

News story: Defence Secretary praises UK efforts as RAF operations against Daesh continue

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson meeting UK troops stationed in Taji who, along with over 600 British soldiers on the ground in Iraq, are helping to train Iraqi security forces. Crown copyright.

In his first visit to Iraq, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson praised UK service personnel as British airstrikes continue to wipe out Daesh.

RAF aircraft flew on operations against the terrorist group every day over the Christmas period, striking terrorist compounds, trucks, mortars and pockets of fighters engaged in close quarter, street fighting with Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The dangers we face are changing and are intensifying rapidly. Eliminating the threat from terrorism is critical to our security at home and abroad. Our brave Armed Forces are working tirelessly, day and night, to defeat Daesh after helping to recover significant territory in Iraq.

Only by defeating this evil and barbaric group for good will we reduce the deadly threat they pose to us, which is why we won't stop until their global network is destroyed.

RAF aircraft have carried out over 1,700 strikes against Daesh in Iraq and Syria since 2014 and in his first visit to Cyprus, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson also met the crews who are playing a vital role in the coalition campaign to totally defeat Daesh.

Fast jets flying out of RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and remotely piloted Reaper aircraft continue to provide support to the SDF on the ground who are clearing the last remaining pockets of Daesh terrorists in Eastern Syria.

Typhoons, Tornados and Reapers worked closely with coalition partners, offering vital intelligence and close air support throughout December, destroying Daesh targets near Abu Kamal, Abu Hardub and Abu Hammam.

He also visited UK personnel in Taji and Baghdad, as well as Kuwait, praising their efforts as part of the UK's contribution to the global coalition fight Daesh.

In Kuwait, he met with US Lieutenant General Paul Funk the Commanding General

of the global coalition as well as Major General Felix Gedney, Deputy Commander-Strategy and Support and the most senior UK officer in the military campaign against Daesh.

They discussed the success of the military campaign in both Iraq and Syria, but also reflected that Daesh have not yet been defeated as pockets of fighters still remain and will continue to pose a threat at home and abroad.

In Baghdad, Mr Williamson met with the Iraqi Defence Minister and visited the Iraqi National Security Agency, commending the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces and reiterating the UK's commitment to the long-term security and stability of Iraq. This follows from the Prime Minister's pledge in her recent visit to address the evolving threat from Daesh and countering the dispersal of foreign fighters as Daesh is squeezed out of the battlefield in Syria and Iraq

He also visited UK troops stationed in Taji who, along with over 600 British soldiers on the ground in Iraq, are helping to train that country's forces. UK troops have so far helped train around 60,000 Iraqi Security Forces in battle-winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills. In addition to personnel on the ground in Iraq, the UK has provided over 1,400 military personnel from all three Services as part of its three year involvement.

[News story: Imperial War Museum Trustees: Desmond Bowen and Suzanne Nicholas](#)

The Foreign Secretary has appointed 2 new Trustees to the Board of the Imperial War Museum following an open competition, each for a period of 4 years.

Desmond Bowen CB CMG

Mr Bowen is appointed Trustee with effect from 22 December 2017.

Mr Bowen was a civil servant from fast stream entry in 1973 until 2008 when he retired from the position of Director General for Security Policy at the Ministry of Defence. During his career he served as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Paris, as Defence Counsellor in the UK delegation to the negotiation on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, as Director of the cabinet of the NATO Secretary General in Brussels, as Director General in the Cabinet Office running the overseas and defence secretariat. As an officer in the Parachute Regiment between 1970 and 1973 Mr Bowen served in

Northern Ireland, Cyprus and West Germany.

Since his retirement, Mr Bowen has been a member and Chair of the UN Secretary-General's advisory board on disarmament matters; a visiting Professor at Reading University School of Politics and International Relations and Staff Counsellor of the UK intelligence and security agencies.

He is currently a mentor for the Royal College of Defence Studies twice-yearly strategic exercises and a consulting member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies and team leader for their workshops on nuclear doctrine with India and Pakistan. In 2008 he was awarded the US Secretary of Defense Medal for outstanding public service.

Suzanne Nicholas

Ms Nicholas is appointed Trustee with effect from 1 January 2018.

Ms Nicholas is currently Director for Counter-Terrorism at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, where she has been in service since 1995. Her previous roles have included Head of the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre and Head of Counter Terrorism policy. Between 2009 and 2012 Ms Nicholas led teams responsible for delivery against national security objectives, including in preparation for the Olympic Games in London.

