Ukraine Defence Minister visits Defence team securing vital military aid

Press release

Volodymyr Havrylov, Ukraine’s Deputy Defence Minister, visited the UK today to see the support being provided to assist his country’s armed forces.

The visit took place at MOD Abbey Wood near Bristol. Abbey Wood is the base of Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the part of the MOD responsible for procuring much of the military support that the UK is sending to Ukraine.

The UK was the first European country to provide weapons to Ukraine and has so far provided over £2.3 billion worth of military aid, including hundreds of armoured vehicles, thousands of anti-tank weapons, and Multiple-Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) which have been able to strike targets on the battlefield with pinpoint accuracy.

While at Abbey Wood, the Minister saw the ongoing efforts to ensure the UK’s support is aligned with Ukraine’s requirements and military priorities.

Also today, Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey joined a call with counterparts from the US-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG). The UDCG is made up of around 50 countries from around the world who discuss and pledge support for Ukraine in line with their requirements and needs.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey MP said:

> The Ukrainian people have no closer friend in their heroic fight than the United Kingdom. The military aid we have provided so far has made a real difference on the battlefield. My continued engagement with Volodymyr and with international partners through organisations like the Ukraine Defense Contact Group have allowed us to support Ukraine’s requirements for the coming winter and

beyond.

Andy Start DE&S CEO said:

> I’m immensely proud of the work the teams at DE&S have done to support our Ukrainian allies to date. This has been a huge team effort involving different parts of government, and companies right across our supply chain.

While in the UK, the Ukrainian Minister also visited the UK-led programme to train the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the UK, as well as discussions with UK industry partners.

It comes the week after the UK announced it was providing Ukraine with equipment to support its armed forces through harsh winter conditions, as well as 1,000 more surface-to-air missiles to counter threats to Ukrainian infrastructure.

Published 16 November 2022

E3 statement to the IAEA Board of Governors on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, November 2022

Chair,

On behalf of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, I thank Director General Grossi for his latest report contained in GOV/2022/62, and Deputy Director General Aparo for his Technical Briefing. Once again, we commend the Agency for carrying out its mandate conferred by the United Nations Security Council – even given Iranian non-adherence with its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The E3 thank the Agency for its objective reporting of Iran’s activities with regards to these commitments and encourage the Director General to keep the Board informed regarding the Iranian nuclear programme in all its aspects. We would welcome the Agency’s last quarterly report on monitoring and verification in Iran to be made public.

The Director General very clearly reports that Iran is moving further and further away from its commitments agreed upon in 2015.

- Today, Iran’s total enriched uranium stockpile exceeds JCPoA limits by 18 times and comprises very concerning amounts of uranium enriched up to 5, 20 and 60 percent.
- Since the Director General`s last report as of September this year, Iran has increased its stockpile of uranium enriched up to 20 percent by 16 percent and its stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60 percent by 12 percent.
- There is no credible civilian justification for these activities which are inconsistent with Iran’s JCPoA commitments for both enrichment levels and quantities of enriched material.

This situation will only worsen in the near future if Iran does not decide to return to full compliance with its commitments under the JCPoA. Iran has also drastically increased production of uranium enriched up to 5 percent, enabling Iran to produce even more HEU in the future. In his report, the Director General notes Iran has rapidly increased its enrichment capabilities through the testing and installation of additional IR-1 centrifuges as well as of advanced centrifuges. For example,

- At the underground location in Natanz, Iran has significantly increased the number of centrifuges producing uranium enriched up to 5 percent.
- More than half of Iran`s advanced centrifuges at Natanz have been installed since the beginning of this year.
- Iran’s knowledge gains from the operation of advanced centrifuges are irreversible.

In addition, the Director General once again emphasised in his report that Iran’s decision to stop cooperating with the Agency with regards to monitoring and verification activities agreed in the JCPoA has seriously affected the Agency’s knowledge of Iran’s nuclear programme. Iran’s decision to remove Agency surveillance and monitoring equipment has, as the Director General says, detrimental implications for the Agency’s ability to provide assurance of the peaceful nature of Iran`s nuclear programme.

Chair,

These steps present a very clear picture: Iran continues its unprecedented nuclear escalation. This raises serious doubts as to the nature of Iran’s nuclear programme, which threatens regional and international security.

The E3, along with our partners, have done our utmost to negotiate a return to a reasonably restricted Iranian nuclear programme. After many months of negotiations, the JCPoA Coordinator tabled viable deals in March and again in August this year which would have returned Iran to full compliance with its JCPoA commitments and returned the US to the deal. Iran refused these packages with continued demands beyond the scope of the JCPoA, despite further efforts over the summer.

