

News story: Defence Ministers meet US Secretary of the Navy for the first time

They reviewed a number of defence and security issues, including our close Carrier cooperation, our deepening capability collaboration on F-35s and P-8A Maritime Patrol Aircraft, and the UK's National Shipbuilding Strategy. The meetings underscored the strength and strategic importance of the UK-US Defence relationship, as well as each other's role at the forefront of NATO.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Britain has no closer friend than the United States and across the globe our nations stand side by side defending our values. Our Armed Forces work closely together in every area of defence from planning for future challenges through to working together on operations around the world today.

Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

As the Minister responsible for the Royal Navy, I was delighted to welcome Secretary Spencer on his first official visit to the UK. Our meeting highlighted the unrivalled levels of interoperability between the Royal Navy and the US Navy, and the disproportionate contribution they make to our overall bilateral defence relationship.

As previously announced we continue to make good progress on the plan to deploy HMS Queen Elizabeth on her inaugural deployment in 2021 with USMC F-35B embarked.

Minister of State for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

I thanked Secretary Spencer for the US Navy's continuing excellent support in helping the UK quickly field P-8 maritime patrol aircraft in support of our joint requirements, building on the MPA declaration I signed earlier this year with former Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work, to ensure increased value for money and operational effectiveness for both countries.

We also discussed the UK National Shipbuilding Strategy, the

importance of close partnerships with Industry, and opportunities for further collaboration as our countries look to new platforms in the coming years.

Royal Air Force squadrons recognised for gallantry

The MOD has announced that Her Majesty The Queen has approved the award of Battle Honours to squadrons of Her Majesty's Royal Air Force.

The Battle Honours have been awarded to commemorate notable battles, actions, or engagements in which squadron aircrew or RAF Regiment personnel played a memorable part.

Battle Honours were approved for 27 operational flying squadrons and eight Royal Air Force Regiment squadrons for their service during Operation TELIC in Iraq. Five operational flying squadrons and three Royal Air Force Regiment squadrons have been awarded the highest honour of 'Battle Honour with Emblazonment'.

For Operation DEFERENCE and Operation ELLAMY in Libya, Battle Honours were approved for 13 operational flying squadrons with three being awarded the highest honour of Battle Honour with Emblazonment.

There are two levels of Battle Honour within the Royal Air Force, the first is entitlement, signifying that a squadron took part in the campaign. The second, higher level, gives the right to emblazon the Battle Honour on the Squadron Standard itself. This highest level has been awarded to squadrons who were involved in direct confrontation with the enemy, and who have demonstrated gallantry and spirit under fire.

The RAF's Deputy Commander for Operations, Air Marshal Stuart Atha said:

Whilst individuals are often recognised for bravery and courage, the award of a Battle Honour to a unit is rare, so I am delighted to hear that the fighting spirit of Royal Air Force squadrons has been recognised at the highest level by their award today. Those Air Mobility, Rotary, Fast Jet, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance squadrons, and RAF Regiment units, whose people have contributed so much to these operations in the air and on the ground, should be hugely proud of this important addition to their legacies.

The honours will be awarded for participation in Operation TELIC, which took place between 1 May 2003 and 22 May 2011, Operation DEFERENCE, which took place from 22 February 2011 to 27 February 2011, and Operation ELLAMY, which took place from 19 March 2011 to 31 October 2011.

To mark the awards, the MOD is releasing a number of examples of outstanding service during these campaigns:

FIRST UK LAUNCHED STRIKES SINCE WW2

Royal Air Force Squadrons II (Two) and IX (Nine) are two of three units to be awarded the honour of emblazoning the battle honour "Libya 2011" on their standards.

On 19 March 2011, under strict secrecy and in the dark of night, four Tornado fast jets from IX (Bomber) Squadron, Royal Air Force Marham, roared into the Norfolk night sky to deliver long-range airstrikes against Libyan Regime targets.

