing Flt Sgt Reed's name, as provided by the CWGC, was held in the cemetery in Hanover near to where the crash site was.

To further honour Flt Sgt Reed's memory a simultaneous ceremony was held in Chedburgh, Suffolk (where 620 Squadron was based). It was organised by former members of The Blues and Royals, Nigel's former regiment and attended by his regimental brothers.