

More than 17,000 helped to get home from across Africa

UK Government charter flights to bring Brits home from countries in Africa have now flown over 150,000 miles, bringing people back from across six different time zones and enabling over 8,400 stranded travellers to return home from across Africa in addition to over 9,000 the FCO have helped to return home on commercial flights.

Elderly grandparents, families with babies and NHS doctors were among the thousands of people helped by British Embassy and High Commission staff to get on flights after they got stranded while visiting family, working or on holiday.

As well as organising the flights, UK teams went to great lengths to make sure people got home safely, with staff in South Africa driving a collective 7,000 miles to pick up the most elderly and vulnerable passengers to ensure they made their flights.

Elsewhere the team in Kenya sorted emergency travel documents for a new-born baby without a passport, in Nigeria staff made sure a father got home in time for his son's 14th birthday, and the High Commission in Ghana ensured a microbiologist made it back to work on the front line in the UK's fight against coronavirus.

On top of this diplomats were working with partners including Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airways to keep as many commercial routes open as possible. Our staff also helped British nationals who could not afford travel costs back to the UK for example by providing emergency loans if they had exhausted all other options. Overall, the Government has enabled tens of thousands of British people who had been visiting Africa to get home.

The number of British travellers returning on Government charter flights include:

- More than 4,300 from South Africa
- More than 2,200 from Nigeria
- More than 900 from Ghana
- More than 200 from The Gambia
- More than 200 from Sierra Leone
- More than 100 from Tanzania
- More than 150 from Sudan
- More than 200 from Uganda
- More than 100 from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon
- More than 50 from West Africa (covering Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea and Cape Verde)

Minister for Africa, James Duddridge said:

The scale of these repatriation efforts is truly remarkable. It's excellent news that so many people are being reunited with their families in the UK and I am very grateful for the sterling work by our embassy teams and to the Governments who have supported us.

Filming a message on social media, father of four Mr Opoku from Manchester said:

I was part of the flight [from Ghana] and it means so much to me and my family to be coming back. What we are saying is thank you very much British High Commission Ghana.

Turning to his four daughters gathered around him the family exclaimed:

Thank you British High Commission Ghana for bringing our Daddy back!

Since the outbreak in Wuhan, it is estimated that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes. The majority of these routes were supported by the FCO, which worked with airlines and foreign governments to keep vital transit hubs open and ensure that domestic restrictions didn't pose a barrier to getting people home.

Work does not stop here. The UK Government continues to work on more charter flights focussed on where they are most needed, including more flights from Nigeria scheduled this week.

A package of measures to support British travellers who are still waiting to return to the UK has also been put in place. The support package addresses financial issues, healthcare concerns and visa extensions, as well as loans for those who cannot afford flights to the UK where they have exhausted all other options.

Case studies

The efforts of Embassy and High Commission teams include:

- In Nigeria, staff supported a family with toddlers to get home in time for a funeral, with the help of an FCO COVID emergency loan to help purchase tickets for a special UK charter flight.
- Our High Commission in Ghana arranged for hundreds of British travellers to get home to cities around the UK, including Edinburgh, Ipswich, Liverpool and London.
- Our staff in South Africa drove a collective 7,000 miles across the country to pick up a number of elderly passengers to make sure they got to the airport in time. The High Commissioner himself was on hand at the

airport to greet British travellers and help carry luggage. [Photos available]

- On our flight from Tanzania, the team enabled 151 British travellers, including 15 children and 17 pensioners, to return to their families in Belfast, Glasgow and Bolton.

[New UK deals will bring millions more PPE items to frontline healthcare staff](#)

Press release

Millions more visors, aprons and gowns will be delivered to frontline health and social care workers treating coronavirus patients, manufactured in response to the UK government's call to arms.



- Four more companies answer government's call to arms to manufacture PPE
- Millions more visors, aprons and gowns to be delivered over the next few months
- New contracts are part of the government's 'Make' initiative to harness UK production power

As part of the government's Make initiative to use the production power of the UK's world-leading manufacturing sector, 4 new partnerships have been struck to rapidly produce and deliver PPE to frontline workers over the coming months.

