

News story: Defence Secretary and Australian Minister tour Scottish site building world-class warships as £1 billion is pumped into supply chain

Australia's decision to choose BAE Systems to build the nine British-designed warships could be worth up to £20 billion, and has been hailed as the biggest Naval ship deal for a decade. The agreement has massive potential benefits across the entire existing Type 26 supply chain, which the Defence Secretary outlined has now seen investment of more than £1 billion across more than 80 companies.

Speaking during the visit to BAE Systems' Clyde Shipyard with Minister Payne today, the Defence Secretary revealed the massive investment had already boosted family firms and British businesses across the nation, showing the importance of shipbuilding in every corner of the country, and its potential to support allies across the world.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This renaissance in British shipbuilding is great news for our major yards, but also for the whole defence industry, with millions being injected into so many businesses, both big and small, supporting and supplying our world-class warships. The Type 26 supply chain has now seen investment worth over £1 billion, and many of the businesses involved are now perfectly placed to benefit from Australia's £20 billion build.

Australian Minister of Defence Ms Payne toured the shipyard where Britain's new warship fleet is being constructed. Her Government's 'Global Combat Ship' agreement, which was announced last month and will see nine of Britain's cutting-edge ships built in Australia, is also expected to draw on the United Kingdom's robust supply chain to support the construction of its fleet.



Defence Secretary and Australian Minister tour Scottish site building world-class warships as £1 billion is pumped into supply chain. Crown copyright.

BAE Systems Chief Executive Charles Woodburn said:

Australia's selection of the Type 26 Combat Ship for its Future Frigates programme reflects the world-leading anti-submarine warfare capabilities these ships will deliver to the UK and to the Commonwealth.

In the 12 months since cutting steel on the first of the UK ships, we have committed more than £1 billion with supply chain companies, large and small – vital partners in delivering cutting edge capability to the Royal Navy, supporting thousands of jobs and contributing to national prosperity.

Our recent success on the Australian Future Frigate programme will not only deliver huge benefits for Australia, supporting jobs, local industry and sovereign capability – it will also generate opportunities for companies in our UK supply chain.

The pair's visit to the Govan shipyard comes almost exactly a year to the day since the first steel was cut on HMS Glasgow, marking the beginning on the build of Britain's first Type 26 frigate.

More than 80% of the total equipment spend has now be committed to the supply chain, and more than 80 companies have secured contracts to supply material

for the first three ships.

Sixty-four of those companies are based across the United Kingdom, supporting more than 4000 jobs. The regional reach of the Type 26 ship helped secure the Australian deal for BAE Systems, with the success stories across Britain expected to be replicated in Australia.

The naval contract, which is the biggest surface ship deal in the past decade and saw the UK chosen ahead of Italian and Spanish firms, is the first time a British ship design has been exported since the 1970s.

The deal will secure more than 4,000 jobs in Australia and boost Britain's export economy for generations to come, opening a raft of opportunities for British firms to offer specialist knowledge and capabilities.

The 6,900 tonne multi-mission warships are designed to support anti-submarine warfare and a whole range of other operations anywhere in the world. They will form a key part of the Royal Australian Navy.

The formidable frigates will also allow interoperability between Australian and Royal Navy ships amid a climate of intensifying threats around the world, especially in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific regions.

The visit to the Scottish shipyard also came on the day the [Defence Secretary announced plans to ensure that thousands of troops resident in Scotland are not left out of pocket following recent tax rises from the Scottish Government.](#)

[News story: Autonomy for tomorrow's world](#)

Updated: Headline edit.

In a new cross-government collaboration, the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Department for International Development (DFID) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) are working together on turning cutting-edge designs for drones and robots into reality.

Experts from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) are leading the partnership as part of MOD's Innovation Autonomy Challenge, with joint competition funding from MOD, DFID and UKRI being placed through the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

This is the second phase of the competition, which will build prototypes for initial demonstration this year, and is worth a total of £3.8m over the next 12 months. Four of the five successful organisations are British-led, with a

wide range of sub-contractors from small and medium enterprises, industry and academia.

Winning systems concepts include autonomous hoverbikes, powered paragliders and other unmanned air vehicles, operating alongside self-driving ground vehicles to deliver supplies across difficult, and potentially contested, terrain.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Defence makes an unrivalled investment in science and technology, creating thousands of highly-skilled jobs and brilliant career opportunities, generating billions for the UK economy.

This Autonomous Last Mile competition has seen next-generation concepts from unmanned hoverbikes to powered paragliders come to life.

And they could be saving troops' lives on the battlefield in years to come. I congratulate all those involved in the competition as they ensure our military remain ahead of our adversaries.



