

News story: MOD signs £146 million contract to upgrade RAF's long-range missile

The shared deal with MBDA will see the UK's Storm Shadow and France's SCALP missiles updated so they remain fit for purpose and ready for operational use.

During an inward visit by Laurent Collet-Billon, the Minister confirmed the strong partnership with France in a series of meetings at Lancaster House. The collaboration is providing a £50 million saving for both sides.

The contract will keep the missile in service for the next decade and beyond and help to sustain around 60 UK jobs. Storm Shadow is a combat-proven, long-range, precision cruise missile, already in service with RAF Tornados, deployed recently against Daesh in Iraq.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin said:

Storm Shadow is a proven and vital missile for the RAF, and this £146 million upgrade will ensure it is always ready for whenever our Armed Forces might need it to defend our way of life.

This contract is an important part of the Government's £178 billion plan to ensure our armed forces have the right equipment at the right time.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin with her French counterpart Laurent Collet-Billon. Crown Copyright.

The midlife refurbishment programme has been developed in co-operation with the French Government who will be updating their own similar missile known as SCALP.

By taking advantage of the similarities, this collaboration not only reaffirms the strong defence relationship as outlined under the Lancaster House Agreement, but has also resulted in a £50 million saving for both the UK and France.

The regeneration will consist of a midlife refurbishment of current missile parts such as the turbo-jet engine, an upgrade of the navigational system, and a like for like replacement of items such as the cabling, seals and gaskets.

The work will sustain around 60 jobs at MBDA in Stevenage and Bolton, in a variety of roles including software and systems engineering. Over 40 jobs will also be sustained through the supply chain.

Chief Executive at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support Organisation, Tony Douglas said:

The contract to regenerate Storm Shadow, a combat-proven, all-weather precision missile, provides a clear example of the MOD and UK industry working effectively together with our counter parts in France; providing our UK Armed Forces with the best equipment possible while sustaining dozens of UK jobs.

Two Storm Shadow missiles on a Tornado GR4. Crown Copyright.

Storm Shadow is designed to target substantial buildings and structures, such as military facilities, control centres, bunkers, missile sites, airfields and bridges, which might otherwise require the use of several aircraft over the course of numerous missions.

France is the UK's most important European Ally, with both countries' defence budgets together account for almost half of all European defence spending. This deal is the most recent example of collaboration in a long history of cooperation on defence and security. The £146 million investment in Storm Shadow will sustain the missile until its planned out of service date in 2032.

Laurent Collet-Billon, Délégué Général pour l'Armement said:

This deep-strike missile mid-life update was jointly prepared. It represents a new step in the Franco-British cooperation roadmap and strengthens the Franco-British strategic partnership in the armament field.

[Press release: Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan visits Montenegro and Macedonia](#)

From:

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22 February 2017

Part of:

His visit underlines the UK's commitment to playing an active and supportive role in the Western Balkans.

During his visit to the Montenegrin capital Podgorica, the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, will reaffirm the UK's commitment to the region and Montenegro during his meetings with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Minister for European Affairs. He will spend time with key civil society organisations from Montenegro, and discuss important reforms on corruption, the rule of law and media.

In Macedonia, Sir Alan will meet President Ivanov and the leaders of all political parties represented in the Macedonian Assembly. They will discuss the current political situation, the need for important reforms to enable progress on NATO and EU accession and their plans to build a prosperous and inclusive country. He will also meet members of Macedonia's civil society, and rule of law institutions focused on the future of Macedonia.

Ahead of the visit, Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan said:

The Western Balkans is a key region for the UK. We are committed to playing an active and supportive role. I'm delighted that my visit will build on this by developing opportunities for future cooperation on security, prosperity and reform.

We have long supported both Macedonia and Montenegro on their paths towards EU accession and NATO membership, which will require vital progress on reforms within both countries.

Of course, challenges remain. I am eager to hear from politicians and civil society so we can better understand how the UK can support both countries to be stable, secure and prosperous.

Further information

[News story: Marine Management Organisation \(MMO\) issue authorisations to catch bass](#)

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From 22 February 2017 the MMO will be issuing letters to fishermen.

In order to protect bass stocks and the sustainability of the wider marine environment from 22 February 2017 the MMO will be issuing letters to fishermen who, based on their track records, have authorisation to catch bass. The MMO will also send letters to those who do not have such authorisation.

The letters include details of a representation process through which fishermen can, on limited grounds, provide evidence to the MMO should they wish to challenge the authorisation decisions which have been made. The deadline for such representations is 14 March 2017.

The MMO action is a response to Article 9(2) of Council Regulation (EU) 2017/127 which fixed the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters in 2017.

Phil Haslam (MMO Director of Operations) said:

“The bass authorisations help implement EC measures designed to manage effort in order to help protect and improve Bass stocks.

