

News story: Defence Secretary recognises UK efforts in the fight against Daesh with service medal

Sir Michael met with personnel from the Mercian Regiment, Engineer Regiment, Intelligence Corps, and Medical Regiments at Erbil and Taji where they have been involved in training Iraqi Security Forces, Kurdish Forces and Ninewah police.

Speaking to the troops, he announced the Op Shader medal, recognising the valuable contributions made by many serving military personnel who have been tirelessly undertaking the UK effort as part of the Coalition fight against Daesh for the last three years.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

It is only right that those who've performed above and beyond in this fight against the evil of our time get the recognition they deserve. This medal will do just that.

Our troops have made huge contributions to the fight against Daesh, helping end its tyranny in large parts of Iraq and Syria.

They have conducted over 1,500 strikes against Daesh terrorist targets and helped train nearly 60,000 Iraqi Security Forces. The campaign is not over but for those that have served we rightly honour the critical role they have played in helping keep us safe.

Taking a leading role in the Counter-Daesh Global Coalition, the UK has provided over 1,400 military personnel from all three Services as part of its three year involvement.

Following the recent uplift of 44 additional Royal Engineers who deployed to Al Asad Airbase in August, there are around 600 British soldiers on the ground in Iraq. They are primarily involved in training Iraqi security forces in battle winning infantry, engineering and combat medical techniques as well as providing courses on countering IEDs and other critical skills.

Current UK Operational Medals policy requires consideration of risk and rigour to qualify for award of a campaign medal. To date, risk has been defined in terms of requiring an individual to be physically exposed to danger to qualify for medallic recognition and currently there are approximately 3,600 personnel who will receive the medal from May 2018.

The Defence Secretary has directed that this approach be examined to consider how best to recognise the rigour and operational contribution of those outside the immediate theatre of operations.

He said:

The changing character of warfare provides new challenges – not just about how we fight but also how we recognise and support those who serve.

As fighting has evolved we have adapted, ensuring our troops have cutting edge equipment including unmanned systems operated from outside the battle space. Our recognition of service, the risks taken, and the long-term effects must therefore adapt too.

That is why we need to examine how to provide medallic recognition for those making a vital contribution to Op Shader outside the battlespace, from Reaper pilots taking life and death decisions to those who ensure our planes can strike Daesh targets.

On his trip to the Middle East, the Defence Secretary also visited the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, where the UK is working closely with US as the two largest contributors to the Coalition's military campaign. As the command centre for the entire coalition's operations in Iraq and Syria, UK personnel, working alongside allies, are coordinating over 70 nations' activity including over 1500 air strikes and surveillance conducted by the RAF in the UK's three year campaign.

Speech: Priti Patel: UNGA High Level Event on UN Development System Reform

Excellencies and colleagues, I welcome you to this discussion on how we will enable the UN system to meet the needs of the global challenges we face across the international system. I would like to thank my co-hosts for their leadership on this issue and for joining the UK in championing and securing a collaborative approach to reform.

Britain has always been a bold and confident nation, unafraid to stand up for what we believe in. This applies equally to our leadership on development which is a crucial part of Britain's place in the world.

Looking outwards not inwards and utilising our unique history, skills and position as a force for good.

Whether it's tackling global scourges like killer diseases, modern slavery or the oppression of women and girls...

...this is central to our country's place in the world.

And in today's world of new threats and extremist ideologies...we must, and we will, be bold and unapologetic in standing up for our values.

The UK has led the way in responding to urgent need around the world, working as a proud and proactive member of the United Nations.

With these crises the UN and the multilateral system has never been more needed that is why we choose to remain one of the largest core funders to the UN's development and humanitarian agencies

The UN's universal membership is the place where states strengthen alliances, build new relationships and work with 192 other potential partners.

And it is because the UK is a committed supporter of the UN, that we are working so hard to reform and improve it.

Disasters, famines, persecution, terrorism and instability are leaving millions of our fellow citizens without hope or aspiration.

98% of the victims of terrorism are in developing countries, where terrorism is destroying lives, reducing investment, setting back economies and development and causing people to flee their homes to safer countries.

From Yemen to Somalia, an estimated 141 million people in need.