Chair,

The situation we are in is very dangerous. We urge Iran to immediately stop and reverse its nuclear escalation, allow for complete transparency with the

IAEA by returning to full cooperation, and re-applying the Additional Protocol, as an important confidence-building step. We also recall that, under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, Iran is legally obliged to implement Modified Code 3.1. and, according to international law, Iran cannot change its application or withdraw from it unilaterally.

Chair,

We will continue consultations, alongside international partners, on how best to address Iran's unabated and dangerous nuclear escalation. Thank you.

A57 Link Roads development consent decision announced

Press release

Today, 16 November 2022, the A57 Link Roads (previously known as Trans Pennine Upgrade Programme) application has been granted development consent by the Secretary of State for Transport

The A57 Link Roads project will include the creation of two new link roads: (1) Mottram Moor Link Road – a new dual carriageway from the M67 junction 4 roundabout to a new junction on the A57(T) at Mottram Moor; and (2) A57 Link Road – a new single carriageway link from the A57(T) at Mottram Moor to a new junction on the A57 in Woolley Bridge.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by National Highways on 28 June 2021 and accepted for Examination on 26 July 2021.

Following an Examination during which the public, Statutory Consultees and Interested Parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, recommendations were made to the Secretary of State on 16 August 2022.

This is the 120th Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and 47th transport application to have been examined by The Planning Inspectorate within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008.

The Planning Inspectorate's interim Chief Executive, Navees Rahman said:

"The Planning Inspectorate has now examined more than 100 nationally significant infrastructure projects since the Planning Act 2008 process was introduced, ensuring local communities, the local authority and other interested parties have had the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them.

"The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to all local views and the evidence gathered during the Examination before making its recommendation to the Secretary of State."

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State for Transport and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation are publicly available on the project pages of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure Programme of Projects details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

Published 16 November 2022

Supporting a sustainable, collective response to challenges facing the Sahel

Thank you President, and I thank ASG Pobee, Executive Secretary Tiare, and to Mr Usman for their briefings.

President, the regional picture in the Sahel is stark. Countries are facing unprecedented challenges with escalating violence, rising humanitarian needs and famine-like conditions. As always, it is ordinary people who suffer the most. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the people of the Sahel – last year we contributed around $355 million to the region.

However, if our collective response to these challenges is to be sustainable

then the right conditions need to be in place.

Firstly, political will is needed to drive forward accountable governance, rule of law and justice. With three countries in the region now in the midst of political transitions, continued engagement with ECOWAS and the African Union is vital. We urge the Burkinabe, Chadian and Malian authorities to prepare for elections in open dialogue with civil society, including women and young people.

Second, effective counter-terrorism and respect for human rights must go hand in hand. To do otherwise risks aggravating grievances, undermining trust with local communities, and driving recruitment to terrorist groups. The harmful impact of Wagner Group operations on civilians in Mali and elsewhere on the continent is, by now, well documented. This is why Wagner will not succeed in Mali, and why they are not the right answer for any other country in the region.

We welcome the UN's efforts to build the G5 Sahel Joint Force's capacities for human rights compliance. But we urge the Joint Force to implement the mitigation measures identified under Human Rights Due Diligence assessments, as a condition of MINUSMA's support.

Finally, President, like others we look forward to the outcome of the Independent High Level Panel Strategic Assessment on the Sahel. We also look forward to the forthcoming discussions in the region on the Accra Initiative. Together these will help us to identify how best to work together to support regional security.

The United Kingdom remains committed to helping address the Sahel's challenges through a holistic approach, with accountable governance and human rights at its heart. Thank you.

Understanding the scale and needs of a Geological Disposal Facility

By Clare Bond

Understanding the need and scale of the UK's radioactive waste is an important part of ensuring the effective and timely delivery of a geological disposal facility. This includes consideration of the current storage solutions and the lengths of time these will be needed for, as well as innovative solutions to minimise the volume of waste that requires to be disposed of. With this in mind six CoRWM members travelled to Sellafield in July to get an overview of the task in hand.

It was July 19, the hottest day on record in Britain, when the CoRWM members

met in Cumbria. Temperatures had topped 40 degrees centigrade for the first time in the UK and Britain's transport infrastructure was 'melting' in the heat. I had left my home in Aberdeenshire in the early morning, while the southern contingent had rented a car and were on a journey northwards, punctuated by CoRWM member pick-ups, as train cancellations rolled out across the country.