The Autonomous Last Mile Resupply project is looking at the technologies that could transform the delivery of logistics. Banard Dynamics copyright.

Phase 2 has selected 5 bids, led by Animal Dynamics Ltd, Barnard Microsystems Ltd, Fleetonomy, HORIBA MIRA, and Qinetiq, to build prototypes systems for

initial testing and evaluation this autumn:

- Animal Dynamics with a system featuring novel autonomous powered paragliders;
- Barnard Microsystems Ltd with Cranfield University developing a vertical take-off and landing unmanned air vehicle-based system;
- Fleetonomy with Thales, Thesigers, Avartek & Callen Lenz to provide a system to demonstrate autonomous networked unmanned deliveries in the urban and other environments;
- Horiba Mira with Frazer Nash Consultancy featuring a highly autonomous all-terrain unmanned ground vehicle using artificial intelligence to provide GPS-denied navigation, advanced terrain perception and object recognition;
- QinetiQ with Hull University, Malloy Aeronautics, MilRem Robotics, Roke Manor Research, Oxbotica, IQHQ Ltd & Aberystwyth University offering an integrated highly-automated logistic system, featuring autonomous hoverbikes and advanced unmanned ground vehicles.

Peter Stockel, Dstl's lead for the Innovation Autonomy Challenge, said:

We're particularly pleased that we're able to take the next step on this important journey in partnership with DFID and UKRI, as part of our innovation initiative.

Working together we can collectively make the best use of the resources available for the most promising proposals and this is good joining together of important government interests and investment.

It increases our options across similar requirements and offers a broader range of potential routes to market for this rapidly developing technology area where the UK has world-class expertise and innovation.

For future frontline military operations, the technology could reduce risk to soldiers by removing them from the hazards of frontline logistics resupply and improving the pace of operations.

Lt Colonel Richard Craig, Staff Officer for Robotics and Autonomous Systems, said:

The Autonomous Last Mile Resupply project is looking at the technologies for use in ways that could transform the delivery of logistics in not only Land, but also Maritime operations. It has the potential to reduce the amount of supplies stored at the front line and increase the speed of resupply. There is the potential to increase combat mass as the technology enables the redeployment of current manpower onto different tasks.



The Autonomous Last Mile Resupply project is looking at the technologies that could transform the delivery of logistics. Fleetonony copyright.

UK Research and Innovation, which has also invested £1.2 million in the Last Mile Challenge, is funding the project under their Robots for a Safer World Challenge, as part of the Industrial Challenge Strategy Fund. The investment aims to support the development of new technologies for extreme and challenging environments, including nuclear energy, deep mining or space.

DFID's investment in ALMRS Phase 2 presents an opportunity to strengthen cross-Whitehall collaboration around innovative technologies. The investment is part of a wider portfolio of projects to see how UAVs can be responsibly used to deliver life-saving aid to the world's poorest and most vulnerable people in hard-to-reach locations, including in the aftermath of humanitarian disasters.

International Development Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles could be a game changer in delivering life-saving UK aid to the world's poorest and most vulnerable people in the aftermath of humanitarian disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis and conflict.

This fund will help develop technology that can deliver vital supplies to the hardest to reach locations and I am proud that British experts are helping use this innovative technology to save lives.

Andrew Tyrer, Challenge Director of Robots for a Safer World Challenge, said:

The increasing amount of work that needs to be done in extreme environments means there are more applications for robotics and AI, such as hazardous humanitarian aid situations. Solving all these problems presents business opportunities for UK companies. Many of the challenges being addressed via this competition are consistent with those being addressed by the Robots for a Safer World Industrial Strategy Challenge and build on the same underlying technologies.

Press release: Military personnel in Scotland protected from tax hikes

The plans will protect around 8,000 personnel who would otherwise be negatively affected by the income tax hikes. Personnel will be compensated with an annual payment to make sure that all troops, regardless of where they are deployed or where their families are based, will pay the same income tax.

Following the announcement of Scottish Government's tax changes, in March Mr Williamson ordered work to start on how the Ministry of Defence would mitigate the impact, following concerns that the changes could result in Scotland becoming a less attractive place for military personnel to be posted to.

The measures announced today will protect nearly three quarters of all armed forces personnel liable for Scottish Income Tax and will help with recruitment and retention, particularly as many of those affected are personnel with specialist skills, such as aircraft and submarine engineers.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

It is completely wrong for the brave men and women of our Armed Forces to be punished for serving in Scotland by unfair raids on their pay packets by the Scottish Government.

That's why we have taken this urgent action to ensure that our troops are treated equally and fairly.

