

News story: Defence Secretary visits Appledore yard as warship competition ramps up

The Ministry of Defence announced plans to procure a new class of frigates, the Type 31e, as part of [the National Shipbuilding Strategy which was launched last year](#). The warships will be built in the UK, with a set price cap no more than £250M per frigate for the first batch of five, with an investment decision to be made at the end of this year.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Visiting a shipyard that has built hundreds of vessels and meeting some of the next generation of apprentice shipbuilders leaves me in no doubt of the current resurgence of UK shipbuilding. The South West is crucial for our military, with a particularly special connection with our Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and it's good to see Babcock seeking to strengthen that even further with this bid.

The department has received over 20 expressions of interest from industry with Babcock today announcing it will lead a bespoke team of industry partners, including Thales, BMT, Harland & Wolff and Ferguson Marine in a bid for the new Type 31e.

The MOD spent £810 per person in the South West region last year, greater than any other region in the UK coming in at a total value of £4.4bn. The department's direct spend in the area is estimated to sustain 30,000 jobs, one in every 70.

Babcock's Appledore facility has been a particularly integral link in the production of the largest ships in the Navy's history, with their production of a number of significant 'blocks' of the UK's new aircraft carriers. Separately, the Appledore yard has recently been working to deliver a new class of offshore patrol vessels for the Irish Naval Service.

The Defence Secretary was given a guided tour of the yard and visited some of the 260 staff employed there and met with the apprentices showing their enthusiasm for the potential opportunity to build cutting-edge ships for the growing Royal Navy.

The frigates will be designed to meet the needs of the Royal Navy, but also with the export market in mind. The Government will work with industry to provide support to become internationally competitive, boosting the UK economy and jobs, while also helping to create a more stable and well-protected world.

The Defence Secretary will go on to visit the Commando Training Centre in

Lympstone, Devon, which is entering its 78th year of training Royal Marines. An average of 1,300 recruits, 2,000 potential recruits and 400 potential officers attend training courses at the centre every year, and the Defence Secretary will meet many of those set to join the Corps.

News story: Royal Navy work with Australians on massive drug bust

Under the command of Combined Task Force (CTF)150, Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Fort Rosalie's Royal Navy Sea King Mark 7 helicopter spotted a suspicious boat while flying over the Arabian Sea, off the coast of Oman, this week.

Australian ship HMAS Warramunga – working with Fort Rosalie as part of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) – then intercepted it and found more than 3.5 tonnes of illicit substances, valued at £105million.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Thanks to the skill and professionalism of Britain's Armed Forces, working with key allies like the Australians, we are keeping our citizens safe by tackling the evil international drugs trade that funds terrorism.

I am incredibly grateful that we have the best service men and women in the world who always go the extra mile, whether they are protecting us from harm or saving precious wildlife like this family of turtles.

The Flight Commander, Lieutenant Commander Dan Breward Royal Navy said:

We're delighted to have been able to contribute to CTF 150's missions within the joint operations area. There was a massive effort from all parties involved from both Fort Rosalie and, ultimately, Warramunga.

As long as drugs and weapons continue to be trafficked to aid terrorism, we will be here with the coalition members to stop them; we have a track record that we aim to build upon.

In addition to the huge haul, RFA Fort Rosalie was also able to rescue three young Loggerhead Turtles that were caught in a huge mass of fishing nets drifting through the water. The baby turtles were freed by some delicate

cutting from the team.

The Navigator, Second Officer Thorsten Brabetz, said:

It was not what we expected to find when we investigated the floats. It was great to be able to save the turtles and release them back into the sea. It was a real feel good moment for the boats crew and the entire ship.

In 2017, CMF ships have seized a total of 22.67 tonnes of narcotics. Boarding, search and seizure operations at sea require a persistent and methodical approach by CMF sailors and marines.

News story: Defence Secretary praises UK efforts as RAF operations against Daesh continue

In his first visit to Iraq, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson praised UK service personnel as British airstrikes continue to wipe out Daesh.

