

Press release: Theresa May to lead ambitious three-nation trip to Africa

Theresa May will lead an ambitious trip to Africa this week (24 to 26 August) on her first visit to the continent as Prime Minister.

She'll be the first British Prime Minister to visit Sub-Saharan Africa since 2013, and the first to go to Kenya for over 30 years.

This visit comes at a time of enormous change across Africa with a unique opportunity, as the UK moves towards Brexit, for a truly Global Britain to invest in and work alongside African nations, with mutual benefits.

The Prime Minister's central message will be focused on a renewed partnership between the UK and Africa, which will seek to maximise shared opportunities and tackle common challenges in a continent that is growing at a rapid pace – from the Sahara to South Africa.

She will use a speech on the opening day of the visit in Cape Town to set out how we can build this partnership side by side with Africa, particularly by bringing the transformative power of private sector trade and investment from the UK to a continent that is home to 16% of the world's people but just 3% of FDI and 3% of global goods trade.

As Africa seeks to meet the needs of its growing population the visit will also emphasise that it is in the world's interest to help secure African stability, jobs and growth because conflict, poor work prospects and economic instability will continue to encourage migration and dangerous journeys to Europe.

Because nations cannot prosper without security, the Prime Minister will also use the visit to announce further support to tackle instability across the region.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Africa stands right on the cusp of playing a transformative role in the global economy, and as longstanding partners this trip is a unique opportunity at a unique time for the UK to set out our ambition to work even closer together.

A more prosperous, growing and trading Africa is in all of our interests and its incredible potential will only be realised through a concerted partnership between governments, global institutions and business.

As we prepare to leave the European Union, now is the time for the UK to deepen and strengthen its global partnerships. This week I am looking forward to discussing how we can do that alongside Africa

to help deliver important investment and jobs as well as continue to work together to maintain stability and security.

I am proud to be leading this ambitious trip to Africa and to become the first UK Prime Minister in over 30 years to visit Kenya.

The Prime Minister will be joined by a business delegation made up of 29 representatives from UK business – half of which are SMEs – from across all regions of the UK and its devolved administrations. The delegation shows the breadth and depth of British expertise in technology, infrastructure, and financial and professional services.

Delegates include:

- the London Stock Exchange
- Cardiff-based cooling technology firm Sure Chill
- solar tech provider Northumbria Energy from North Tyneside
- London-based start-up Farm.ink who have created a knowledge-sharing mobile platform for farmers
- Northern Irish agri-tech leader Devenish Nutrition
- the world-renowned Scotch Whisky Association and Midlands manufacturing giant JCB

Also travelling are Trade Minister George Hollingbery and Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin. Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will join the visit in South Africa to support the Welsh companies in the business delegation, while the Lord Mayor of London Charles Bowman is also accompanying the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will begin her trip in Cape Town in South Africa where she'll see President Cyril Ramaphosa and meet young people and business leaders.

While in South Africa the Prime Minister will present the Mendi bell to President Ramaphosa in a ceremony at Cape Town's presidential office the Tuynhuys – over a century after it was lost in a shipwreck.

Over 600 troops, the majority black South Africans, died when the Mendi tragically sank in the English Channel in 1917, on their way to join the Allied forces on the Western Front. It was the worst maritime disaster in South Africa's history, and the Mendi has become a symbol of the country's First World War remembrance.

In Nigeria the Prime Minister will meet President Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja and spend time in Lagos meeting victims of modern slavery – a cause Theresa May has worked passionately to tackle.

In Nairobi she will meet President Uhuru Kenyatta and see British soldiers training troops from Kenya and other African countries in the techniques needed to identify and destroy improvised explosive devices before they go to fight Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

She will also commit to helping support the next generation of energetic, ambitious young Kenyans as they seek to build a more prosperous country in the years ahead.

News story: RAF typhoons investigate Russians over Black Sea

Launching from the Romanian Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, the RAF Typhoons responded yesterday (August 23) to a Russian Be-12 heading south west over the Black Sea from Crimea. It's the second time in a week that RAF jets, on NATO's Air Policing mission, have been scrambled to deter provocative Russian aircraft and reassure Romania and NATO allies.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our commitment to NATO and European security is unwavering. Whether in the skies over the Black Sea and the Baltic, or on the ground in Estonia our actions send a clear message – we are collectively ready to respond to any act of aggression and will support our Eastern European allies to deter any threats faced.