The companies are:

- Photocentric, who are using an innovative 3D printing method to produce visors in large quantities. They will be supplying over 7.6 million protective visors over the next 6 months, with plans to scale up to

making 500,000 visors a day if required

- Ramfoam will be manufacturing and delivering 3 million visors to the NHS per week. They are recruiting an additional 100 staff to ensure demand is met, scaling up to more than 160
- Elite Plastics Ltd, who have adapted their production lines to produce large volumes of aprons. Starting this week, 20 million will be delivered to the NHS and social care sector per month
- Macdonald and Taylor Healthcare Ltd, who have scaled up production of isolation gowns and scrubs, so far delivering 40,000 gowns a week for the last 2 months. They will now be providing an additional 50,000 gowns a week with government fabric for the next 6 months

Lord Paul Deighton, adviser to the Health Secretary on PPE, said:

The response from our manufacturing industry has been phenomenal and I can't thank them enough for their continued efforts. Every health and care worker must have access to appropriate PPE and through this national effort we will ensure they do.

We have already struck deals with around 30 UK companies to manufacture PPE and over 100 suppliers to deliver items at scale and pace. We will continue to identify further opportunities to get more PPE to the frontline rapidly.

The government has delivered over 1.65 billion pieces of PPE to the frontline and deals have already been struck with around 30 companies, including Amazon, Royal Mail and Jaguar Land Rover, through the Make initiative to produce much-needed PPE.

We are also working with over 100 new suppliers to deliver at the scale and pace the UK requires.

- Photocentric, based in Peterborough, East of England, produces 3D printers and the polymer used to make printed parts to supply the dental and industrial prototyping sectors
- Ramfoam, based in Oldbury, West Midlands, produces expanded polyethylene-grade foams for the automotive, aerospace, leisure and healthcare sectors in the UK and internationally
- Elite Plastics, a company based in Hereford, West Midlands, produces polythene products like shrink film, food bags and mailing bags for the building, catering, automotive and retail sectors
- Macdonald and Taylor Healthcare, based in Warrington, North West, produce protective clothing for healthcare, chemical and nuclear industries, as well as patient care products and consumer healthcare

products, like antibacterial wipes

Other examples of the [contracts signed](#) with UK based manufacturers include:

- The Royal Mint will be providing over 1.9 million face visors over the next 6 months, with 54,000 being delivered a week
- A partnership with Amazon allows us to harness their global sourcing expertise
- eBay has provided a new platform, jointly developed with Clipper Logistics, that will allow primary, social, and community care providers to order from a range of PPE directly – the orders are then fulfilled by Clipper and shipped directly via Royal Mail
- [Honeywell](#) will produce more than 70 million face masks, creating 450 new jobs
- Survitec, a survival technology company, will begin producing gowns as soon as the beginning of June
- DTR Medical will be providing 1.3 million visors, with the first delivery expected next week
- Bollé Safety, who manufacture protective eyewear, will make 6.5 million visors over the course of the pandemic
- Jaguar Land Rover is now manufacturing 14,000 visors a week for healthcare staff
- Don & Low will be manufacturing 12 million metres squared of fabric for gowns over the next six months, with the first delivery expected later this month
- Burberry is manufacturing non-surgical gowns at its factory in Castleford and sourcing masks through its supply chain. To date, the company has donated over 100,000 pieces of PPE to the NHS and healthcare charities
- Ineos is delivering around 50,000 bottles of hand sanitiser a week to NHS hospitals

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[Pursuing peace in the Sahel](#)

Thank you, Mr President, and my thanks to USG Lacroix and His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mauritania for their briefings. I want to begin by paying tribute to the forces of the G5 Sahel, to UN peacekeepers serving in MINUSMA, to international troops deployed in Operation Barkhane, and to all those working to bring peace and security to the people of the Sahel.

Our thoughts are with the families of those who have paid the ultimate price in the service of this cause, and with the innocent civilians who continue to suffer the impact of the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. Just last weekend three attacks by jihadist armed groups in northern and eastern

Burkina Faso led to the loss of over 50 lives. The UK strongly condemns all such attacks, and calls for all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians.

