

News story: UK hosts international nuclear disarmament verification exercise

Experts from Norway, Sweden and the United States travelled to join UK experts from the Atomic Weapons Establishment at RAF Honington, Suffolk where the exercise, named 'Letterpress', took place.

The first of its kind, the exercise began to address the greatest technical obstruction to nuclear disarmament – the absence of an established or agreed process of checking the dismantlement of a nuclear weapon. Letterpress is part of an ongoing arms control research collaboration. In a concluding event yesterday personnel simulated the very early stages of dismantling a mock-up nuclear weapon and there were a range of talks from international experts the subject.



Exercise Letterpress included a simulation of the early stages of dismantling a mock-up nuclear weapon.

Speaking on the exercise yesterday, James Franklin, Head of Nuclear Policy for the UK Ministry of Defence said:

International exercises of this scale are hugely important to

ensure the possibility of a world without nuclear weapons. This exercise was part of our commitment made at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee 2017 and makes a tangible contribution to the UK's commitment to Article VI of the treaty itself which remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation framework. I'm proud that the UK remains a responsible nuclear weapons state, exercises like this and the reduction of our nuclear forces by over half since the Cold War continue to reinforce this.

Director General of the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority, Ole Harbitz remarked:

Disarmament verification constitutes a central part of Norway's non-proliferation and disarmament work. We must focus on effective and concrete steps to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Exercise Letterpress is a core building block of our common efforts and exemplifies a fact-based approach to disarmament that we strongly believe in. International cooperation of this kind is essential in developing trust and confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states. Norway's long-term cooperation with the UK on disarmament verification -the UKNI – has greatly improved our understanding of the technical and security related challenges associated with nuclear disarmament.

Signed in 1968, the UK has been a long-term member of the Treaty on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has a key aim of achieving the long term goal of nuclear disarmament. Exercises like Letterpress are key to fulfilling our commitment to the Treaty.

News story: Millions invested in pilot training at state-of-the-art helicopter centre

The simulators put pilots through their paces, replicating extreme real-life scenarios, from flying in blizzards or under enemy fire to dealing with power failures and electronic warfare.

The deal will sustain 70 jobs at the Medium Support Helicopter Aircrew Training Facility based at RAF Benson in South Oxfordshire.



One of the helicopter simulators in action at RAF Benson.

Defence, Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, signed a contract amendment with simulator specialist CAE Aircrew Training Services to deliver training for Chinook, Puma and Merlin aircrews at a purpose-built facility, extending the use of CAE's current contract for another 8 years.

The equipment provides a realistic representation of the operating environments the crews will fly in, including emergency situations like the effects of icing and rotor blade damage, the impact of gun or missile fire and electronic warfare, total electrics failure and fuel management issues.

The contract will deliver training for Chinook and Puma aircrews until the Puma planned out-of-service date. Training for the Merlin Mk3 will continue at the facility for at least two more years as the Royal Navy transitions from the Mk3 to the Mk4 helicopter.



One of the UK Chinooks undertaking relief work in the Caribbean in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.

The centre is equipped with six CAE-built dynamic mission simulators (three Chinook, two Merlin and one Puma), four computer-based ground school training classrooms and a Tactical Control Centre that allows for operational mission training.

Adrian Baguley, Director Air Support at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support, said:

The importance of effective synthetic training cannot be underestimated and continues to play an increasingly important role in our overall training curriculum.

The Medium Support Helicopter Aircrew Training Facility has consistently delivered a high standard of quality training to the operators of our front line helicopter capabilities. This agreement continues to maintain the world-leading ground school and simulator training facility for our helicopter aircrews.

News story: DIO awards contract for new jetty at HMNB Devonport Oil Fuel Depot

The project will deliver a new jetty with fuel loading and fire fighting facilities; the fire fighting facilities within the depot will also be replaced. The jetty will be constructed within a Special Area of Conservation on the River Tamar and the project has to comply with stringent environmental regulations. The completed facility will service all of the Navy fuelling requirements at Devonport.

Bill Hughes, DIO Project Manager said:

This is a key milestone in the Navy Oil Fuel Depot upgrade programme. There have been considerable environmental challenges and constraints that have been successfully navigated through the excellent efforts of the Project team and we look forward to working in collaboration with VolkerStevin to ensure the successful delivery of this operationally critical project.