1 (Fighter) Squadron, based at RAF Lossiemouth, is deployed to Romania as part of the NATO 'Enhanced Air Policing' mission, where assistance is provided to the Romanian Air Force's own fleet of fast-jet aircraft.

A Typhoon pilot from 1(Fighter) Squadron, attached to 135 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) and on Quick Reaction Alert duty when the scramble was called said:

"We launched in response to a Russian Be-12 aircraft that was manoeuvring over the Black Sea. It is exactly what the RAF has been brought to Romania to do and it felt great to have been able to contribute towards the mission."

News story: HMS Queen Elizabeth sets off for F-35B fighter jet trials

Eight years since a British aircraft carrier last flew a fast jet from her decks, the 65,000-tonne carrier will embark two F-35B test aircraft, from the

Integrated Test Force (ITF), based out of Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland.

Around 200 supporting staff, including pilots, engineers, maintainers and data analysts will be joined by two 'orange wired' test aircraft, belonging to the ITF, which are expected to conduct 500 take offs and landings during their 11-week period at sea.

The aim of these initial, or 'developmental' trials are to ascertain, through the specially equipped aircraft and sensors around the ship, the operating parameters of the aircraft and ship, in a range of conditions. Similar successful trials were conducted by HMS Queen Elizabeth at sea earlier this year for Rotary Wing aircraft.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

HMS Queen Elizabeth is a true statement of our national power, and the whole country can be proud to see this magnificent symbol of our engineering prowess and international ambition leaving port to sail onto the world stage.

Her voyage to America not only shows her global reach, but strengthens our special relationship with the US Forces who we have worked hand-in-hand with on this iconic programme. As she sails along the east coast of the USA, she will signal our determination to keep fighting alongside our allies in all corners of an ever more complex and uncertain world.



F-35B aircraft will join HMS Queen Elizabeth when she arrives in the USA. Crown copyright.

Four F-35B Lightning developmental test pilots, who are members of the ITF, will embark to fly the aircraft; three British, one American. The British personnel comprise a Royal Navy Commander, a Squadron Leader from the Royal Air Force and one civilian test pilot. They will be joined by a Major from the US Marine Corps.

The trials follow the recent arrival into the UK of the first joint Royal Navy, Royal Air Force F-35B jets, based at RAF Marham. 'Operational testing', utilising British F-35B aircraft are scheduled to take place on board HMS Queen Elizabeth next year.

The deployment, known as 'WESTLANT 18', will be the first-time HMS Queen Elizabeth will have sailed across the Atlantic. As well as the vital deck trials, it will also involve exercises to prove the ability to operate with other nations' maritime and aviation assets, as well as the landing of Royal Marines and their equipment ashore in the United States, to conduct training with their US counterparts.

HMS Queen Elizabeth Commanding Officer, Capt Jerry Kyd said:

This deployment to the United States will be another first for my ship. Crossing a major ocean with 1500 sailors, aircrew and Marines embarked and the spectre of the first F-35B Lightning landing on the deck in September is very exciting for us all.

It has been an incredible journey since we left Rosyth just over a year ago and we are all looking forward to this next, seminal chapter in HMS Queen Elizabeth's life.



HMS Queen Elizabeth departs for the USA to land fast jets on deck for the very first time. Crown copyright.

As the ship's work-up continues, so too does the regeneration of the UK's Carrier Strike capability. Commander UK Carrier Strike Group (COMUKCSG), Cdre Andrew Betton, will take command of the ship and other units of his task group, embarking in HMS Queen Elizabeth with his Carrier Strike Group headquarters staff.

He said:

As a critical step towards delivering the UK's new Carrier Strike Group, this deployment demonstrates the astonishing collaborative effort that will enable the new F-35 jets to fly routinely from our Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

At the heart of the Maritime Task Group, the aircraft carrier is well protected and sustained, ready to operate around the world as a potent and exceptionally flexible instrument of our foreign policy. These first F-35B embarked trials in a UK aircraft carrier are not only key to future operational success, but represent an iconic moment for the modern Royal Navy.

