

News story: New stealth fighter jet 'takes off'

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson experienced the world-class technology of the new F-35 today in a Lockheed Martin F-35 simulator in London. Crown copyright.

At an event held at the Institute for Engineering and Technology, the Defence Secretary was joined by MPs and journalists to see what it is like to fly and land the pioneering fighter jet which will protect British lives around the world.

The global F-35 programme will support 20,000 UK jobs over the 30 year production period and already the programme has generated over £9 billion for UK industry. The cockpit demonstrator gave the Defence Secretary a feel for flying the new state-of-the-art stealth aircraft, allowing him to practice landing and taking off from the new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

After flying the jet demonstrator, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today demonstrates that we are investing in our brave Armed Forces by making sure they have the very best equipment, securing tens of thousands of British manufacturing and engineering jobs, and ensuring Britain will always play a leading role in making the world a safer place.

These pioneering stealth jets will protect British lives as we face intensifying and evolving threats at home and abroad.

The F-35 is the most advanced and dynamic fighter aircraft in our history, and will defend this country from terrorists, collect crucial intelligence, and safeguard our national interests from those who seek to do us harm.

The Defence Secretary was guided through the flight by Squadron Leader Andy Edgell and Lieutenant Commander Adam Hogg, two of the UK's F-35 pilots putting the aircraft through its paces over in the United States. Alongside its short take-off and vertical landing capability, the F-35B's unique combination of stealth, cutting-edge radar, sensor technology, and electronic warfare systems provide world-beating capability of a fifth-generation fighter.

The UK currently has 14 F-35s based in the US, operated by around 150 UK personnel. These aircraft will arrive in the UK later this year at RAF Marham and initial flight trials will take place from the UK's new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, in autumn off the coast of the US.

During his visit to the cockpit demonstrator, the Defence Secretary also met with representatives from some of the 500 UK companies who are in the F-35 supply chain. UK industry will provide approximately 15% of each F-35 to be built and, with more than 3,000 aircraft projected, the programme will support 20,000 UK jobs over the 30 year production phase.

Lockheed Martin UK Chief Executive Peter Ruddock said:

To date, the F-35 programme has generated \$12.9 billion (pounds figure) in contracts for British suppliers and that investment will grow as we ramp up towards full rate production. The F-35 will provide the UK Armed Forces with a game-changing capability that will allow the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to project power around the world for decades to come.

Operated jointly by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, the F-35 Lightning jets will fly from both land bases and the UK's new aircraft carriers. The programme is on target to achieve Initial Operating Capability (IOC) by December 2018, meaning that UK F-35s will be able to operate from land bases from this point.

Following successful trials on the land based ski-ramp design, which is featured on the UK flagship carrier, and with RAF Marham runway infrastructure now complete as part of a £250m major investment programme, the UK has made significant progress over the last year in preparation for the F-35 arrival later this year.

[Press release: Environment Agency issues permit to Southern Water for Bewl reservoir](#)

The Environment Agency has issued a temporary winter drought permit to Southern Water Services Limited, to help refill Bewl Water reservoir in East Sussex.

The water company made an application on 5 January stating it needed to take more water from the River Medway to help refill Bewl Water, which was only 42% full at the start of the year.

Despite a wet December, the autumn was very dry. There was also lower-than-average rainfall across south east England during the previous winter. This prolonged dry period across the region has left many groundwater supplies and some reservoirs lower than normal for the time of year.

Bowl Water is the largest reservoir in the south east of England and can hold 31,000 million litres of water. It is an important source for Southern Water, which manages the supply of water to over 2.5 million customers across south and south east England. Southern Water already routinely takes water from the River Medway to fill the reservoir. The change to the permit will allow the company to abstract additional water until the end of March.

The change will mean Southern Water can take water when river levels are lower than the previous limit. The water company has requested the change as part of its plan to secure public water supplies for the upcoming summer.

In determining the drought permit application, the Environment Agency has taken into account the very low rainfall, the impact this has had on water supplies, as well as considering the response to the recent public consultation.

Julie Foley, Environment Agency Area Director, said:

Although it has been wet over the past few weeks, overall this winter across south east England there has been lower-than-average amounts of rain. Consequently, we now need above average rainfall for the remainder of the winter to replenish our water resources.

The Environment Agency has to balance the water needs of people, businesses and wildlife so we have carefully considered Southern Water's application. We have decided to grant this temporary change to the existing licence, helping the company to refill the reservoir at a time of year when there will be less impact on the environment. We will carefully monitor any effects and take action if needed to ensure the environment is protected.

We encourage people to follow advice from their water company about saving water. Using water efficiently will help ensure we have enough water for people, businesses and the environment.

