

News story: Defence Secretary hosts first meeting in UK with Secretary Mattis

Both have just returned from NATO and counter-Daesh Ministerial meetings in Brussels, where the alliance agreed to adapt its command structure to better reflect the security environment, announcing the establishment of two new headquarters: an Atlantic Command and a Logistics Command.

NATO is the cornerstone of UK and US defence and both nations have been leading calls for NATO to adapt to future threats. The meeting in London focussed on three themes: current threats, capability and shared prosperity.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“From fighting in the trenches of the Great War to countering Russian aggression and tackling Daesh today, the UK has been America’s closest partner for a century. Today our countries are cooperating on everything from operations and intelligence to innovation and this meeting is an opportunity to continue strengthening our special relationship.”

Despite being close to defeat in Iraq and Syria, Daesh remains a concern for the UK and US and the British Defence Secretary reaffirmed his support to the US-led coalition. The pair also discussed the increasing assertiveness from the Kremlin, as the UK stands side by side with US and NATO allies, leading the enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup in Estonia and contributing soldiers to the US-led Battlegroup in Poland.

Amongst only six NATO countries meeting the commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence, the UK and US are investing heavily in next generation technology, including the F-35 aircraft. US F-35s will fly from the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier in 2021, demonstrating the close relationship between the two countries.

The defence trading relationship between the UK and US is worth £3 billion a year and as the UK looks beyond Brexit, both countries hope to strengthen that relationship too.

News story: RAF continue to strike a retreating Daesh

Already in November UK aircraft have struck Daesh command posts in Al Qaim,

supporting the Iraqi Security Forces liberating the city, and eliminated mortar teams and destroyed parts of the terrorist's tunnel network in eastern Syria. As the Defence Secretary joins counterparts in Brussels today for a meeting of the Counter-Daesh Coalition, the UK remains steadfast in its commitment to destroy Daesh militarily and to counter its poisonous propaganda.

Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

Our forces are working tirelessly to defeat the evil of our time. Daesh is weakened and in retreat having now lost its last remaining major strongholds in Iraq and Syria.

The battle is not yet over. We will continue to hit the terrorists hard in both Syria and Iraq while supporting efforts to rebuild – only by defeating Daesh for good will we reduce the threat to both our nations at home.

In the fight for the last remaining major strongholds, the UK continued to support coalition partners fighting on the ground. Having received intelligence from a coalition surveillance aircraft on Wednesday 1 November, RAF Tornados launched two Paveways at a command post near Al Qaim destroying the building, the terrorists and their vehicles.

Tornados continued to support Iraqi Security Forces in the battle for Al Qaim the following day, and successfully bombed a Daesh observation post, which was attempting to direct mortar fire against the rapidly advancing Iraqi ground forces.

On Saturday 4 November, two Tornados patrolled the far east of Syria, destroying a mortar team north-east of al Mayadin. The aircraft also bombed the entrance to a Daesh tunnel network nearby. Typhoons flew missions over eastern Syria on Sunday 5 November, eliminating a mortar team near Abu Kamal, as well as striking another tunnel complex near Al Mayadin.

British aircraft have struck Daesh 1348 times in Iraq and 262 times in Syria. In that time the group has lost territory, finances, leaders and fighters as the 73-member coalition liberate its last remaining strongholds in both countries.

But despite military progress in Syria and Iraq, the threat posed by Daesh and their poisonous narrative remains substantial. Their continued ability to inspire attacks means that we must remain resolute in our work to defeat them in their branches worldwide and counter their propaganda.

News story: DCDC hosts Northern Group working group

Hosted by the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), the event was attended by ten of the Northern Group member nations, including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Sweden and The Netherlands.

A think tank within the Northern Group, the Northern Group Centre for Conceptual Thinking (NGCCT) provides a forum for collaborative discussion, idea exchange and mutual understanding of issues and opportunities. This event aimed to highlight security issues of interest to all NGCCT members, such as the High North and Modern Deterrence.

Led by the DCDC Futures team, the High North discussion examined the strategic significance of melting Arctic sea ice. Members then divided into syndicates, to present national perspectives on potential scenarios arising from this discussion.

To provide a context for discussion of the common challenges associated with deterrence in 21st century Europe, the DCDC Doctrine team introduced 'Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 06, modern deterrence: the military contribution', currently being drafted.

Further NGCCT events, hosted by other Northern Group member states, are being planned for 2018.