Terry O'Connor, DIO Account Director for VolkerStevin said:

We are delighted to have been awarded the design and construction of the new jetty at Thanckes Oil Fuel Depot. It continues our long association with the DIO and Royal Navy in providing key critical infrastructure solutions and we look forward to working closely with the project team and key stakeholders to deliver this strategically important scheme.

The dredging and clearing works are due to commence in January 2018 with the main piling works starting in September 2018 to avoid the annual fish migration season. The jetty is due to be in service by November 2019. The Thanckes Jetty is the first in a number of projects to modernise the Oil Fuel Depots in Devonport and Portsmouth to service the fuelling of the Naval Fleet in both ports.

News story: Exercise Cambrian Patrol

testing the best from around the world

Taking place over some of the harshest yet most picturesque terrain in Mid Wales, Exercise Cambrian Patrol is a unique event and the largest of its kind anywhere in the world. It is rightly regarded as the premier patrolling exercise in NATO.

It is mentally and physically demanding and examines all the basic skills of a modern-day soldier, enhancing leadership skills and levels of endurance and determination. On average only five per cent of patrols gain the top Gold award while about a third fail to finish.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Exercise Cambrian Patrol is the premier examination of patrolling abilities in NATO. It is arduous and testing and regarded as the proving ground for Armed Forces from all around the world.

With so many allies coming together, this is a further opportunity to strengthen bonds and comradeship, paving the way for a safer future for us all.

Brigadier Alan Richmond OBE, Commander 160th Infantry Brigade and Headquarters and head of the Army in Wales, is the Exercise Director.

He said:

Exercise Cambrian Patrol is becoming more popular every year and this year we've had more international patrols take part than ever before.

That means people really understand the value of this as an exercise. It's also a great opportunity for us in the British Army to work alongside a lot of our international partners and develop our solid relationships. This year has been a great success.

First Lieutenant Pavel Popovici of the Moldovian Army was one of the first time patrol commanders.



1st Lieutenant Pavel Popovici of the Moldovian Army. Crown copyright

He said:

We are representing our country for the first time and it is important to do well. We have had a lot of help from our friends 2nd Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment, and we are very thankful for it.

Major Steve Keir, Officer Commanding Exercise Cambrian Patrol, said the event had achieved all of its objectives in testing the basic military skills of soldiers over the harshest terrain in Wales.

He said:

This year was especially testing in that we had three serious weather fronts to deal with – two named (Hurricane Ophelia and Storm Brian) and one unnamed.

That means the dynamic of the exercise changed completely and we had more patrols fail to complete than ever before.

Additionally, those who dug in with real grit and determination and who upped their game gained higher awards than normal. Our normal Gold medal award allocations increased by about 50 per cent to nine awards and the number of Silvers were also up significantly with 33 being awarded.

The feedback from those who had completed the exercise before was that this year was definitely much tougher due to the inclement weather thrown in.

Cambrian Patrol 2017 is the biggest so far – 126 patrols took part. We've also had a number of countries ask us how they could replicate a similar exercise in their own countries.

To us, that's a good statement because it means they see this as world class.

News story: UK steps up role as the fight against Daesh evolves

2 Rifles, currently based at Al Asad providing infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical training to the Iraqi Security Forces, will now patrol outside the base perimeter.

The UK is also deploying a further team of British military medical personnel to Al Asad and will extend the deployment of British engineers at the base by six months. A Light Surgical team, made up of RAF medics and personnel from the Army Medical Corps, will be able to provide world leading medical treatment to Coalition forces within the critical "Golden Hour" after being wounded.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

The fight against Daesh's reign of terror is not over and as the nature of the Coalition campaign changes, the role we play must adapt too. By training Iraq forces we are helping with the long-term stability of the country and our own security here at home.

The campaign to defeat Daesh in Iraq has entered its final phase following the liberation of Mosul, Hawija and the Ninewah Province from its barbaric rule. Iraqi Security Forces are now advancing across Anbar Province, clearing Daesh positions in the Euphrates River Valley.

Medical support to operations is a top priority for the Coalition. Learning from previous operations, such as the world leading trauma care developed at Camp Bastion's hospital, the UK medical personnel will ensure Coalition forces receive the highest standard of treatment if required.

Over 600 British soldiers are on the ground in Iraq, helping to train that country's forces. UK troops have so far helped train over 58,000 Iraqi

Security Forces in battle-winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills. In addition to personnel on the ground in Iraq, RAF aircraft have carried out over 1,600 strikes against Daesh. The UK's commitment from all three Services to the fight against Daesh across the region now numbers just over 1,400 military personnel.