Mr President, since this Council last discussed the situation in the Sahel, Covid-19 has created new challenges to bringing about stability and development in the region. It will increase pressure on limited state resources and risks diverting international attention away from tackling the drivers of instability. In response, the United Kingdom is supporting governments and our humanitarian implementation partners in the Sahel to manage escalating health and humanitarian needs.

But we recognise that the secondary impacts of Covid-19 will also hit these countries hard, and so we are also helping the governments of the region to address the longer-term, socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. This is in addition to the \$665 million the United Kingdom is contributing to global efforts to develop vaccines, treatments and testing for Covid-19, and to the IMF to support vulnerable economies.

In this highly challenging context, we commend the efforts of the G5 Sahel nations and their partners to address security concerns and tackle cross-border threats. We welcome the increased operational output and improved capabilities of the Joint Force, and the positive trajectory of improving coordination with regional and international forces.

The United Kingdom is proud to be supporting efforts to stabilise the Sahel through our deployment to MINUSMA later this year, through our non-combat assistance to Operation BARKHANE, and our ongoing contribution to the EU Training Mission in Mali. We are also supporting the G5 Sahel Joint Force itself, with UK bilateral contributions so far totalling \$3.4 million, in addition to our contributions through other organisations. We would welcome all partners who have committed to support the Force to deliver their pledges in full.

Mr President, I would like to reiterate that there can be no sustainable peace and security in the Sahel without the protection and promotion of human rights, and compliance with international human humanitarian law. The UK welcomes the progress made in implementing the human rights compliance framework for the G5 Sahel Joint Force, but we would underscore that all reports of human rights violations and abuses – whether by violent extremist groups, “self-defence” militias or state security forces – need to be addressed. This is essential not only to prevent human suffering, but to prevent impunity, strengthen the social contract between citizens and the state, and avoid creating grievances that fuel further violence. We urge all G5 governments to ensure that any allegations of violations committed by their security forces are thoroughly and transparently investigated, and that all perpetrators are brought to justice.

The United Kingdom is also concerned by the increasing pressures on humanitarian access in the region. It is critical that all parties respect the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian actors, and facilitate unimpeded access to ensure that emergency assistance reaches those in need.

In conclusion, Mr President, the United Kingdom will continue to play its part, working with the UN, the G5 Sahel states and all our partners across the region, in pursuit of peace, stability, sustainable development and justice for the people of the Sahel.

Thank you, Mr President.

Reforming UN peacekeeping to best respond to global challenges

Mr President, let me just say that I want to thank, first of all, the Force Commanders for addressing us today and in particular, through you, thank your troops for the work they they're doing to help protect civilians and support stability in some of the toughest environments in the world. And I want to join my colleagues in paying tribute to the 25 peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the field this year, including those who lost their lives recently in MINUSMA because of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has, of course, posed a range of additional challenges in every mission setting. And I very much welcomed your comments in the briefing on how the missions are rising to meet these new challenges and how we as individual Member States and the Security Council, as well as, of course, through our UN Headquarters, can best support you. The crucial challenge is how to continue supporting the safety and security of our peacekeepers while ensuring they can fulfill their important work and the mandate giving them their important work to protect civilians and provide stability in conflict-torn environments. We can't afford to let up on either imperative.

While we address these pressing challenges, we mustn't lose sight of the longer term commitments we've all made as part of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, reforming peacekeeping to make it fit for the 21st century. A4P can continue to provide a solid basis for ensuring our UN peacekeeping missions can and do fulfill all that we ask, even now, in these challenging circumstances.

Firstly, a central priority when it comes to those reforms must be enhancing planning, improving the collection and use of data across the board in order to support evidence-based decision making, both here at HQ and throughout the mission settings. This will help improve the analysis and recommendations provided to members.

Connected with this is the issue of performance and the provision of better data on both outstanding performance and underperformance. We look forward to the promised rollout of the UN's new integrated performance policy framework later this year to address the performance of uniformed and civilian peacekeepers and overall mission performance, as well as to enhance

transparency and accountability.