I would urge fishermen to read the letters they receive and familiarise themselves with the bass regulations and the representation process. Those that feel they meet the representation criteria and can provide the relevant evidence should do so at the earliest opportunity and certainly before the 14 March 2017 deadline”.

Full details of the [bass regulations and the representation process](#) have been published on the [MMO website](#).

Assistance is also available via [MMO coastal offices](#).

Speech: The world is sleepwalking towards catastrophic famine – Britain will help prevent this

This year the world is facing numerous humanitarian crises which, taken together, are on a scale not witnessed in recent times. The extent of the challenge is unprecedented, set against a backdrop of immense human

suffering. Before this week there has been only one certified famine globally since 2000.

Parts of South Sudan are now in famine and there is a credible risk of famine in Yemen, North East Nigeria and Somalia – drought and conflict are pushing families to the brink of starvation. That is why today I am announcing new support combined with a call to the international community to step up to ensure 2017 is not defined as a year where people died of hunger and drought on a catastrophic scale.

As a nation, we face a choice. With parts of the world on fire, can we ignore the despair beyond our borders? Or do we use our global influence and leadership to confront these challenges head-on? The answer lies in the great British values of fairness and compassion for those less fortunate. The immense generosity of the British public shines through in responses to emergency appeals. British aid workers will always be among the first on the ground bringing relief and now the world is looking to Britain for our leadership once again.

So far the international response to these crises has been inadequate. We are sleepwalking towards catastrophe. Earlier this week famine was declared in parts of South Sudan. In Somalia, a country that saw a quarter of million people die from famine in 2011, the drought conditions are as bad, if not worse than five years ago.

The challenge is unprecedented and the warnings are growing louder: we need a comprehensive response. In Somalia, more than 6 million people have no reliable access to food and there are 360,000 acutely malnourished children. When I visited Somalia it was clear we have to act now to avoid major loss of life. That's why I am announcing a package of UK humanitarian relief that will provide emergency food aid and water to 1 million people.

In South Sudan almost 5 million face the daily threat of going without enough food and water and 3 million people have been forced from their homes because of ruthless violence and widespread use of rape. That is why this year UK aid will provide food assistance for over 500,000 people, life-saving nutritional support to more than 27,500 children and safe drinking water for over 300,000 people.

Within these crises the risk of famine is exacerbated by conflict, instability and a lack of respect for international humanitarian law. Without political progress to allow access to the areas of the country where famine is taking hold we will not be able reach those in desperate need. The international community must exert pressure on the South Sudanese regime to end the ethnic violence which risks collapsing the country into famine and genocide.

As we step up our response it is vital we ensure UK support goes to where it is desperately needed. I have seen for myself how, in times of crisis, the world looks to Britain not just for our work on the ground, but also for our leadership internationally. Britain will use our place in the world to build a faster, more effective humanitarian system fit for the 21st Century. And to

ensure all of this happens at pace, I recently brought together a group of major donors to work together on driving forward much needed reform.

If the international community steps up, quickly, we can save countless lives this year. From painful experience, we know the longer we wait the higher the price humanity will pay. I will be lobbying other governments, the UN and international agencies hard in the weeks and months ahead. We will continue to exert diplomatic pressure to get food flowing into Yemen and humanitarian aid to people under siege in Syria, while continuing to work towards political solutions.

As well as providing urgent humanitarian support, we are also working with refugee host communities to create jobs and education to reduce the pressure to migrate to Europe.

Wherever possible our help will be branded with the Union Jack – so people around the world can see support UK taxpayers are providing. When people in refugee camps or remote communities see our flag displayed proudly on our emergency supplies, they know they have a friend and an ally in Britain.

This is why we make our commitment to UK aid, for these times of crisis.

Britain is at its best when we stand up for the values that we believe in. In the coming months I will ensure my department's energy is focused on relentlessly tackling these crises and galvanising others to step up as we seek to avert catastrophe. Doing so is in the world's interest and ours. 2017 could be the ultimate test of our international system and a test of our shared humanity; the world cannot afford to fail it.

This article was first published in The Telegraph on 22 February 2017.

[Green Party calls for investigation following claims of child inmates kept in solitary confinement](#)



22 February 2017

The Green Party has demanded the Government investigate allegations of young offenders being held in solitary confinement in British prisons [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“It was already clear our prison system was reaching crisis point but these stories reveal a new level of callous disregard for the human rights of some of the youngest and most vulnerable offenders.

“Being kept in solitary confinement for even just short periods of time causes severe distress and has lasting impact. I fail to see how the Ministry of Justice can possibly think this treatment will result in positive outcomes. These young offenders need to be rehabilitated, not punished further using one of the most cruel and unhelpful methods possible. We urgently need an investigation into these allegations.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-prisons-child-inmates-solitary-confinement-un-torture-rules-young-offenders-institutes-break-jail-a7591781.html>

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