

Press release: Defence Secretary announces innovative threat detection system for the Army's newest armoured vehicle

Updated: Tagged Defence Equipment and Support as a supporting organisation.

The Defence Secretary has today announced a £3.7 million deal to equip the Army's next generation armoured vehicle with the latest in automated threat warning systems.

Thales UK has signed a contract with General Dynamics Land Systems-UK for the installation of its Acusonic sensor, a vehicle-mounted acoustic shot detection system, on the £4.5 billion Ajax family of armoured fighting vehicles.

The Ajax Shot Detection System will be manufactured at Thales in Templecombe in Somerset, which employs more than 700 people in highly-skilled manufacturing and technical roles.

Designed to accurately sense and report the direction of incoming enemy fire, the system will give the vehicle's crew the critical situational awareness to react to the threat. Its innovative sensing system is based on Thales's world-class sonar technology that provides the 'ears' for ships and submarines around the world.

Each Ajax will be fitted with three Acusonic sensors, giving the crew a 360-degree threat-detection capability.

Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

> I am pleased to announce today that we will be spending almost £4million with Thales and General Dynamics Land Systems-UK to deliver the Ajax Shot Detection System, which can sense enemy gunfire and protect troops using our next generation armoured vehicles.

Under the terms of the contract, 735 Acusonic systems are now on order for integration onto Ajax. Thales is already on contract to supply the primary and secondary sighting systems on the vehicle.

The six variants in the Ajax programme – Athena, Ajax, Ares, Apollo, Atlas and Argus – are due to come into service in 2020, providing a full suite of medium armoured vehicles and capabilities.

They will be the 'eyes and ears' of the British Army on the battlefields of the future.

The new vehicle will give the army enhanced intelligence, surveillance, protection, target acquisition and reconnaissance capabilities.

Major General Colin McLean, Director Land Equipment for Defence, Equipment and Support, the government's procurement agency, said:

Ajax will deliver a step-change in versatility, agility and protection for our soldiers. Integrating this new sensor on to our family of Ajax vehicles, which will provide critical situational awareness, is another innovation we are investing in to ensure that British soldiers have the very best equipment to maintain their competitive advantage on the battlefields of today and the future.

Ends

Notes for editors

- General Dynamics Land Systems–UK, as the prime contractor for Ajax, was awarded the contract to provide the Ajax family of armoured vehicles in 2014.
- Thales UK has already been selected by General Dynamics Land Systems–UK to supply the primary sighting system for Ajax, and by Lockheed Martin UK, the sub-contractor responsible for the design and manufacture of Ajax turret, for the secondary sighting system.
- For more information contact the MOD News Desk on 0207 218 7907 or the Defence Equipment & Support Press Office on 01179130537.
- For the latest news follow us on Twitter at [@DefenceES](#) and [@DefenceHQ](#).

[News story: Help shape the development of a new Online-filing service for CICs](#)

Updated: Rewording of piece

Are you a Community Interest Company (CIC) or an Agent who files on behalf of one?

- Would you like to help shape the development of a new service to allow CICs to file their annual report and accounts online?
- We are looking for CICS & Agents to participate in user testing our new online filing service at Companies House, Cardiff.
- The testing will take approximately an hour and will help make the new service fit for the needs of CICs and their Agents.

If you are interested in taking part please email surveys@companieshouse.gov.uk for further details.

Press release: Crackdown on private landlords renting overcrowded and dangerous homes

Measures to improve overcrowded and dangerous living conditions of private tenants in shared homes were laid before Parliament today (15 March 2018) by Housing Minister Heather Wheeler.

Councils are being given tough new powers to tackle the small minority of rogue landlords who rent out overcrowded properties and impose fines of up to £30,000 for those landlords who do not comply.

From October councils will be able to set minimum bedroom size standards and also introduce limits on how many people can live in each bedroom of a licenced multiple occupancy home. Councils will be able to use national minimum standards or apply even tougher requirements in order to address specific local needs.

This move will help ensure tenants have the space they need and deserve as well as reduce health and safety risks they face by sharing cooking and washing facilities with too many people.

The new standards will apply to all landlords seeking new licences. Landlords of existing properties will be given up to 18 months to make necessary changes when re-applying for a licence when it expires.

In a move to stop rubbish piling up outside some shared rented homes, often presenting health risks and blighting neighbourhoods, landlords will also be required to provide adequate waste storage facilities in line with their local authority's rules. If they fail to do so they could face a fine.

These latest measures build on wider government action to drive up standards in the private rented sector by tackling bad landlords. This includes the launch of a new database of rogue landlords and introduction of banning orders for the worst offenders coming into force next month.

Minister Heather Wheeler said:

Everyone deserves a decent and safe place to live. But some tenants are being exploited by a minority of unscrupulous landlords who profit from renting out cramped and sometimes squalid or dangerous

properties.

Today's measures will mean landlords must provide adequate space for their tenants or face a hefty fine. It is part of a raft of new powers for councils to crack down on rogue landlords and comprehensive action we are taking to improve conditions for private tenants.