RAF aircraft flew on operations against the terrorist group every day over the Christmas period, striking terrorist compounds, trucks, mortars and pockets of fighters engaged in close quarter, street fighting with Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The dangers we face are changing and are intensifying rapidly. Eliminating the threat from terrorism is critical to our security at home and abroad. Our brave Armed Forces are working tirelessly, day and night, to defeat Daesh after helping to recover significant territory in Iraq.

Only by defeating this evil and barbaric group for good will we reduce the deadly threat they pose to us, which is why we won't stop until their global network is destroyed.

RAF aircraft have carried out over 1,700 strikes against Daesh in Iraq and Syria since 2014 and in his first visit to Cyprus, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson also met the crews who are playing a vital role in the coalition campaign to totally defeat Daesh.

Fast jets flying out of RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and remotely piloted Reaper aircraft continue to provide support to the SDF on the ground who are clearing the last remaining pockets of Daesh terrorists in Eastern Syria.

Typhoons, Tornados and Reapers worked closely with coalition partners, offering vital intelligence and close air support throughout December, destroying Daesh targets near Abu Kamal, Abu Hardub and Abu Hammam.

He also visited UK personnel in Taji and Baghdad, as well as Kuwait, praising their efforts as part of the UK's contribution to the global coalition fight Daesh.

In Kuwait, he met with US Lieutenant General Paul Funk the Commanding General of the global coalition as well as Major General Felix Gedney, Deputy Commander-Strategy and Support and the most senior UK officer in the military campaign against Daesh.

They discussed the success of the military campaign in both Iraq and Syria, but also reflected that Daesh have not yet been defeated as pockets of fighters still remain and will continue to pose a threat at home and abroad.

In Baghdad, Mr Williamson met with the Iraqi Defence Minister and visited the Iraqi National Security Agency, commending the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces and reiterating the UK's commitment to the long-term security and stability of Iraq. This follows from the Prime Minister's pledge in her recent visit to address the evolving threat from Daesh and countering the dispersal of foreign fighters as Daesh is squeezed out of the battlefield in Syria and Iraq

He also visited UK troops stationed in Taji who, along with over 600 British soldiers on the ground in Iraq, are helping to train that country's forces. UK troops have so far helped train around 60,000 Iraqi Security Forces in battle-winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills. In addition to personnel on the ground in Iraq, the UK has provided over 1,400 military personnel from all three Services as part of its three year involvement.

Press release: British Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visits Kuwait

Updated: Added translation

British Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson visits Kuwait today,

Wednesday 3 January 2018, for the first time since his appointment in November 2017. During his visit he called on His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also called on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and congratulated him on his recent appointment.

This visit is an important opportunity to build on the excellent defence co-operation between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom as part of the close and cordial bilateral relations which exist between our two countries. The United Kingdom welcomes the important role which Kuwait is playing in the region. Kuwait is a key partner in the Counter-Daesh Coalition and a major humanitarian donor and as a mediator in regional disputes. Kuwait also joins the United Nations Security Council in 2018 to 2019.

News story: MDP Officer awarded MBE in New Year Honours

Claire has been appointed awarded her MBE for services to defence and policing and in recognition of her work as the Defence Police Federation Welfare Officer.

Claire has been with our organisation since 1992 and in 2009 became a member of the Defence Police Federation, acting as the Welfare Officer.

Her contribution to the MDP through her role as a Constable and her engagement as a Welfare Officer has been of valuable assistance to the Force, as well as supporting colleagues at times of need following organisational change, bereavement or ill-health. She has thrown herself whole-heartedly into this work, forging a role which is now recognised as a valuable element of the MDP structure. In doing so, she has balanced the organisational need with her DPF position to ensure that both are appropriately represented.

T/Chief Constable Andy Adams comments:

I am sure that many people will want to congratulate Claire individually but, I offer her many congratulations on behalf of the force.