Storm Shadow, the Tornado's highly capable stand-off cruise missile, which is currently seeing service in Iraq and Syria, was used as the weapon of choice against heavily defended and hardened targets in a gruelling 3000-mile round trip. For the missions, RAF Marham operated as a cohesive team. II (Army Cooperation) Squadron personnel worked tirelessly to plan this complex mission and prepare the aircraft, while aircrew from IX (Bomber) Squadron flew and delivered successful mission.

This historic event was the first direct delivery of airborne weapons launched from Royal Air Force aircraft based in the United Kingdom since World War Two and demonstrated the Royal Air Force's ability to conduct highly effective surprise airstrikes at great distance. The missions were ably supported by RAF Voyager in-flight refuelling aircraft, which were used four times during the eight-hour sortie.

Following these strikes, IX (Bomber) Squadron deployed to Italian Air Force Base Gioia Del Colle and mounted an intensive bombing, close air support and armed reconnaissance campaign against the Libyan Regime's mobile military forces. The unit was relieved by II (Army Cooperation) Squadron one month later.

At this point, the campaign had grown significantly, requiring II Squadron to undertake complex strike missions by day and night using Paveway precision guided bombs and Brimstone missiles.

PUMAS PROVIDE IMPORTANT SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

Number 33 Squadron, based at RAF Benson, Oxfordshire, was one of seven RAF units to earn the right to emblazon the battle honour 'Iraq 2003-2011' on its standard.

33 Squadron operated Puma helicopters during the Iraq campaign. Working in close cooperation with UK and allied land forces, their role was to move equipment and soldiers around the battlefield, as well as provide convoy escort, reconnaissance and resupply of Forward Operating Bases (FOB). They also transported the wounded quickly away from the front line for emergency medical care.

Aircraft often flew at 50 feet above the ground, to try and avoid ground fire due to the level of the insurgent threat. Working in the highly unstable area around central Iraq, the Pumas operated at a furious pace, often at the limits of their performance. Nevertheless the helicopters proved to be highly reliable; a testament to the superb efforts of the squadron's engineers based at FOB Kalsu.

In November 2004, a formation of one 33 Squadron Puma and one Lynx helicopter operated in support of the Black Watch (now Scottish Regiment) Battle Group. Working from Camp Dogwood which was in an area locally dubbed 'the Triangle of Death', the two aircraft came under heavy mortar fire within minutes of landing. Later, due to the volume of enemy ground fire, both the Puma and the Lynx were hit by enemy rounds with the Lynx pilot suffering injury.

Flight Sergeant Andy Leys, a crewman on the Puma said:

On arrival back at base after operations, the sense of satisfaction and achievement was immense. This period was the busiest and most intense operational tasking I have completed in my 19 year flying career. All of our tasking was completed safely and professionally with crews returning to base wiser and more experienced aviators – something that can never be too highly valued.

Recognised squadrons:

With the Right to Emblazon 'IRAQ 2003- 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No 7 Squadron RAF
- No XXIV Squadron RAF
- No 33 Squadron RAF
- No 47 Squadron RAF
- No 230 Squadron RAF
- No 1 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 26 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 34 Squadron RAF Regiment.

Without the Right to Emblazon 'IRAQ 2003- 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No II (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No IX (Bomber) Squadron RAF

- No 10 Squadron RAF
- No 12 (Bomber) Squadron RAF
- No XIII Squadron RAF
- No 14 Squadron RAF
- No 18 Squadron RAF
- No 27 Squadron RAF
- No XXVIII (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No 30 Squadron RAF
- No 31 Squadron RAF
- No 32 (The Royal) Squadron RAF
- No 39 (Photographic Reconnaissance) Squadron RAF
- No 51 Squadron RAF
- No LXX Squadron RAF
- No 99 Squadron RAF
- No 101 Squadron RAF
- No 120 Squadron RAF
- No 201 Squadron RAF
- No 206 Squadron RAF
- No 216 Squadron RAF
- No 617 Squadron RAF
- No II Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 3 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 15 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 51 Squadron RAF Regiment
- No 63 Squadron RAF Regiment.

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- No 47 Squadron RAF.