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743. Or email southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Follow us on Twitter at [EnvAgencySE](https://twitter.com/EnvAgencySE)

News story: Interested parties invited to provide information on protests outside abortion clinics

It is the latest step in the review, announced by Home Secretary Amber Rudd in November 2017, following reports that women have experienced intimidation from protesters when visiting family planning clinics to seek information, advice and services from medical professionals.

To understand the scale and nature of these protests, the Home Office is seeking evidence from policing partners, healthcare providers and local authorities as well as inviting contributions from groups protesting outside abortion clinics and people who have sought medical assistance or advice.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

An abortion is an incredibly personal decision for anyone to take, and so it is completely unacceptable for women to face harassment or intimidation for exercising their legal right to healthcare advice and treatment.

While everyone has a right to peaceful protest, this review is about ensuring the police, healthcare providers and local authorities have the right powers to protect women making these tough decisions.

The review is assessing if more needs to be done to protect those seeking medical assistance and covers:

- the scale, frequency and nature of protests and the powers police have to manage them
- the laws to protect people from harassment and intimidation
- the public's right to peaceful protest and exercise of freedom of speech, within the law
- international comparisons given that similar protests have taken place in Australia, France, Canada and the United States

Work has already progressed to evaluate measures in place in other countries, such as buffer zones around clinics, with policing and healthcare partners providing further evidence for consideration.

The review is considering protests only, and will not consider any aspects of the Abortion Act 1967 which makes abortion legal in the United Kingdom.

All members of the public or organisations, who have experience of protest activity outside abortion clinics, are invited to contribute evidence to the review. You can complete the questionnaire [online](#), or alternatively evidence

can be provided directly to ACPReview@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

All contributions must be received by 19 February 2018.

[Speech: Britain and Germany's special and enduring partnership](#)

It is a pleasure to join you today, especially in such an inspiring setting.

I am particularly delighted to give this speech in German – it is a language very close to my heart.

Indeed my home is filled with the German language. When I finish my day job as Minister for Trade Policy, I go home to my family: my German wife and our 2 children, both of whom can speak German better than me!

I must say my children know how to take advantage of being both British and German.

I should also tell you that as MP for Chelsea and Fulham, football is a big thing in my constituency.

Before the last World Cup, I asked my son, "Which country are you going to support in the tournament?"

"Papa," he said, "I will split my loyalty in the tournament 50:50 between England and Germany. I will support England for the first half, and then switch to Germany". He is a clever boy.

We have a home in Germany too, and almost every year I visit the party conferences of both the CDU and the CSU. I may even have more friends in each of them than they have with each other.

My ties to Germany go back beyond my career in politics. I lived for much of the years 1985 – 1988 in what was then called West Berlin.

I discovered the particular Berlin dialect –Berlinerisch – while working as a Bädewarter in the exotic location of the Sommerbad Kreuzberg, and working at whatever holiday jobs I could find, such as at the Kaufhaus des Westens (or KaDeWe), and even McDonalds.

During this time my love of German culture, people and language really took root.

That is why today I am pleased to have been asked to speak to you about the special and enduring partnership that exists between Britain and Germany.

If I achieve anything today it will be to impart to you the enthusiasm with which I and my ministerial colleagues believe in this partnership, and in the opportunities for us to work together in the years ahead.

In June 2016 the people of Britain made a democratic decision to leave the European Union.

More votes cast for Brexit than Prime Ministers Thatcher, Blair or Cameron ever managed to achieve. 1.3 million more people voted to leave than to remain.

The instruction from the British people to their politicians, including those who had campaigned on the side of remain such as myself, was crystal clear.

We are now more than a year on from that historic vote and things have changed. We are no longer a country defined by how we voted, but instead by our willingness to make a success of the result.

I believe in the success that Brexit can be, if negotiators on both sides get it right.

I am optimistic about Britain's future as an independent trading nation and optimistic of the new partnership we will form with Europe and with Germany.

As Prime Minister Theresa May has clearly stated, we want to be the EU's strongest friend and partner. For us to thrive side by side.

The British people chose to leave the European Union. We did not choose to leave Europe.

Indeed we want to maintain and where possible strengthen our ties around trade, security, law enforcement and criminal justice cooperation.

In 2016 the UK imported goods worth £242 billion from the EU.

Conversely, the UK exported £145 billion worth of British goods to the EU in 2016.

That amounts to a £97 billion goods deficit for the UK with the EU.

That is why it is to both sides' advantage that we secure the greatest possible tariff and barrier free access to European Markets, whilst offering the same access to the UK market.

While the statistics I quote are rightly impressive, they fail to demonstrate the cultural and ideological ties that unite us and that underpin our trading relationship.

Like Ludwig Erhard, we believe in the power of free trade to strengthen our economies, improve the lives of citizens and vitally to help build a more secure world.

As Erhard said himself –

As one's economy grows, the value of human labour increases.

