

News story: Defence Secretary announces £80m Guardian to protect the skies

Known as Project Guardian, the new Air Command and Control System will support the continued early detection and rapid response to potential hostile or suspect aircraft that pose a threat to UK sovereignty, be that terrorists or state-based actors.

This project will see the current systems at RAF bases in the UK and Falkland Islands replaced with the new technology. It will allow the RAF to exercise command and control of UK and NATO fighters to intercept aggressive or suspect aircraft that are a threat. The RAF routinely intercept, identify and escort aircraft that transit international airspace within the UK's area of interest and continue to be on call 365 days a year.

Since 2013 RAF jets have launched 68 times to intercept or monitor suspect aircraft in the skies around Britain – half of these in response to Russian planes.

IBM Services in the UK is leading the way to develop and install the replacement system, with work being carried out by a dedicated team of specialists at IBM locations across the country.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

With hostile regimes such as President Putin's Kremlin ripping up the international rulebook and terrorists still targeting our way of life, this cutting-edge technology gives our RAF the upper hand in the face of rapidly changing and intensifying global threats.

This investment will play a vital role in making sure our fighter pilots are primed and ready to keep Britain safe and to counter aggression from those who seek to cause us harm.

The Air Command and Control System is the computer system that takes in data to generate the Recognised Air Picture – a dynamic, real time depiction of aircraft in the airspace the UK control or patrol, with each being identified as friendly or hostile. The upgrades will continue improving the rapid exchange of real time command and control information and speed and accuracy of decision making.

The announcement comes as the RAF celebrates 100 years since its formation and demonstrates how the service is continuously looking at ways to design and innovate to meet the full spectrum of threats that the UK is currently facing.

The contract, which IBM UK won in competition, is for approximately £60 million with costed options that the MOD can exercise which would take the total value towards £80 million. It represents a continuation of IBM UK supplying the equipment to UK armed forces and includes five years of support services following the installations.

Director Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance, Dr Simon Dakin, of the MOD's procurement organisation, Defence Equipment and Support, said:

Guardian will provide a new Air Command and Control system connecting the UK's defence network of radars and radio and delivering several new capabilities to improve communication and interoperability between UK, NATO and coalition aircraft, vital to the protection of the UK's skies.

Group Captain Steven Blockley, director of the RAF's Director, National Air Defence and Space Operations, said:

The new system provides a quantum leap in technology and information exchange for the personnel charged with the Defence of the Homeland and will ensure that future homeland operations are conducted with equipment befitting the RAF as it reaches its 100th year. The equipment will ensure that new digital technologies, along with new requirements for future capabilities, will also allow us to seamlessly exchange data and threat information across the new RAF platforms, such as the P-8 maritime patrol aircraft and F-35 Lightning II, as well as continue to integrate with our NATO colleagues to ensure the UK National mission to protect our skies and the NATO Air Policing task are met fully.

[Press release: UK confirms new support to World Bank after Securing Key reforms](#)

As a result of UK lobbying, the World Bank Group has committed to focus significantly more of its resources on poorer countries, increasing from 63% to 70% by 2030, while ensuring richer countries will pay more to borrow.

The UK is to commit more money, \$547m (approx.) over five years to the World Bank alongside a wider package of agreed reforms. These will include the

World Bank Group making efficiency savings of \$1.8bn by 2030, through pay restraints.

Historically, each \$1 shareholders have invested in the World Bank Group has delivered up to \$50 in financing for governments and businesses in developing countries, making it excellent value for money.

The World Bank has a track record of immunising children, getting them fed and educated. Between 2017 and 2020 the World Bank Group is expected to train and recruit 10 million teachers and vaccinate 180 million children.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, the UK Governor to the World Bank, said:

It is in all our interests to make sure the World Bank Group is in the right shape to tackle the global challenges of today and of the future.

This crucial, landmark agreement between the Bank, and the international community, will increase lending to some of the poorest countries in the world to deliver better, sustainable health provision, education and jobs to those who need them most.

