

News story: Exercise Cambrian Patrol testing the best from around the world

Taking place over some of the harshest yet most picturesque terrain in Mid Wales, Exercise Cambrian Patrol is a unique event and the largest of its kind anywhere in the world. It is rightly regarded as the premier patrolling exercise in NATO.

It is mentally and physically demanding and examines all the basic skills of a modern-day soldier, enhancing leadership skills and levels of endurance and determination. On average only five per cent of patrols gain the top Gold award while about a third fail to finish.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Exercise Cambrian Patrol is the premier examination of patrolling abilities in NATO. It is arduous and testing and regarded as the proving ground for Armed Forces from all around the world.

With so many allies coming together, this is a further opportunity to strengthen bonds and comradeship, paving the way for a safer future for us all.

Brigadier Alan Richmond OBE, Commander 160th Infantry Brigade and Headquarters and head of the Army in Wales, is the Exercise Director.

He said:

Exercise Cambrian Patrol is becoming more popular every year and this year we've had more international patrols take part than ever before.

That means people really understand the value of this as an exercise. It's also a great opportunity for us in the British Army to work alongside a lot of our international partners and develop our solid relationships. This year has been a great success.

First Lieutenant Pavel Popovici of the Moldovian Army was one of the first time patrol commanders.



1st Lieutenant Pavel Popovici of the Moldovian Army. Crown copyright

He said:

We are representing our country for the first time and it is important to do well. We have had a lot of help from our friends 2nd Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment, and we are very thankful for it.

Major Steve Keir, Officer Commanding Exercise Cambrian Patrol, said the event had achieved all of its objectives in testing the basic military skills of soldiers over the harshest terrain in Wales.

He said:

This year was especially testing in that we had three serious weather fronts to deal with – two named (Hurricane Ophelia and Storm Brian) and one unnamed. That means the dynamic of the exercise changed completely and we had more patrols fail to complete than ever before.

Additionally, those who dug in with real grit and determination and who upped their game gained higher awards than normal. Our normal Gold medal award allocations increased by about 50 per cent to nine awards and the number of Silvers were also up significantly with 33 being awarded.

The feedback from those who had completed the exercise before was that this year was definitely much tougher due to the inclement weather thrown in.

Cambrian Patrol 2017 is the biggest so far – 126 patrols took part. We've also had a number of countries ask us how they could replicate a similar exercise in their own countries.

To us, that's a good statement because it means they see this as world class.

News story: UK steps up role as the fight against Daesh evolves

2 Rifles, currently based at Al Asad providing infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical training to the Iraqi Security Forces, will now patrol outside the base perimeter.

The UK is also deploying a further team of British military medical personnel to Al Asad and will extend the deployment of British engineers at the base by six months. A Light Surgical team, made up of RAF medics and personnel from the Army Medical Corps, will be able to provide world leading medical treatment to Coalition forces within the critical "Golden Hour" after being wounded.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

The fight against Daesh's reign of terror is not over and as the nature of the Coalition campaign changes, the role we play must adapt too. By training Iraq forces we are helping with the long-term stability of the country and our own security here at home.

The campaign to defeat Daesh in Iraq has entered its final phase following the liberation of Mosul, Hawija and the Ninewah Province from its barbaric rule. Iraqi Security Forces are now advancing across Anbar Province, clearing Daesh positions in the Euphrates River Valley.

Medical support to operations is a top priority for the Coalition. Learning from previous operations, such as the world leading trauma care developed at Camp Bastion's hospital, the UK medical personnel will ensure Coalition forces receive the highest standard of treatment if required.

Over 600 British soldiers are on the ground in Iraq, helping to train that country's forces. UK troops have so far helped train over 58,000 Iraqi

Security Forces in battle-winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills. In addition to personnel on the ground in Iraq, RAF aircraft have carried out over 1,600 strikes against Daesh. The UK's commitment from all three Services to the fight against Daesh across the region now numbers just over 1,400 military personnel.

News story: Defence Secretary announces exceptional gift to Canada

The journey to locate these vessels has taken 172 years. Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin set sail from England in 1845 on an expedition to chart the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic with HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. The ships and all crew were lost after the ships became stuck in ice off King William Island and the crew abandoned them to trek overland to the South. None of the crew survived.

Many attempts were made over the years but only artefacts were found. In 1992, the wrecks were designated as a national historic site, despite neither shipwreck having been found at that time. In 1997, UK and Canadian Governments signed an agreement giving custody and control of the wrecks and their contents to the Canadian Government, whilst still remaining the property of the UK.