Leaving the European Union is not a move away from this desire for improvement.

Instead, we are becoming a more vocal champion.

Before the decision to leave the European Union was taken, the department within which I am a minister, the Department for International Trade did not exist. Trade did not have a seat at the cabinet table and had not done for many years.

Trade is now at the top of our agenda. Both as we move to a new, deep and special partnership with Europe but also as we look out to the world.

We must both be passionate advocates for free trade at a time when the cause needs champions. The need to resist the tide of protectionism is an endeavour that unites Britain and Germany.

As the Prime Minister has clearly set out- we are not looking for an 'off-the-shelf' solution. Instead the UK and European Union have the opportunity to build a new, bold and ambitious future economic partnership.

This is of course an ambitious vision, but to quote Ludwig Erhard once more,

In my experience small things fail too easily, but big plans are filled with a fascination that touches people and that in itself constitutes success.

I was at the CDU party conference last year and was struck by Angela Merkel's speech about how the largest demonstration in Germany in recent years was not against Putin, Assad or even Trump, but was against TTIP.

Championing free trade will of course extend to our support of the EU's trade agenda. While we remain a member, we will continue to support on-going trade negotiations with third countries. After we leave, we will continue to argue for trade liberalisation at the EU level.

We want prosperous free trading neighbours on our doorstep; it is in our national interest and, we believe, the route to a safer world.

Of course, we cannot talk about economic security without reference to the mutual defense interests that exist between the UK and Germany.

To keep our people safe and to secure our values and interests, we believe it is essential that, although the UK is leaving the EU, the quality of our cooperation on security is maintained.

Such cooperation is vital not only because we face the same threats, but because we share the same values, of peace, democracy, and the rule of law.

I believe that we can use that same spirit of cooperation and mutual trust to inform our commercial and political relationship.

There are few countries in the world that already share such a close economic relationship as Germany and UK.

We are natural and long standing trading partners.

Germany accounts for 13% of total UK imports – no other country in the world sells us more. That means around 1 in every 8 pounds spent in the UK on imports goes to Germany.

A similar story is true on investment. In 2016 the UK invested £21 billion in Germany. And now around 240,000 people in Germany work for British companies based here, making us your third biggest investor.

For those people, the individuals working for Allianz insurance in Guildford Surrey or their counterparts working for Rolls Royce in Brandenburg, not far from where my family and I own a home, the partnership between the UK and Germany is part of their daily life. It is a natural and easy union.

We want to protect this in the years to come.

Touching briefly on the financial services sector as I know this is the topic of the next session.

We need to think creatively about the options, but we believe we can find a positive solution, using our unique starting point of regulatory alignment to ensure that your businesses continue to have easy access to what will remain by far the largest concentration of financial services expertise and liquidity in Europe, even when the UK is outside the EU.

So it is not the case, as some have suggested, that Brexit is an attempt to undermine the institution of the EU or the prosperity of its members.

That would be an inconceivable act of self-harm for the UK. As the Prime Minister has stated to hope for anything but success for our neighbours would be truly perverse.

Therefore, I look forward to seeing a creative solution to a new economic relationship that can support prosperity for all our peoples. And I am glad that we have now made sufficient progress to move onto the second phase of negotiations.

The guidelines published by President Tusk for the next phase of negotiations point to the shared desire of the EU and UK to make rapid progress on an implementation period, with formal talks beginning very soon. This will help give certainty to the business community that we are going to deliver a smooth Brexit.

The council has also confirmed that discussions will now begin on trade and our future security partnership.

An implementation period means that both businesses and public services will only have to plan for one set of changes in the relationship between the UK and the EU.

Most of all, the significance of the UK as a trading partner for the European Union should not be underestimated.

Of course, we need to preserve our productive and open trading relationship. What is more, what kind of message does it send to the rest of the world if we didn't?

This is at a time when free trade is being questioned in many parts of the globe. If friendly and trade-liberal powers like the EU and the UK can't reach a free trade agreement, then what message does that send to Washington, Beijing and Delhi?

I told you earlier that my rather smart son has opted to support both England and Germany. Well I agree with his approach – maybe not when it comes to football – but when it comes to our shared prosperity and mutually dependent future.

It is only by working together that we can hope to meet some of the challenges facing our societies and economies in the coming years and that we can truly thrive.

Thank you.

[News story: Update on Carillion contracts](#)

A spokesperson for the Insolvency Service said:

The Official Receiver is very pleased with the level of support shown by Carillion's private sector service customers. Over the past 48 hours all of the company's private sector service customers have been contacted to determine their ongoing needs.

Over 90% of these customers have indicated that they want Carillion to continue providing services in the interim until new suppliers can be found and will provide funding which enables the Official Receiver to retain the employees working on those contracts.

Work has paused on construction sites, pending decisions as to how and if they will be restarted.