The ship will conduct trials in UK waters over the coming days, before departing for the USA later this month. She will be joined by RFA Tiderace and Plymouth-based type-23 frigate HMS Monmouth, as well as Merlin Mk2 helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron, RNAS Culdrose, Mk 4 Merlins from 845 Naval Air Squadron, RNAS Yeovilton and a contingent of Royal Marines from 42 Commando, Plymouth.

News story: Defence Ministers re-affirm Scotland's central role in UK defence

Defence Ministers Tobias Ellwood and Stuart Andrew toured Scotland this week, visiting some of the UK's most important military bases that have had billions of pounds of investment in recent months.

Minister for Defence People & Veterans, Tobias Ellwood, visited RAF Lossiemouth where he saw progress being made on the £132 million invested in the site ahead of the arrival of the 9 new P-8A Poseidon aircraft. The new Lossiemouth facility will be completed by 2020, to coincide with initial operating capability of the Poseidon aircraft being available in the UK.

These state-of-the-art submarine hunters will help keep Scotland and the rest of the UK safe and secure from intensifying threats, protecting the new aircraft carrier and nuclear deterrent. The aircraft will work alongside eight cutting-edge new Type 26 warfare frigates, which also have their roots firmly in Scotland.

Minister for Defence Procurement Stuart Andrew met with BAE business leaders as he visited BAE Systems' yard in Govan, which is producing the frigates.

The Type 26 frigate programme will sustain 1,700 BAE Systems jobs in Scotland and safeguard 4,000 jobs across the wider UK supply chain until 2035.

Stuart Andrew's visit comes just after a year since the first steel was cut on HMS Glasgow, marking the beginning on the build of Britain's first Type 26 frigates.

The importance of this programme was also emphasised when Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visited the site alongside his Australian counterpart Marise Payne last month.

Gavin Williamson outlined how Australia's decision to choose BAE Systems to build nine British warships could be worth £20 billion hailed as the biggest Naval ship deal for a decade.

Tobias Ellwood and Stuart Andrew also visited HMNB Clyde that has recently had £1.3 billion invested in the infrastructure that will see it become the home of all the Royal Navy's submarines by 2020.

The Ministers capped off their visit in Scotland at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. This year the Tattoo will celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the RAF with the 'Sky's the limit' theme.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

From the Scottish shipyards building our cutting-edge new Type 26 Royal Navy fleet, to our brave servicemen and women tirelessly working to protect our national security, Scotland is crucial to defence.

We invest £1.6 billion every year in the Scottish economy, supporting thousands of jobs and hundreds of businesses, as our industry partners pioneer world-leading technology to ensure our forces remain a step ahead of our adversaries.

This is my first visit to Scotland as Minister of Defence Procurement and I am extremely proud of the work going on in every corner of the nation to ensure our country remains safe in a climate of intensifying threats.

The visit comes at an important time for defence's footprint in Scotland. Under the Better Defence Estate strategy, the department is reducing the Scottish estate to 14 key sites.

Reducing the number of estates will allow for greater investment in the key sites such as HMNB Clyde, RAF Lossiemouth, as well as building the new radar facility Saxa Vord in Shetland.

It will also benefit local economies as the Department will work closely with Local Authorities and the Scottish Government to make the best use of the released land.

[News story: RAF helicopters ready to support French in Mali](#)

The helicopters, from RAF Odiham, are providing niche logistical support to French combat forces conducting counter-terrorism operations as part of Operation Barkhane. UK forces have built three temporary aircraft hangers on the ground, enabling the Chinooks to fly multiple missions each week.

Armed Forces minister Mark Lancaster said:

This deployment demonstrates the vital role our Armed Forces play, working alongside our French allies to tackle terrorism and reduce threats to European and UK security.

The deployment is in addition to the UK's long-standing support of UN, EU and G5 Sahel Joint Force operations in Mali aimed at preventing extremists from using the ungoverned space in the Sahel to plan and launch attacks on Europe, as well as countering the illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and wildlife.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

This helicopter deployment demonstrates the UK's commitment to do more in the Sahel, alongside £50m of UK Aid providing lifesaving humanitarian support, and a bigger diplomatic network.