

News story: Defence Minister's visit strengthens UK ties with South America

The Minister for Armed Forces has returned from Chile, Uruguay and Colombia, where he met senior military figures and politicians, and saw first-hand a range of ongoing projects.

Minister for Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

The UK has a proud and long-standing history with these nations, who are all playing their part to achieve prosperity and stability, at home and abroad.

It's vital that we keep all of our international friends close, particularly as we prepare to leave the European Union and reinforce our relationships across the globe.

In Chile, Mr Lancaster met with Defence Minister Alberto Espina, Undersecretary of Defence, Cristián de la Maza, and the commander-in-chief of the navy, Commander Admiral Julio Leiva, having recently laid a wreath at Westminster Abbey to mark the 200th anniversary of the Chilean Navy.

The minister also went to the Chilean Army Military Academy, in Santiago, which provided an opportunity to reinforce its links with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

On the Uruguay leg of the trip, he also met and praised staff at the renowned Uruguayan National Peacekeeping School. The school has trained more than 900 personnel from the country to be deployed to one of the most challenging UN Peacekeeping missions, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Defence Minister also discussed a post-Brexit relationship and collaboration on joint exercises, including counter-terrorism training, with Uruguay's Minister for Foreign Affairs Rodolfo Nin Novoa and the Defence Minister Dr Jorge Menendez.

In Colombia, the minister met the Head of the Army, General Ricardo Gomez Nieto, the Deputy Defence Minister Anibal Fernández de Soto and the Chief of the Defence Staff General Alberto Mejia Ferrero. These meetings presented an opportunity to reaffirm defence ties between the two ties and demonstrate continued support to the Peace Process.