From the current crises across the Middle East, Africa, and Burma, to conflict, droughts, famines and environmental disasters such as Hurricane Irma and now Hurricane Maria – these have shown the world that the international system is, frankly, not coping – it is not fit for purpose.

While the objectives and goals of the UN are timeless, the structures and system we have today are out of date, designed for different eras – and have not adapted to the realities of today: the challenge of fragile states, terrorism, extremism, cross-border conflict, and a changing climate.

These crises have shown the weaknesses in our international system – and one that is recognised by Secretary General Guterres.

Over the last 70 years the UN has ballooned into a multiplicity of agencies, organisations, with billions spent in funds, programmes, costs and overheads, but too little coherence when it comes to collaboration, the sharing of resources and the effectiveness of aid.

The levels of inefficiency are shocking, with competition between agencies and bodies generating institutional turf wars that hinder and harm the very

efforts we are meant to assist. Examples such as money wasted, to the inefficient and counter productive use of aid, are just the tip of the iceberg.

Appallingly, we have actually seen child rape, sexual exploitation and abuse carried out under the UN flag – and not just by peacekeepers or in peace operations.

These deplorable crimes have been committed against children and vulnerable people – the very people the UN is mandated to protect.

As a world leader in development, the United Kingdom will be at the forefront of assisting the UN to wipe out this scourge. Inaction is not an option. Obfuscation and denial of the problem will only exacerbate the shame, eventually leading to loss of faith and trust in the organisation.

A NEW UN SYSTEM

As a country that believes in global leadership and using British values to shape a better world, the United Kingdom will be at the forefront driving this fundamental reform.

The UN Secretary-General's first report on system reform creates a strong foundation for building a UN for the 21st Century. One that the UK believes must be transparent, efficient and able to justify to the taxpayers of the world what it does and what outcomes it achieves on their behalf. He has our support in driving this change.

Several key themes come out of this report:

Efficiency – the UN must embrace efficiency. This isn't about doing less it's about doing more, reaching more people with the resources we already have by collaborating, pooling resources including best practice and tackling waste.

Accountability – the UN needs to be more accountable. The United Kingdom wants to see greater transparency on where funding comes from, how it is spent and the results it achieves.

The UK wants to see staff throughout this complicated system being held to account both for their performance and their conduct.

And, crucially, we support the Secretary-General's recommendations of focus on improved performance on the ground.

All aspects of these development reforms are solely about strengthening development impact.

If the UN is to remain relevant there must be improved delivery across all of the UN's activity and particularly on the ground, where suffering and need is the critical priority.

UK ACTION & FUNDING

For our part the UK is fully committed to working with you all to build a better UN for the 21st Century.

And Britain will lead the charge – from next year almost a third (30%) of our core funding to UN development and humanitarian agencies will be dependent on improved results and progress on reform priorities.

For all major emergencies, agencies will have to demonstrate that effective accountability and feedback mechanisms are in place if they want full funding from British taxpayers.

And we are demanding more effective and efficient delivery of assistance to the vulnerable – including greater use of cash transfers. Cash, rather than flying in food and other supplies, is more efficient, it enables those in need to choose how to support themselves. Crucially, it helps build local markets, local markets that create jobs and economic growth rather than perpetuating the aid dependency across these communities.

PRIVATE SECTOR

No country can defeat poverty and leave aid dependency behind without sustainable economic growth and jobs.

We know that trade, investment, free markets and economic growth are the route out of poverty.

UK Aid seeks to raises horizons, transform people's lives and secure better futures. If we can liberate the energies and talent of people around the world, to work hard and exchange the fruits of their labour in open markets, then people will work their way out of poverty.

So I am also calling on the UN to collaborate more closely with the private sector, the engine of job creation around the world, the vehicle to end poverty and we will link Britain's development spending to long term private sector investment, in order to lift people out of poverty and end aid dependency.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

One example of where the international system has failed is on the issue of the scourge of child sex abuse, and child rape, in development and peacekeeping.