Prior to this she ran a research project for the British High Commission in Islamabad, presenting findings to the Home Office and FCO and spent a period of time in Jerusalem as Associate Producer of a BBC TV series on the Arab Israeli conflict.

[Press release: Guardi's Rialto Bridge with the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi at risk of leaving the UK](#)

The Rialto Bridge with the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi, by Francesco Guardi.

Arts Minister John Glen has placed a temporary export bar on the Rialto Bridge with the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi by Francesco Guardi to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The extraordinary painting is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £26,796,000 (including VAT of £591,000).

With its masterful colouring and dynamic composition in which a series of

gondolas bisect the Grand Canal, The Rialto Bridge with the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi showcases Guardi's atmospheric style and the elegant depiction of light that would come to dominate his later works.

Arguably Guardi's masterpiece, the painting is considered to be one of the ultimate expressions of Venetian vedute, or view painting. Alongside Canaletto and his nephew Bellotto, Guardi was one of the great Venetian view painters of the 18th century.

He was much admired in the 19th century for his impressionistic depictions of Venice and the Lagoon, which inspired many generations of artists visiting the city, most significantly Turner.

The painting is believed to have been commissioned in 1768 by the relatively unknown grand tourist, Chaloner Arcedeckne, making it of great importance to the study of the British relationship with Venice and Grand Tour commissions.

Arts Minister John Glen said:

This magnificent painting is a true masterpiece that encapsulates the vibrant atmosphere and light of 18th century Venice.

I very much hope that it can be kept in the UK, where it can be appreciated and admired by future generations for many years to come.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest \(RCEWA\)](#), administered by The Arts Council.

RCEWA member Aidan Weston-Lewis said:

At more than six feet across, this beautifully composed, bustling view of one of the classic stretches of the Grand Canal is one of the most spectacular and attractive Venetian view paintings in this country. Commissioned by a British visitor to Venice in the late 1760s, it has remained in the UK ever since and has frequently been on public display. Its departure from these shores would be a regrettable loss.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the painting's outstanding aesthetic importance and outstanding significance for the study of the development of Guardi, Venetian view painting and the study of Grand Tour patronage and taste.

The decision on the export licence application for the painting will be deferred until 4 July 2018. This may be extended until 4 January 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £26,796,000 (including VAT of £591,000).

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the painting should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

An image of the painting can be downloaded via our [flickr site](#).

ENDS

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Notes to editors

1. Details of the painting are as follows: The Rialto Bridge with the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi, late-1760s Oil on canvas, 119.7 x 204.3 cm Signed 'GUARDI' (lower left) In very good condition. Probably commissioned in Venice in 1768 by Chaloner Arcedeckne, in whose family it remained for the next 123 years, when it was acquired by Sir Edward Cecil Guinness, later 1st Earl of Iveagh. Then by descent and inheritance.
2. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
3. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

[News story: Malpractice for GCSEs, AS and A levels: 2017](#)

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News story: David Belsham re-appointed to the Prudential Regulation Committee

Today (5 January 2018) the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, announced the re-appointment of Prudential Regulation Committee (PRC) external member David Belsham for an additional term of three years. David Belsham's second term on the PRC will begin on 1 May 2018 and end on 30 April 2021.

The Prudential Regulation Committee is responsible for the most important decisions of the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), the UK's micro-prudential regulator, which supervises banks, insurers and major investment firms.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

David Belsham has brought extensive experience and expertise to the Prudential Regulation Committee throughout his first term as external member, so I am very pleased to announce his re-appointment. I am confident his insights will continue to enhance stability and resilience in the UK's financial sector.

David Belsham has been a member of the PRC and its predecessor, the PRA Board, since May 2015. He is a qualified actuary and spent his most of his career with British insurer Prudential, where he was the Executive Director for the UK and appointed actuary for Prudential's UK and Europe insurance entities. He retired from Prudential in 2014.

Further Information

- the PRA's most important decisions are taken by the Prudential Regulation Committee, chaired by the Governor of the Bank of England. The Prudential Regulation Committee has a majority of external members, including the Chief Executive of the Financial Conduct Authority and six others selected for their experience and expertise in financial services
- the government has today also announced the appointment of Charles Randell as Chair of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Payment Systems Regulator (PSR). Mr Randell has resigned as an external member of the Prudential Regulation Committee. He will leave this position before joining the FCA and PSR as Chair. HM Treasury and the Bank of England will begin recruiting a successor soon.