After a cooling lunch time dip with a view to the Sellafield site at St Bee's, I met the others in preparation for our tour the following day. Our half dozen comprised of the CoRWM chair and deputy chairs and the three 2022 recruits to CoRWM: Simon Webb with expertise in large scale project management, Catherine MacKenzie a legal expert, and me, a geoscientist. We had a full day tour ahead taking in the first-generation Magnox Storage Pond Facility, the Waste Monitoring and Compaction Plant, HALES the Highly Active Evaporation and Storage Plant and finishing off with a tour of the Vitrification Lines. Rather than give a blow-by-blow account of the day I am going to focus on what struck me most. First-up security!

Security

Security, both in terms of site access but also in the security of one's own personal health and safety, was paramount. For our first site visit to the Ponds, personal safety included no facial hair, dosimeter badges (which we wore throughout our visit), clothing, steel toe-capped shoes and additional electronic personal dosimeters. The storage ponds are kept at a highly alkaline PH of 11.4, similar to domestic bleach, that allows long-term storage of the fuel cannisters with minimal corrosion. We were able to access the roof above the ponds to look down on them and to see the robotics (remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROVs)) deployed to move and clean the canisters of waste stored.

Robotic use has revolutionised the working processes in the ponds, allowing work to be done remotely which ensures that workers can carry out their roles without exposure to higher doses of radioactivity, meaning that work can be carried out by individuals more safely and for longer time periods. Robotic use has required micro-innovations that may sound simple, like the fact that the RoVs use toothbrushes to clean the cannisters in the ponds, but that have a large impact on operational health and safety. Waste currently stored in the ponds will go in a geological disposal facility so ensuring long term up-keep and maintenance is essential whilst the process of securing a site for and building a geological disposal facility takes place.

Time

The knock-on effects of both security checks and health and safety protocols is time. I am sure if you worked at Sellafield on a day-to-day basis, you would be much more efficient at changing and decontamination checks, as well as ensuring your steel-toed shoes are stored in the right place and that you haven't breached protocols. But for a novice it is quite a learning curve. With work length restrictions in some areas and all the changing, hand washing, radiation contamination monitoring it struck me that this was a

business that could not be rushed and that the processes in place to ensure personal safety and site integrity were important, thorough, and time intensive.

Scale

The scale of the site hadn't really struck me before. Tucked away on the far side of the Lake District and bordering the sea, it is not immediately obvious that the site is huge. Only when you're being transported inside the compound, and its internal compounds within compounds, does the scale of the operation really hit home. It has the hustle, bustle, and noises of a massive industrial site and I wouldn't dare to guess the meters, or kilometres, of ducting for steam and other services that cross the site. The complexity of the linked buildings and facilities that over Sellafield's lifetime have been erected to ensure the next stage in the process is met and the continual evolving modernisation of processes (from wheel-turned valves to electronically controlled systems) is hard to comprehend.

The history is fascinating, the site is immense, and the interlinked processes and contingent stages make the scale of the job, compounded by longer-term uncertainties, such as the timing of an operational geological disposal facility, challenging. This is where further innovations such as the laser cutting of waste crates are being deployed. In the laser cutting process 2 crates are cut and stored in a third crate that is then compacted to minimise the storage volume required. Learning about the scale of the linked operations and onsite processing and storage of waste made me think of a kind-of intricate chess game in which radioactive material is moved around the site being prepared and waiting for final positioning in the geological disposal facility.

Heat

So, it was a hot a day, not 40 degrees, but hot. The site is full of steam and vents, and the big concrete buildings were reflecting the heat of the day. But there is also the heat of the waste – no central heating is needed in the vitrification cylinder store. Having been taken through the vitrification process, we ended in the store. Here the vitrified canisters are stored in 'plugs' ready for movement elsewhere, including being shipped back to those countries whose waste we have vitrified. You can walk over the top of the store and see the circular tops to the plugs below that contain the carefully shielded vitrified waste. Bend down and touch the floor and you can feel the heat of the waste being emitted from below. Not the comfiest place to be on one of the hottest days of the year, but another insight into the challenges of a geological disposal facility. The geological disposal facility design will include spacing between canisters to ensure that the heat produced by the waste can be effectively conducted out of the facility over the timescales of radioactive decay and the geological disposal facility life.

The people

Last but by no means least I want to mention the people I met. We were joined on our tour by specialists in the different areas and engineering challenges that we visited. Many were people who had worked on the site for years and had huge experience and lots to share. Their enthusiasm for their work and their contribution towards ensuring safe practice and storage is not to be underestimated. They shared their knowledge, stories, and thoughts on future challenges without prejudice, making the visit truly informative and rewarding. As we move forward towards a geological disposal facility, people are going to be as much a key to the process as the engineering and geology of the facility. An engaged host community, workers, and many other people will be required for an effective geological disposal facility.