The United Kingdom's position could not be clearer;

We call upon the UN to have the best in class systems for training, prevention and detection in order to protect the world's vulnerable children from abusers and abuse;

To do much more to support Member States to enhance their investigation and prosecution capability;

Legal immunity, of whatever form, must neither exist nor be claimed for child sex crimes. We, must declare that child sex crimes do not fall within the scope of protection envisaged by the Convention on UN Privileges and Immunities.

In practical terms we must fight to see;

- The Confirmation that Agencies heads are accountable for action, and failure of action, on sexual abuse and exploitation, reporting annually to Boards and in keeping with the new MoUs that I have issued on behalf of the British Government;
- An Assurance that the Special Task Force on SEA will not be closed after one year;
- Agreement that the UN's Sexual exploitation and abuse database is updated to include HQ as well as field based staff, officials, experts, contractors and others for all UK funded agencies;
- And assurances that the UN will toughen its investigation and prosecution response.
- A commitment to a real inter-agency response to help bring perpetrators to justice in countries where concerns and caseloads are greatest.

The UK government recognises the progress made with the Voluntary Compact, but will nevertheless not be shy however in calling out agencies and organisations that do not take all necessary steps in training, prevention, detection to as fast as possible eliminate this scourge.

Britain will have agreements in place whereby all agencies we support endorse a 'zero tolerance' policy when it comes to child sex abuse, which will apply to its staff, officials, experts, contractors, implementing partners and any other organisation or individual that benefits from Agency support or direct or indirect funding.

And we are absolutely clear that all UN agencies must be fully transparent about any and all accusations made against their staff, contractors and implementing partners.

Any agency that receives funds from us must have the strongest possible measures in place to protect vulnerable populations, especially children, and to deter, detect and catch paedophiles and sex offenders.

Under these agreements agencies must also have robust and credible whistleblowing mechanisms and the UK will host an international conference to plan on how we, together, set up, fund and support such a mechanism.

This is a defining moral issue for the UN and for Member States and there can be no more excuses.

AN URGENT AGENDA

No one in this room can doubt the urgency of reform.

On behalf of British taxpayers, the UK Government will put our money where our mouth is on our reform priorities and I call upon others to do the same.

The UN's goals and objectives are timeless.

But a UN that embraces reform can realise its enormous potential to build it up and make it relevant to the 21st Century.

We can't allow our international institutions to slide into irrelevance at a time when disasters, conflict, instability and poverty are desperately in need of global co-operation and global leadership.

A global Britain will lead this challenge and work together to create a more engaged and outward looking international system. Our work is to serve, and serve those whose futures are dependent upon the actions we undertake today.

Thank you.

News story: Foreign Secretary's message for Rosh Hashanah

The Foreign Secretary said:

Every New Year is a time for reflection.

As we enter the Jewish Year 5778, I reflect on the Jewish community we have here in the UK: A community which contributes so much to our society, in every field.

I also reflect on what a good friend the UK has in Israel.

My own relationship with Israel goes back to when I worked on a Kibbutz as a young adult, and it was a privilege to work with many partners in Tel Aviv as Mayor of London as it is now as Foreign Secretary with the State of Israel.

I was delighted to see London host the Tel Aviv Festival earlier this month attended by Middle East Minister Alistair Burt. It affirmed the strong cultural ties between two of our respective countries' great cities.

In the coming year, there are two significant anniversaries in UK-Israel

relations. November will mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration and in May the 70th Anniversary of Israel's Independence.

Marking these anniversaries is an opportunity to show not only is our friend Israel here to stay, but that the UK and Israel are going to continue to work together, to grow together and to thrive together.

New Year is also a time to make resolutions, and I am going to share three of mine with you – bear down on the scourge of antisemitism, both at home and abroad, build the strongest ever relationship between the UK and Israel and celebrate the UK's Jewish community, a community that has made an enormous contribution to British society.

I wish Jewish friends in the UK and around the World a Shana Tova u-Metuka – a Happy and Sweet Jewish New Year!

Speech: PM speech to UNGA on modern slavery: 'behind these numbers are real people.'

So, it's fitting that we gather here today, united in our determination to eliminate the scourge of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern slavery exists in all our societies. It respects neither borders nor jurisdictions. Its victims are subject to the most appalling mistreatment and exploitation. And the scale of the challenge, which will be set out in more detail in new estimates from Alliance 8.7 in a moment, is sobering, and brings our task into sharp focus.

