

# News story: Armed Forces Minister reaffirms importance of Gibraltar to UK defence

The signing of the Armed Forces (Gibraltar) Act marks an important milestone for both the UK and Gibraltar and will ensure the relationship between Service Police on The Rock and the Royal Gibraltar Police to go from strength to strength.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Gibraltar is of vital importance to the UK Armed Forces and our allies. Whilst our relationship with the EU is changing, our commitment to European prosperity and security remains steadfast and our duty to support Gibraltar, its people and its economy is resolute.

Mark Lancaster also met Chief Minister Fabian Picardo, they discussed the strategic importance of Gibraltar to UK defence. Its value is best demonstrated by the support delivered to HMS Ocean as she docked to load humanitarian aid and disaster relief before sailing to the Caribbean Islands to assist those devastated by Hurricane Irma in 2017 as well as welcoming future flagship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, this year whilst on sea trials.

While onboard HMS Diamond, Mark Lancaster also met Commanding Officer, Commander Ben Keith, and his crew who are returning from training in the eastern Mediterranean. The Portsmouth-based Type 45 warship and her 200 crew have been tested by fighter jets including Tornados, Typhoons and F16s, plus E3 surveillance aircraft and Voyager transporters in the skies above and around Cyprus as well as training in anti-submarine warfare.

The Minister also took the opportunity to catch up with a number of units within British Forces Gibraltar. A visit to the Spyglass and Rockgun Battery's was followed by a visit to the Gibraltar Defence Police Headquarters. He then met with UK Armed Forces service personnel stationed at RAF Gibraltar and got the chance to see the Airfield Fire and Rescue Service's new fire vehicles, which have been procured through joint funding between MOD and HMGoG.