News story: First Secretary salutes RAF Lossiemouth contribution to UK Defence

In 1941, Lady MacRobert lost two sons who flew with the RAF within six weeks of each other: Roderic (25) was killed when leading a Hurricane aircraft attack on German positions in Iraq; Ian (24) was declared missing in action after his Blenheim aircraft failed to return from a search and rescue mission flown from Shetland – his body was never found. Their older brother Alasdair had also been killed in a civil aviation accident in 1938.

The indomitable response of Lady MacRobert's to these tragedies was to buy a £25,000 Stirling bomber aircraft for the RAF that same year, stipulating that it be called MacRobert's Reply, and which flew 12 operational missions.

In 1942, Lady MacRobert donated a further £20,000 to purchase four Hurricane fighters, which were sent to RAF operations in the Middle East, with three named after her sons and the fourth after her.

A succession of RAF aircraft have carried the MacRobert's name ever since. The MacRobert Trust has donated millions of pounds to charitable organisations, created a variety of prizes, awards, traineeships and endowments, and paid for building works across the country.

First Secretary of State Damien Green MP said:

In this season of remembrance, the MacRobert's legacy epitomises the contribution made by Scotland and the Scots to the defence and national security of the United Kingdom, both historically and today.

The new Sir Roderic belongs to 6 Squadron which maintains the Quick Reaction Alert (Interceptor) mission, alongside sister aircraft from RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire. Together they protect UK airspace from rogue aircraft and other threats by providing crews and aircraft at high states of readiness 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Chris Hockley, Chief Executive, MacRobert Trust added:

It is fantastic that 6 Squadron are taking on the mantle as our affiliated Squadron, strengthening the bond that we are lucky enough to have with the RAF and RAF Lossiemouth.

We look forward with huge enthusiasm to getting to know the new members of the MacRobert 'family' – the men and women of 6 Squadron and to seeing Sir Roderic in the skies above Douneside.

As one of three RAF fast jet bases, RAF Lossiemouth's three frontline Typhoon squadrons make a significant operational contribution to UK Defence. In addition to QRA, these Typhoons have regularly deployed on operations over Iraq and Syria, and on training and defence engagement activity in Oman and the Far East.

RAF Lossiemouth is home to 5 Force Protection Wing, which has deployed regularly to deliver Airfield Force Protection Training to Nigerian Forces. Moray-based personnel and aircraft have also deployed on training and defence engagement activity in Oman and the Far East over the past year.

From 2020 RAF Lossiemouth will begin to be the home of the new £3bn fleet of Poseidon P8-A Maritime Patrol Aircraft, which will add to the UK's surveillance capabilities and are designed to conduct anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, search and rescue and intelligence gathering. They can carry torpedoes and anti-shipping missiles and will be used to protect the

two new UK aircraft carriers and the nuclear deterrent.

Poseidon will increase the Lossiemouth workforce to over 2,000 personnel bring wider economic benefits, with £400m being invested in new support infrastructure for the nine Poseidon aircraft. Full Operating Capability is expected by 2024, and will include nine aircraft and 18 crews.

As a leading members of NATO, the UK Ministry of Defence has already signed agreements with the US and Norwegian militaries to cooperate closely on operating their P-8A aircraft across the North Atlantic.

News story: Armed Forces Minister reinforces UK support to Gibraltar

He will meet Gibraltar Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo, Deputy Governor, Nick Pyle OBE, as well as service personnel stationed in the UK overseas territory as part of a visit to discuss Brexit and the role of the UK's military in Gibraltar.

Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said:

Gibraltar is of great importance to the UK, our Armed Forces and our allies. It has provided vital assistance to operations and exercises over the years, perhaps best demonstrated by the recent support to the UK's hurricane relief effort in the Caribbean.

We are absolutely steadfast in our support of Gibraltar, its people and its economy and will fully involve Gibraltar as we prepare to exit the European Union.

In meetings with the Deputy Governor and The Chief Minister, Mark Lancaster will stress the UK's commitment to upholding Gibraltar's sovereignty as well as ensuring that their priorities are taken properly into account as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

Whilst in Gibraltar, Mr Lancaster will also attend an event recognising the important role that personnel stationed there played as part of the UK military response to Hurricane Irma. They delivered vital assistance to HMS Ocean as she docked to load humanitarian aid and disaster relief before sailing to the Caribbean Islands to assist those devastated by the hurricane.

He will also meet with Royal Navy Gibraltar Squadron who support British military activity in the region, providing force protection for visiting allied warships as well as upholding the sovereignty of British Gibraltar territorial waters.