Notes to editors

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Press release: Crackdown on touts using robots to rip off real fans

A new law to ban ticket touts from using 'bots' to dodge security measures and snap up more tickets than allowed by event organisers will this week be laid in Parliament, paving the way for the measures to come into force.

The new offence will mean touts using automated software to bulk buy tickets for resale on secondary ticketing sites at hugely inflated prices will face an unlimited fine.

London musical Hamilton saw tickets being advertised on the secondary ticketing market for up to £6,000. While artists including Adele and Ed Sheeran have also been targeted by professional touts. The Government's work places the UK at the forefront of the fight against touts exploiting real fans.

Margot James, minister for digital and the creative industries, said:

I'm determined to make sure everyone has the chance to see their favourite stars at a fair price.

This week we will reach the final stage in our fight to beat rip-off ticket touts using bots to buy huge numbers of tickets only to sell them on at massively over-inflated prices.

Our work, together with improvements by industry, will give consumers greater protection, make the market more transparent and help Britain's live events scene continue to thrive.

Consumer Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

Fans have a right to know exactly what they're signing up to on ticket resale websites, but all too often people are left feeling ripped off when the ticket doesn't match expectations.

We're taking steps to crack down on touts using "bots" to bulk buy tickets for resale and last week's new rules will also improve transparency in this market.

Adam Webb, campaign manager FanFair Alliance, said:

This new legislation is important, and we need it to be activated and enforced. By reducing the means of dedicated touts to bulk harvest tickets, Government can help recalibrate the live music market and give fans a better opportunity to buy tickets at a price the artist sets.

Michael Dugher, UK Music chief executive, said:

I'm delighted the Government has listened to calls from UK Music and industry campaigners like the FanFair Alliance to ban bots.

This new law is an important step to ensure transparency in the resale ticket market. We need the law to be fully enforced to protect music fans from being ripped off. We also need much

stronger action from Google which is still directing fans to sites like Viagogo at the top of an online search, rather than to official ticketing.

Music fans have been fleeced for far too long and we will continue to work with Government to ensure our fantastic live music industry continues to bring enjoyment to millions of people and to make over a £1 billion annual contribution to the UK economy.

The new legislation, being brought forward thanks to a provision in the [Digital Economy Act](#), is part of a wider government drive to make sure genuine fans are not losing out through the secondary ticketing market.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy introduced new rules requiring ticket resellers to provide more information around resold event tickets. Resellers now have to supply any unique ticket numbers (UTN) to the buyer to identify a ticket's seat, standing area or location.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is taking enforcement action against secondary ticketing websites suspected of breaking consumer law, Trading Standards has been conducting raids across the UK to pursue those suspected of potential breaches of the Unfair Trading Regulations, and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is clamping down on misleading prices and charges on secondary ticketing websites.

New [guidance](#) was also published last month to help prepare business for these changes and provide clarity to make sure they comply while also securing a better deal for consumers.

[Citizens Advice](#) provide information for consumers about buying event tickets and how to make sure a ticketing site is genuine.

Government work is being bolstered by new approaches in the private sector:

- UK startup [Aventus](#) and Dutch startup [Guaranteed Unique Ticketing System](#) use blockchain technology to make it impossible to resell tickets at a higher price.
- British firm [DICE](#) is using innovative mobile technology to lock tickets to user accounts and beat the touts.
- Big UK music stars such as Adele and Ed Sheeran have partnered with sites such as [Twickets.co.uk](#), which prohibits the resale of tickets at a profit.

Notes to editors

Citizens Advice consumer helpline: 0345 404 0506

For more information please contact the DCMS press office on 020 7 211 2210

[Press release: Government hits target of 2,500 new prison officers 7 months ahead of schedule](#)

The government has passed its target to recruit an additional 2,500 prison officers by the end of 2018 7 months ahead of schedule, the Justice Secretary revealed today (22 April 2018).

As figures showed a net increase of 3,111 prison officers between October 2016 and March 2018, David Gauke said there would be no let up in the relentless recruitment drive despite the milestone being reached. Nearly 90 per cent of the 3,000 new recruits will be on the landings by the summer.