With a combination of traditional Inuit knowledge and state-of-the-art technology, the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror were finally located under relatively shallow Arctic Waters to the south of King William Island in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Acknowledging the importance of this momentous discovery, the UK Government is proposing to update the 1997 agreement, transferring ownership of the wrecks to Parks Canada, whilst retaining a small sample of artefacts. Items from the wreckages will be displayed for future generations in both Canadian and UK museums.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

"During her recent visit to Canada, the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of recognising our shared past with Canada as we seek to reinvigorate our already strong bilateral relationship.

"This exceptional arrangement will recognise the historical significance of the Franklin expedition to the people of Canada, and will ensure that these wrecks and artefacts are conserved for future generations."

The transfer of ownership is expected to be undertaken over the coming weeks.

News story: MOD Veterans UK welcomes Prince Harry to Blackpool in a visit marking 25 years of helpline support

During the visit, Prince Harry was accompanied by Jon Parkin, Head of Veterans UK, as he was shown the extent of work undertaken in support of all UK veterans. Veterans UK provides vital welfare help for ex-service personnel and their families, working in partnership with a number of charities and support networks. They also administer pension and compensation schemes for those injured or bereaved through service in the armed forces.



His Royal Highness Prince Harry talks to Veterans UK staff about the work they do, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Jon Parkin, Head of Veterans UK said:

I was delighted to welcome Prince Harry to Veterans UK. I am hugely inspired by his work with veterans, so I was very proud to be able demonstrate the breadth of services we provide here and the commitment our staff show in support of veterans.



Christine Bulpitt explains the support provided by the Veterans UK Helpline team to Prince Harry, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Representatives from the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) described to the Prince how they provide assistance in enhancing the quality of life for veterans.

Russ Egan, Regional Welfare Manager said:

It was an immense pleasure to meet Prince Harry this morning. He clearly has a keen interest in the support and assistance we provide to our ex-service veterans and recognises the importance in helping those approaching discharge to ensure we make that transition pathway as seamless as possible.

Prince Harry also met the Veterans UK Helpline team and gained an insight into the invaluable service they provide. Helpline advisor, Lyndsay Ethell facilitated a call with the Prince watching on.



Prince Harry listens in to a Helpline call with Lyndsay Ethell, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Lyndsay said:

It was a great honour meeting Prince Harry, a once in a lifetime opportunity that I feel extremely privileged to be part of. The whole of Helpline deserve this recognition for all the hard work we do and to say we all enjoyed the day is an understatement!

The Prince then took time to talk to members of the local community who have received help from Veterans UK over the years. They included a retired squadron leader who receives a war disablement pension, a family member who has recently received welfare help and a member of the local Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee.



Prince Harry is presented with a Passchendaele 100 brass poppy badge by Phoebe Taylor, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Prior to leaving, local children of Veterans UK staff presented the Prince with a brass Passchendaele 100 poppy made from shell fuses found on World War 1 battlefields.



Prince Harry unveils a plaque to commemorate 25 years of the Veterans UK Helpline, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Outside the building the Prince unveiled a plaque marking 25 years of service by the Veterans UK Helpline to great rapture by the watching staff.

[Press release: Minister for Europe opens Strategic Dialogue with Georgia](#)

Minister for Europe and Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, will today [October 23] welcome Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Georgia, Mikheil Janelidze for the fourth round of the UK-Georgia annual strategic dialogue, known as the Wardrop Dialogue.

Deputy Prime Minister Janelidze's will also meet Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson before joining the Lord Mayor at Mansion House for talks on business links.

Georgian Defence Minister, Levan Izoria, is also visiting London to participate in the Dialogue and will meet Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon.

Relations between the governments of the UK and Georgia are at an all-time high. The dialogue will provide an opportunity to discuss continued co-operation on trade, defence, and mutual values, which underpin the strength of our ties.

Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

Our relations with Georgia are stronger than ever, and I'm delighted that Deputy Prime Minister Mikheil Janelidze visited London for the fourth round of our annual Wardrop Dialogue.

The UK stands by Georgia in support of its territorial integrity, security, and ambitious reform agenda. This commitment is underlined by our Good Governance Fund, through which the UK helps Georgia to deliver necessary reforms, and reach its economic potential.

As the UK leaves the European Union, we are ensuring our relationship with Georgia will continue to grow. Trade will be an important element and the Prime Minister's appointment of Mark Pritchard as our new Trade Envoy reiterates our optimism over the future of UK-Georgian trade.

Not only is Georgia a role-model in the region for reform, democracy and human rights; they also play a pivotal role in the wider security of the region in the face of external pressures. We also support the positive role the EU plays in the region, which we expect to be reiterated at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels in November.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan on Twitter [@AlanDuncanMP](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

Media enquiries

For journalists

Email
newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

Newsdesk

020 7008 3100