

News story: Royal Marines to stage demonstration on the Thames for Netherlands state visit

On Wednesday 24 October, Royal Marine commandos will take part in a high octane demonstration on the Thames, along with their Dutch counterparts.

News story: Defence Minister teams up with with international counterparts to improve support for veterans

Delegates from each nation came together under a shared commitment to their defence communities, and took part in discussions on mental health support, and the transition process undertaken by the military as they adjust to civilian life.

The Minister was hosted by The Honourable Darren Chester, Australian Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, and joined by General Walter Natynczyk, Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs, Government of Canada; Ms Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd, Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, United States of America; The Hon Ron Mark MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, New Zealand; and Ms Bernadine Mackenzie, Head of Veterans' Affairs, New Zealand.

During the two-day conference, the Minister addressed the delegates on the progress made at the last meeting, which was hosted in London, at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The conference then heard from leading experts on the latest international research on suicide prevention, the importance of evidence-based research to inform new policy, and the promotion of employment and education for those preparing to leave service, and supporting veterans struggling with mental health.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said;

Following the success of last year's conference, it's an honour to be able to continue to discuss the ways in which each of our nations supports those who have served.

The UK has established several new initiatives since I met with my counterparts in London, including the new veterans ID card, and

later this year we will introduce our new transition policy, which will provide additional support to those that need it.

By combining our knowledge and expertise, we can continue to improve and enhance the way we thank our service leavers for their dedication and sacrifice.

The Minister and his international counterparts then signed a statement of intent, which recognises the benefits of working together and exploring examples of best practice in support and care for the defence and veteran communities and their families.

Each of the delegates also travelled to the ANZAC War Memorial, the commemorative military monument in Sydney, where they laid wreaths to honour Australians who lost their lives in the first and second World Wars.

The Minister is in Sydney to support Team UK at this year's Invictus Games, which were founded by HRH The Duke of Sussex to harness the power of sport to aid wounded, injured and sick serving and former personnel in their recovery. On October 20th, he attended the opening ceremony at Sydney Opera House, which hosted 500 competitors from 18 nations preparing to compete in 11 medal sports including powerlifting, sailing, sitting volleyball, and wheelchair rugby and basketball.

News story: New study into Iraq and Afghanistan veterans launched

The new study, which follows on from similar reports conducted after the Falklands War and the First Gulf War, will investigate cause of death, including rates of suicide, for all personnel who deployed to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014. This will cover personnel who are still in service, and those who have now transitioned into civilian life.

While rates of mental disorder are lower in the military (3.1%) than the general population (4.5%), the MOD routinely carries out research into those who have served on large scale combat operations, in order to more accurately assess the effects of deployment.

Previous studies into mortality rates of those who served during the 1982 Falklands 1982 Falklands and 1990/91 Gulf conflicts found that they were no more likely to take their lives than the wider population, while rates of suicide within the military remain low.

This latest research will be conducted in collaboration with NHS Digital, and will match the MOD's service database with corresponding NHS records in order

to track causes of death. It will compare findings with the general population, as well as all personnel who served during the same period outside Iraq or Afghanistan.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Our Armed Forces do a magnificent job, and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to each man and woman who has laid their life on the line to keep our country safe.

Most transition successfully into civilian life once they have put away their uniforms, but we cannot afford to be complacent. Mental health problems can affect us all, and the wellbeing of our people remains a top priority.

By conducting this vital new study, we are furthering our understanding of the wellbeing of our people so we can continue to provide the best possible care to all who have served.

The study will work alongside the ongoing research by King's Centre for Military Health Research and Imperial College in order build as detailed a profile as possible of those who served on these operations.

The MOD's Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is working to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health issues, to ensure that all who serve, and have served, can enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health. It aims to offer the tools and support necessary for each of the Armed Forces' men and women to lead a long and healthy life, during their service, and following their transition back into the civilian community.

The MOD has committed to spending £22 million a year on mental health, and has set up two 24/7 helplines for serving personnel and veterans, so that there is always somewhere to turn in times of crisis. This year, the MOD will launch the new Defence Transition Service, a specialist support system that will provide an additional layer of care for those preparing to leave service, who are most likely to face difficulties once they leave the Armed Forces.

The majority of veterans go on to lead successful and healthy lives once they have left the Armed Forces. They leave with strong values and transferrable skills, demonstrating qualities such as leadership, resourcefulness, adaptability, and the ability to work under pressure.

Of the veterans who use the MOD's Career Transition Partnership upon leaving the Armed Forces, 86% are in education, training, volunteering or in a job within six months. The MOD continues to run the largest apprenticeship scheme in the country.

News story: Defence Minister teams up with with international counterparts to improve support for veterans

This weekend, Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood attended the Ministerial Five Eyes Conference in Sydney, where he joined delegates from the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to discuss best practice in care for ex-service personnel.

News story: New study into Iraq and Afghanistan veterans launched

The Ministry of Defence has launched a new study into the causes of death of military personnel who deployed on combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.