I'm proud that the UK Government recognises the sacrifices our

Armed Forces make across the United Kingdom and the world, and that today we can reassure our service personnel that they will not be left hundreds of pounds out of pocket because of decisions taken by the Scottish Government.

The financial mitigation measures will:

- Be payable to all regular personnel who pay Scottish Income Tax, regardless of where in the world they are serving. Mitigation payments of between £12 and £1,500 will be paid.
- Cover personnel for tax year 2018/19 and will be a single payment made retrospectively
- The case for financial mitigation will be reviewed annually

The MOD will continue to review the situation each year and make decisions each tax year as to whether the difference between Scottish tax and tax elsewhere in the UK is sufficient to warrant financial mitigation. The annual cost to the MOD for Tax Year 2018/19 is expected to be £4 million.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Scotland, and military personnel who have made Scotland their home, play a key role in our nation's defence. Whether it's working on our nuclear deterrent, protecting NATO airspace, or building local security expertise in the Middle East, Scotland-based troops are engaged right now in protecting the UK and its allies.

Scotland Secretary David Mundell said:

Our servicemen and women make a huge contribution to the communities and the economy of Scotland.

The Scottish Government's decision to make Scotland the most highly taxed part of the UK means they would be unfairly penalised and it's absolutely right that the UK Government has taken steps to address that.

Scotland plays an important role in UK Defence supporting over 10,000 industry jobs and is renowned for building the world's finest warships including the UK's new aircraft carriers and the Royal Navy's state-of-art Type-26 frigates.

Scotland also benefits from £1.6 billion investment in local industry and an average of £290 expenditure per person each year. Some of the most important national defence capabilities including HM Naval Base Clyde, home to Britain's nuclear deterrent and hunter-killer submarines and RAF Lossiemouth defending the UK's airspace with its three Typhoon combat aircraft squadrons

and 51st Infantry Brigade.

Press release: UK deployment in Mali reaches the next stage

Three Royal Air Force Chinook helicopters from RAF Odiham, supported by around 90 British troops, are now on the ground and ready to begin providing logistical and troop movement support to our allies.

Armed Forces minister Mark Lancaster said:

“The UK and France have a unique security and defence relationship that has lasted for more than a century and this deployment demonstrates our shared commitment to tackling terrorism, instability and reducing threats to European security”

The Chinooks will provide niche logistical support and will also help improve safety by moving troops by air, rather than ground where they are more vulnerable to attack.

The UK has been a long-standing supporter of UN and EU military operations in Mali and has worked with international partners to prevent extremists from using the ungoverned space in the Sahel to plan and launch attacks on Europe, as well as counter the illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and wildlife.

This is in addition to existing wider support to Africa including doubling our UN peacekeeping contribution with additional deployments to South Sudan and Somalia.

News story: New medal unveiled to recognise the fight against Daesh

Sailors, soldiers and airmen received the Operational Service Medal Iraq and Syria, also known as the Operation Shader medal, from Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson. It is the first operational service medal to be created since 2003 and has its own distinct ribbon and clasp.

The Defence Secretary also confirmed today that Her Majesty the Queen has approved the extension of the eligibility criteria for the medal to new groups of personnel. It means that the medal will also recognise those who

have made a significant contribution from outside the conventional area of operations in Iraq and Syria, including civilians.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The campaign against Daesh is one that our Armed Forces can be extremely proud of. Eliminating the threat from terrorism is critical to our security at home and abroad. Our troops have made huge contributions to the fight against Daesh, helping end its tyranny in large parts of Iraq and Syria. Only by defeating this evil and barbaric group for good will we reduce the deadly threat they pose to us.

I am pleased that today those who have bravely fought against such untold evil will get the recognition they deserve. Reflecting the changing nature of warfare I am pleased to announce that the medal will now recognise those making a vital contribution to Op Shader from outside the conventional area of Operations, for example those Reaper pilots taking life and death decisions from back here in the UK.

Since 2014 the UK Armed Forces have taken a leading role in the counter-Daesh Global Coalition. The RAF has so far conducted over 1,700 strikes against Daesh terrorist targets and units from across the Armed Forces have helped train over 77,000 Iraqi Security Forces in infantry skills, counter-IED, engineering, and medical expertise. As a result, their capacity to defeat Daesh has increased considerably, contributing to the success of this campaign.

Despite recent success over the last year the operation continues and fast jets continue to fly out of RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and remotely-piloted Reaper aircraft continue to provide support to the Syrian Democratic Forces on the ground who are clearing the last remaining pockets of Daesh terrorists in Eastern Syria.

Currently around 1,400 personnel still play an important role in the Global Coalition's counter-Daesh operations in the wider region.