Last month new legislation was introduced requiring more landlords to obtain a licence from their council. Landlords of 1 and 2-storey multiple occupancy properties will be brought within scope of mandatory licensing requirements across England, affecting roughly 160,000 additional properties.

Further information

Minimum space requirements

- Rooms used for sleeping by 1 person over 10 will have to be no smaller than 6.51 square metres, and those slept in by 2 people over 10 will have to be no smaller than 10.22 square metres. Rooms slept in by children of 10 years and younger will have to be no smaller than 4.64 square metres.
- The licence must specify the maximum number of persons (if any) who may occupy any room and the total number across the different rooms must be the same as the number of persons for whom the property is suitable to live in.

Extended scope of mandatory house in multiple occupation licensing

- National mandatory licensing currently only applies to houses in multiple occupation that have 3 or more storeys and occupied by 5 or more people. It is being extended to cover one/two storey houses in multiple occupation which are occupied by 5 or more people.

Waste Storage

- The government has re-affirmed the need for councils to provide comprehensive and frequent household waste collections which are free at the point of use. Councils should not seek to impose backdoor waste charging of residential properties, including houses in multiple occupation.

Banning orders and landlord database

A small number of rogue or criminal landlords knowingly rent out unsafe and substandard accommodation.

The [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) introduced a range of measures to tackle rogue landlords:

- civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution – came into force April 2017
- extension of Rent Repayment Orders to cover illegal eviction, breach of a banning order or failure to comply with a statutory notice – came into force April 2017
- banning orders for the most serious offenders – to be implemented in April 2018
- a database of rogue landlords/letting property agents convicted of certain offences – to be implemented in April 2018

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[News story: UK aid provides healthcare](#)

and education to Palestinian refugees

The UK is supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) to help educate 500,000 children and provide health services for 3 million Palestinian refugees, including those affected by the brutal conflict in Syria.

Speaking at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on UNRWA in Rome today (Thursday 15 March), Middle East Minister Alistair Burt highlighted the UK's continuing commitment to supporting Palestinian refugees and called on other countries to do more to alleviate some of the current pressures the agency is facing. He welcomed reform efforts to date and encouraged UNRWA to continue the pace of cost-efficiency reform.

Mr. Burt confirmed that the UK will deliver its next round of financial support earlier than originally planned, to help meet the growing needs of Palestinian refugees across the region.

Minister Burt said:

The UK is unequivocally committed to supporting vulnerable Palestinian refugees by assisting in the provision of education and healthcare across the region which is a key part of our resolve to promote a two-state solution. UNRWA plays a unique and critical role in supporting regional stability, and it's absolutely right that Global Britain supports the sustainability of its services.

Today I'm calling on others to follow our lead to make sure that UNRWA's humanitarian and stabilising role continues uninterrupted. This is not just important for those Palestinians in need of aid, but also to maintain stability across the region which is in all of our interests.

Notes to Editors

- Over the course of the 2017/2018 financial year, the UK has provided around £50 million to UNRWA to support the agency's delivery of food, education and healthcare to vulnerable Palestinians across the Middle East. This makes us one of the top five donors.
 - The UK will provide at least £28 million to UNRWA next financial year, as previously outlined in our multi-year commitment to 2021.
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Press release: Anglers reminded close season runs from 15 March to 15 June

No fishing for coarse fish in rivers from 15 March to 15 June

The Environment Agency is reminding anglers the 'close season' for coarse fish in rivers comes into effect today (Thursday 15 March) and runs until 15 June. The close season prevents fishing for coarse fish, like barbel and chub, for 3 months to give the fish a chance to breed. The close season applies to all rivers, streams and drains in England but does not apply to most still-waters and canals.

During the close season Environment Agency enforcement offices along with support from the Angling Trusts Voluntary Water Bailiffs will be out on rivers and streams making sure people are observing the close season. They will also be checking lakes and ponds to make sure people who are fishing have a valid rod licence. Anyone fishing without a fishing licence can be expected to be prosecuted.

Kevin Austin, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment, said:

Our job is to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries. This includes rescuing fish in distress, improving habitat and restocking rivers with 450,000 fish a year. The majority of anglers, who fish legally, rightly demand that we take action to catch offenders.

Our enforcement officers, supported by Angling Trust voluntary bailiffs, will be targeting illegal fishing. We urge anyone to report illegal fishing as quickly as possible by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Last year the Environment Agency Enforcement Officers ran 670 close season patrols, reporting 122 anglers for illegally fishing in the close season.

Coarse fishing is still allowed on most still waters and canals, depending on fishery owner agreement, though a valid fishing licence is still required. You can check which still waters and canals still have a close season in operation by checking the byelaws which apply in your area at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-fishing-byelaws>. We will be finalising a review of the close season on rivers during 2018. Any changes that arise from this review will be implemented in 2019.

Anyone who wants to go fishing needs to buy a fishing licence. A full annual licence costs £30 (short term and some concessionary licences are also available) and are available online at www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence.