

# News story: British military chief welcomes largest number of female Afghan officer graduates

*Updated:* new pictures

Speaking today at a graduation ceremony for new Afghan officers at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Kabul, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger welcomed the increasing female participation in the Afghan security forces.

This year's class has the largest number of female graduates to date, with 23 officer cadets graduating today.



Female officer cadets march at the graduation ceremony.

The ceremony took place the day after General Messenger, the MOD's Gender Champion, participated in International Women's Day events in Kabul, including meeting with British Council and Embassy staff who work closely with the Afghan Government and Civil Society to create a better future for women and girls, including increasing awareness of gender issues in Afghanistan's security institutions.



A British officer presents an Afghan cadet with their graduation award.

This work includes supporting efforts to make the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) a more attractive career choice for women, including improving accommodation arrangements for female ANAOA cadets. Training in the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is also provided to cadets as part of the Academy's programme.

Britain is also working to strengthen the role of women in the Afghan security forces through the training of future female leaders at ANAOA. The 23 graduates from the class of 2017 join the 57 female officers who have previously passed the intensive and sought after training. Today's ceremony also saw the Academy's total number of graduates going over 2000.





General Messenger attends the graduation ceremony at ANAOA.

With Afghans in the lead for providing security throughout the country and training their next generation of future leaders, Britain is helping to 'mentor the mentors' at the ANAOA, where over 30 British personnel provide advice and assistance to Afghan trainers.

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

Today's largest ever female graduate class demonstrates the progress the Afghan security forces are making in allowing women to help defend their country.

Britain's enduring commitment to Afghanistan means we're helping them in this task, as well as offering broader support to Afghanistan's security institutions.

UK assistance at ANAOA is an important part of NATO's non-combat Resolute Support Mission, which trains, advises and assists Afghan security forces, building their capacity to provide security for the country.

Britain recently increased the number of personnel in Afghanistan, with 500 people now providing advice to Afghan instructors, developing the fledgling Afghan Air Force, advising Afghan security institutions and providing security as part of the Kabul Security Force.

As part of the UK's long term commitment to Afghanistan, Britain has pledged

over £200million to support the ANDSF.

As Her Majesty The Queen today [unveiled](#) a Memorial in London recognising the contributions of the UK Armed Forces and all UK citizens who deployed in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan from 1990-2015, General Messenger on his visit laid a wreath at the Graves of the Fallen in Kabul.



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