Particularly in this 20th anniversary year of Resolution 1325, we should also continue pursuing measures to increase the numbers of uniformed women peacekeepers and ensure their full effective, meaningful participation at every level.

And as the Council heard recently in our annual debate on the protection of civilians, civilians continue to bear the brunt of conflict worldwide. And so we should keep strengthening delivery of protection of civilians mandates. This should include full implementation of the Peacekeeping-Intelligence policy, as well as the revised DPO PoC policy. And we should continue to implement the latest iteration on the action plan on the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Finally, we should keep working to smooth the transition from peacekeeping to peace building in settings such as Sudan, increasing our support for the Peacebuilding Fund and ensuring a joined-up approach across the UN system, donors, and other stakeholders.

Like others, Mr President, I've got a few questions. May I, first of all, and I think this is relevant to all missions, but I address it, if I might, to the UNMISS Force Commander. Of course, we want to ensure that everything possible is done to ensure the safety and security of all peacekeepers in the field, particularly with respect to illness and injury, but we're concerned the impact COVID-19 is having on Medevac pathways. Do you have confidence, Force Commanders, that the clinical pathways in place provide an adequate level of assurance? And if not, what can any of us do to help unblock issues or support?

Secondly, we have noted the impact of COVID-19 on rotations with potential consequences on mission effectiveness and welfare. Bearing in mind that in several mission environments, the virus may reach a peak in the coming months, what are your expectations for the period following the 30th of June when the freeze on rotations is due to be lifted? What are the implications for mandate delivery in the second half of the year?

Thirdly, a question again for the UNMISS Force Commander, but it's relevant to all: We have continuing concerns about sexual and gender-based violence in several missions' area of operation, including, for instance, recent violence in South Sudan. I know my Indonesian colleague asked about this, but I was wondering if you could comment on how situational awareness and intelligence can be used in the field, both to prevent and deter SGBV and to respond to emergencies.

And finally, again, the UNMISS Force Commander: I would just like to ask for your assessment of the impact the COVID-19 is likely to have on rates of voluntary departures of civilians from PoC sites and whether do you expect a significant impact of COVID-19 on how the force divides its resources between static and mobile protection tasks?

Let me just say that the UK is very much looking forward to the deployment of

our 250-strong long-range reconnaissance forces, of course, under MINUSMA command, late this year.

Thank you very much.

[UK seeks to boost ties with Southeast Asia through ASEAN](#)

The bid is the latest step by the Foreign Office to forge deeper relations with regional blocs beyond the UK's doorstep, and boost ties with international forums that will lead to new opportunities across trade, education, science and security.

The application, which would give the UK high-level access to ASEAN reinforced by deeper practical cooperation, alongside countries including the United States, China and India, was signed by Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

As Asia grows in importance, Global Britain will cooperate even more closely with our friends in the region. We aim to boost trade by joining the Trans-Pacific trade agreement. And by becoming one of ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, we can strengthen our ability to cooperate across the Indo-Pacific region, as a force for good, on everything from climate change to regional stability.

The UK is already one of the few countries with a dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN, an embassy or High Commission in all ten Member States and an extensive cooperation programme on topics spanning terrorism, climate change and COVID-19.

UK Ambassador to ASEAN, Jon Lambe, said:

We have been a close partner of ASEAN for over 40 years, over which time we have worked side-by-side across political, security, economic and social and cultural issues.

In my role as Ambassador to the organisation, every day I see how the UK is being a force for good in the region.

Our bid to become a Dialogue Partner is part of our long-standing and continued commitment to ASEAN.

Dialogue Partner status would further build the UK's strong relationships across the ASEAN region and reflects the strength and breadth of the UK offer to the organisation.

The status would facilitate further practical cooperation across key sectors as well as allow the UK to attend annual ASEAN Summits and ministerial meetings.

Founded in 1967, ASEAN is a regional community that has brought together the ten Southeast Asian countries around a set of common values and principles, as well as seeking to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development through joint endeavours.

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