Behind these numbers are real people suffering terrible abuse, and if we're to meet our ambition to eradicate forced labour, and end modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030, we know we have a long way to go. And that's why I've invited you here today, as leaders who are committed to addressing these barbaric crimes, to champion this cause through a collective call to action. This is a statement of intent through which our shared vision and values can be realised. Its message is clear: we will not tolerate these crimes in our societies.

It is hard to bring out into the open and defeat something which has persisted for so many years in the shadows, but we have a duty as leaders to do so, and if we are to succeed, it will require our concerted efforts, our efforts at home, but also internationally, to drive and to deliver a coherent global response.

Now, all of you here today have demonstrated leadership on this issue, and I look forward to hearing more from you. But before that, I just wanted to

offer some very brief words about what the UK is doing to address these crimes. In 2015, we introduced the world's first Modern Slavery Act, and we're now seeing the first convictions for the new offences it introduced.

But to address this insidious crime, I know that more needs to be done, so today, I'm pleased to announce a series of further measures that will be implemented in my country. We will train new specialist investigators and frontline police officers, and we will develop the expertise of prosecutors so that they can better handle complex cases and support traumatised victims.

But for a crime that has no respect for borders, we need a truly international response. We will therefore host an international summit of chief prosecutors next spring, and in addition, the UK will double its aid spending on modern slavery to £150 million, enabling more work in collaboration with source and transit countries. And this will also include £20 million of seed funding to the new Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. We're delighted to be contributing to this initiative which my US colleague, Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan, will say more about, and I wholeheartedly commend this initiative to you all.

The commitments we make here today through the call to action lay strong foundations for more effective action. The task is an urgent one, so we need swiftly to put our words into practice and hold ourselves to account for progress. And I would like to open the floor to the Secretary General of the United Nations. And before I do so, can I just say, I would like to pay tribute to the commitment that he's personally shown to this agenda.

Press release: BIA & MHRA publish report 'Innovation in life sciences in a changing and dynamic environment'

The UK BioIndustry Association (BIA) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) brought together experts from across the sector to discuss some hot topics and important developments that are having an impact on the changing and dynamic UK life sciences ecosystem. Through a series of presentations, panel discussions and Q and A, key topics were debated and analysed including the Accelerated Access Review and the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy, personalised medicines and companion diagnostics, the Priority Medicines (PRIME) scheme and the challenges posed to medicines regulation by Brexit.

The key note speakers for the seventh annual joint conference were Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Lord O'Shaughnessy who provided the UK Government's position to retain a close working partnership in respect of medicines regulation after the UK leaves the EU, in the

interests of public health and safety, and Chief Executive of NHS England, Simon Stevens, who outlined the challenges faced by the NHS, the opportunities for industry in the NHS Five Year Forward View and the patient's role in promoting access to new medicines.

[The report summarises the presentations and perspectives](#) from senior experts and leading speakers from MHRA, government, NHS England, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), the life science industry, academia, research charities and patient organisations.

Commenting on the publication of the report, Alan Morrison, Chairman, BIA Regulatory Affairs Advisory Committee and Vice President, International Regulatory Affairs, MSD, said:

It is important not to lose sight of innovation when navigating this dynamic and changing environment. As the government continues with the Brexit negotiations this event provides an important forum for industry, regulators and all relevant stakeholders to come together to talk about the practicalities, challenges and opportunities around Brexit.

It was particularly encouraging to have the minister at the conference and to offer a clear message to the life sciences sector.

Dr Ian Hudson, Chief Executive of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, said:

It is a priority of the MHRA to support innovation across industry, SMEs, academia and healthcare, providing help to develop novel medicines, devices and manufacturing processes, through mechanisms such as the Early Access to Medicines Scheme and the MHRA Innovation Office.

This annual conference is a fantastic opportunity for continuous dialogue and engagement between regulators, government and stakeholders across the life sciences ecosystem.

View [the full report on the BIA website](#) and you can also find the [full programme and slide presentations for this year on the conference website](#).

Read the [full text of the speech given by Lord O'Shaughnessy](#) on Brexit and medicines regulation at the BIA/MHRA Conference.