

News story: Autonomous supply to military front line: apply for contracts

Businesses can apply for a share of up to a possible £3 million for supplying the military front line through autonomous systems

The [Ministry of Defence](#) is to invest in projects that look at ways of using autonomous systems in the 'last mile' of the supply chain to front-line military operations.

Up to £1.5 million is available in the first phase of the competition. There is up to an additional £1.5 million in phase 2 that includes proposed system designs. This will only be available to projects funded through phase 1.

A third phase could include a longer period of trials and evaluation of promising proposals.

Last mile supply

Last-mile resupply involves delivery of combat materials from a physical base or logistics vehicle and is often challenging because of the hostile and contested environment. Although described as last-mile, real-life distances could be up to 30km in some instances.

Current ways of supplying the front line involve transport aircraft, helicopters, large trucks, trailers with quad bikes and soldiers on foot.

The challenge areas

This funding competition is particularly looking for solutions in 3 challenge areas:

- unmanned air and ground load-carrying platforms
- technologies and systems that allow load-carrying platforms to operate autonomously
- technologies to autonomously predict, plan, track and optimise re-supply demands from military users

The competition is for fully funded contracts under SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative).

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is midday on 21 June 2017
- the competition is for fully funded development contracts

- phase 1 contracts are likely to be worth between £40,000 and £80,000 and last up to 6 months
- a networking event for potential applicants will take place on 23 May 2017
- there will be a webinar for potential applicants on 30 May 2017