Continuing to boost staffing numbers is crucial as it will allow prisons to introduce a new model where prison officers spend more time both one-to-one and with small groups of prisoners. This approach is key to creating more constructive relationships between offenders and prison officers, reducing violence, improving stability and intensifying the focus on rehabilitation.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Going beyond this important milestone so early is a real achievement. It means the vast majority of these prison officers will be working on the landings by the summer, and all of them will be in place by the end of the year. This will make a real difference to the safety and security of our prisons, ensuring they can fulfil their purpose – protecting the public, reducing reoffending and crucially, rehabilitating offenders.

But let me be clear – the recruitment drive continues and will continue until we reach required levels across the prison estate, with the same urgency that has secured this remarkable influx of new staff.

[Figures released today](#) show an additional 2,699 prison officers on landings or in Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) since October 2016, while a further 255 are performing operational support roles pending the start of their training.

Dean Gardiner, acting Governor at HMP Pentonville, said:

Hitting this target is an important milestone for the prison service. The new staff here at HMP Pentonville have made a real difference to how the prison runs by building positive

relationships with prisoners.

The boost in officer numbers has allowed us to deliver more and improve the rehabilitation offered to the offenders, which prepares them to turn away from crime upon release and prevents future victims of reoffending.

HMP Cardiff's Governor Danny Khan said:

Working in prisons is obviously challenging, but our prison officers are clear their job is about rehabilitating offenders, helping them secure employment upon release and making society safer.

It's essential we recruit positive prison officers who aren't afraid to push this agenda.

Officer Shrubsole, a neuroscience graduate, has just completed his training and started work at HMP Pentonville. The 25-year-old said:

I joined because I wanted a job where I could work with people and try to help rehabilitate them. I was also attracted to the idea that I could progress in this role in the future. I am really proud to work in the prison service – you're working with such an important part of society.

Officer Zefi, aged 27, has completed 6 months as a prison officer at HMP Featherstone. He said:

I joined the service so that I could help rehabilitate people.

In the past 6 months, I feel that I have already made a difference which is really rewarding.

The work is varied – one day I could be escorting people to courts and the next supporting someone who is distressed or needs support.

We are clear about the purposes prison serves: protection, punishment and rehabilitation. Our staffing drive is vital to ensuring prisons will not only be safer, more secure and more decent, but will support prisoners in turning their backs on crime for good.

Increasing staffing levels is part of the wider prison reform programme, with its relentless focus on getting the basics right – ensuring prisons are safe and decent, with a secure perimeter that prevents drugs and other contraband getting in.

And we are also cracking down on the serious and organised criminals operating their networks from behind bars, investing £14 million in tackling this threat including in new intelligence and serious and organised crime teams.

Press release: PM meeting with Prime Minister Turnbull: 21 April 2018

The Prime Minister met Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull today for bilateral talks at Chequers following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London and Windsor this week.

They reflected on the week's events and how they could both offer real support to see the commitments made at CHOGM delivered over the period of the UK's chair-in-office – particularly in the area of cyber security. They agreed to close collaboration between their two countries on this matter.

Acknowledging that the two countries already enjoy a close defence relationship, the Prime Minister welcomed increased cooperation on defence and security, including on equipment programmes and noted the merits of the Type 26 frigate and its anti-submarine warfare capability.

Both Prime Ministers said that their countries' should seek to share research and science, agreeing that their universities had much to offer each other.

The leaders noted the importance of free and fair trade, before discussing their trading relationship post EU-exit.

They confirmed their shared ambition to form a new bilateral UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement after leaving the EU. They welcomed the approach agreed at the March European Council to provide continuity during the implementation period for international agreements, which could be swiftly transitioned into new bilateral agreements once the implementation period ends.

The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Turnbull for Australia's support over the action against the Assad regime. They agreed it was important to continue stressing the Commonwealth communique's commitment to implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention.