

# News story: Huge new Atlas aircraft hangar opened by Defence Minister

A £70 million hangar large enough to contain three of the RAF's new Atlas transport aircraft at the same time was officially opened by Defence Minister Guto Bebb at RAF Brize Norton today. Crown copyright.

The Atlas maintenance, repair and overhaul facility, which covers 24,000 metres squared and is 28 metres high, is now fitted out and fully operational in support of RAF transport operations all over the world.

Minister for Defence Procurement Guto Bebb said:

From deploying troops and armoured vehicles to a war zone, to getting vital support to humanitarian disasters, our Atlas fleet plays a global role and it needs a home to match.

This huge hangar provides exactly that, and will see Brize Norton ready our Atlas fleet for action wherever they are needed in the world.

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The hangar was built under Defence Infrastructure Organisation contracts and has cost approximately £70 million including fit-out work, with activity on the facility ramping up since late 2016 when it was handed to Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation.

The hangar is designed to make Atlas maintenance easier, safer and more efficient. The internal layout is the result of extensive feedback from support delivery teams and has been designed to be highly adaptable with easy access to specialist tools and equipment.

Support for the UK's Atlas fleet is enabled through a £410 million agreement between DE&S and Airbus Defence and Space – part of the UK's ongoing commitment to the Atlas programme which is sustaining 8,000 jobs across the national supply chain.

RAF Atlas aircraft, a familiar sight in the skies above RAF Brize Norton where they are based, recently formed part of the UK's relief response to Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean where they made shuttle flights from Barbados to destinations across the region to deliver key support, including to the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Anguilla.

Defence Equipment and Support Director Air Support, Adrian Baguley, said:

The Atlas programme is delivering a world-class fleet for the RAF, offering the UK next-generation transport and airlift abilities for operations all over the world.

Expert support on the ground in the UK is an essential part of that capability and this new facility will ensure that work continues for decades to come.

The aircraft can carry up to 37 tonnes over a range of 2,000 nautical miles. It is able to deploy troops and equipment between and within theatres of operation either by parachute or by landing on short, potentially unprepared airstrips.

Atlas can also carry armoured vehicles, drastically reducing the time it takes for a deploying force to be ready to fight. For humanitarian roles, it is capable of deploying mobile cranes, excavators and large dump trucks for disaster relief operations— for example clearing earthquake sites.

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Wing Commander Ed Horne, the Officer Commanding 70 Squadron RAF which operates the UK's Atlas aircraft said:

This new hangar provides us with a world-class maintenance facility to match the world-beating capability of the Atlas aircraft.

The UK has ordered 22 Atlas aircraft for the RAF, 18 of which have been delivered. The entire fleet is due to be delivered by 2022.

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## **[News story: VOA Accounts Payable moves to HMRC Financial Shared Services](#)**

From 1 March 2018 the VOA Accounts Payable function will transfer to HMRC Financial Shared Services.

What this means for you:

From 1 March 2018, all payments and related documents from the VOA will be

issued by HMRC, and HMRC will be your first point of contact for any payment queries.

The Accounts Payable email addresses will be:

Our bank account or other details will not change.

Also from 1 March 2018, we will correspond with you electronically instead of by post. Please contact HMRC at [accountspayable.voqueries@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:accountspayable.voqueries@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk) if you wish to amend your contact details.

These changes are automatic and you do not need to do anything.

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## **Press release: Brighton woman imprisoned for laundering £1.4m as part of family fake sex drug operation**

A woman has been sentenced today following a long running investigation into the sale of counterfeit and unlicensed drugs which convicted 12 individuals in 2015. The defendant received a prison sentence of 2 years and 3 months.

The medicines, which were sold predominantly over the internet, have an estimated value of £11 million with a suggested annual turnover in excess of £3 million.

She facilitated payments for the purchase of unlicensed erectile dysfunction medicines and claims that she received 10% of the 'earnings' laundered through her account but was unaware that the money was for the unlicensed medicine, Kamagra.

Samples of the products were found to contain potent, active medicinal ingredients with potential serious side effects and are classified as prescription only. Supply without medical supervision is dangerous as the contents of unlicensed medicines are unknown and untested.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement said:

Selling medicines outside of the regulated supply chain is a serious criminal offence. If you buy medicines online, you are potentially trusting a criminal to look after your health".

Always seek professional help and visit your GP if you are ill. These criminals are motivated by greed and have no concern about

your welfare.

MHRA is currently running the #FakeMeds campaign to warn people against buying potentially dangerous or useless unlicensed medicines sold by illegal online suppliers.

Visit [www.gov.uk/fakemedes](http://www.gov.uk/fakemedes) for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites.

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## [Press release: JD.com commits £2 billion to bring UK products to Chinese consumers](#)

From luxury British couture and tea, to chocolate, beauty products, home appliances and other items, UK products have gained popularity in China in recent years. To meet this growing demand, JD.com, China's largest retailer, has announced plans to sell £2 billion of UK goods to Chinese consumers in the next 2-3 years.

The agreement signed today between JD.com and the British Government's Department of International Trade (DIT), is focused on making it easier for British companies to access the China market via JD.

"Many British brands recognise the huge potential of China's enormous e-commerce market" said Richard Burn, Director-General of DIT China. "JD truly understands what Chinese consumers want and has the resources to help British brands ensure success in the region. We're looking forward to working with JD to bring more British brands to China in the future."

Prime Minister Theresa May, who is on her first official state visit to China since becoming Prime Minister, met with JD Chairman and CEO Richard Liu at the Residence of the British Ambassador to China. Among the topics Liu and May discussed were JD's plans to help more UK brands reach JD's 266 million customers.

The number of UK brands on JD.com has doubled over the last two years, with sales in 2017 growing 100% year-on-year. World famous brands Dyson, Clark's, Johnnie Walker and Lipton are among the brands that have been popular with JD consumers. Over the past three years, Dyson sales on JD have increased by over 60 times.

In order to push even greater sales of British goods, JD will launch special campaigns for seasonal products and undertake other activities to give brands more opportunities to reach Chinese consumers. JD will kick off with a 24-

hour “Celebrate Britain” sales promotion for UK products this April to introduce the “Best of Britain” to Chinese customers.

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## Press release: PM meeting with President Xi: 1 February 2018

Prime Minister Theresa May today met with President Xi during her three-day official visit to China.

President Xi said that, step by step, China and the UK had elevated our relationship and he looked forward to further building on its success. The President quoted William Shakespeare, stating that: ‘What’s past is prologue.’

The PM said that, once Britain leaves the EU, we will be free to strike our own trade deals and pointed to the joint trade and investment review which will now take place as the first step towards delivering ambitious future trade arrangements.

President Xi said China’s markets would be further opened to the UK, including in sectors such as beef, dairy and other agricultural goods.

The PM and the President said the UK and China would hold further discussions on how best they can cooperate on the Belt and Road initiative, which offers significant opportunities to deliver further prosperity and sustainable development across Asia and the wider world. The PM and President spoke of the importance of international standards and transparency to ensure the initiative’s success.

The PM said it had so far been a very successful trip for the business delegation which had accompanied her to China, with deals worth at least £9bn expected to be signed.

The President and the PM discussed their shared commitment to protecting the environment, including their support for the Paris climate change agreement and determination to tackle the ivory and illegal wildlife trades.

The PM said the world had a collective responsibility to tackle plastic pollution on behalf of future generations. She pointed to the work which was being done in China to remove plastic particles from the Yangtze river to stop them from flowing into the ocean.

The two leaders discussed North Korea and their shared determination to bring to an end DPRK’s illegal nuclear activity, agreeing denuclearisation was the objective.

They discussed Hong Kong, and reiterated the importance of and their commitment to "One Country, Two Systems".

As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, they also discussed the importance of the Rules-Based International System.

The PM and President agreed the importance of having frank conversations in areas where the two countries do not see eye to eye, and looked forward to further deepening their ties in the 'golden era', including in areas such as culture and education.