Without the Right to Emblazon 'LIBYA 2011' on Squadron Standards

- No 3 (Fighter) Squadron RAF
- No V (Army Cooperation) Squadron RAF
- No VIII Squadron RAF
- No XI Squadron RAF
- No 30 Squadron RAF
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News story: 'Top of the range' military training facility opened at Garelochhead

The £3 million project took around 2 years to complete and is designed to provide the optimum 'safe place' training environment for armed forces personnel in order to equip them with the skills required for operational duties at home and overseas.

The project has seen the existing Garelochhead ranges transformed in to 2 new developments: a grouping and zeroing (G&Z) range and an electronic target tange (ETR) and a single range building complex with classrooms, a targetry

store and workshops, which serve the 2 ranges.

Brigadier Neil Dalton OBE, head of training for the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) said:

The opening of these ranges represents a significant investment by defence, delivered by DIO, to provide the modern facilities required to develop and maintain individual shooting skills.

These ranges will serve a host of nearby units, as well as those using the neighbouring training area, and are a great further boost to the quality of infrastructure in the Clyde area.

The programme delivery was managed by Scotland's DIO service delivery training team and industry partner Landmarc Support Services with local contractor, Mackenzie Construction Ltd responsible for the build phase of the project.



General Bob Bruce and Brigadier Neil Dalton at the official opening. Crown copyright. All rights reserved.

Lt Col Mike Onslow, Commander of DIO service delivery training team in Scotland and Northern Ireland said:

DIO is committed to improving the facilities and services that it provides to the armed forces and this project is a great example of

how we are doing this. The benefits offered by these new facilities are legion. They are also the result of five years of hard work, detailed collaboration and numerous opportunities to practice our problem solving abilities.

The people involved in delivering these ranges and the supporting infrastructure have been superb and suffered the capricious nature of the west coast weather; they have my admiration and thanks. We have a complex that is efficient; environmentally future proofed and will provide the required training to all elements of defence based in the close proximity and elsewhere for years to come.

Kevin Kneeshaw, regional operations manager for Landmarc Support Services in Scotland added:

By working collaboratively with DIO and our contractor, Mackenzie, we have been able to overcome a number of unique challenges to deliver first class training facilities that are not only sustainable, but will deliver cost savings for our armed forces.

RAF Typhoon fly their longest sortie in the fight against Da'esh.

On 23 September a pair of Typhoons flew for seven hours and 46 minutes on a mission which saw them attack and destroy a weapons cache before conducting a simultaneous strike against four truck bombs.



Flight Lieutenant Tom [surname withheld for security reasons] led the mission from RAF Akrotiri. He said:

"Whilst this sortie was the longest flown by RAF Typhoons to date the nature of the mission was no different to those flown day in day out over the past three years of this operation by both Typhoon and Tornado aircrew. These sorties would not be possible without the tireless support of our ground crew and of the air-air refuelling team who enable us to remain on station for such long periods of time."



During the sortie, which was mostly conducted at night, the Typhoons refuelled on a number of occasions from RAF and Coalition air-air refuelling aircraft. After scanning the areas around the targets to ensure no civilians

were present the targets were struck with a total of six Paveway IV precision guided munitions. Flt Lt Tom:

"Sitting in the confines of a fast jet cockpit for such a long time can be tiring, particularly at night, but assisting the Coalition forces fighting Da'esh on the ground is extremely rewarding and more than enough to keep us focussed. By destroying vehicle borne IEDs and weapons caches we not only save the lives of troops but also civilians; Da'esh have shown no hesitation in the past in detonating these huge bombs close to civilians."



The Typhoon pair were not the only aircraft in operations that day. Over northern Iraq RAF Typhoons destroyed a truck bomb, a terrorist-held building and a mortar team firing on Iraqi forces. RAF Tornado aircraft also destroyed five truck bombs, an armed truck, a Da'esh building and command post on a day which saw the RAF destroy a total of 17 terrorist targets.

The RAF has played an essential role to allies, helping Syrian Democratic Forces engaged in ground close combat and the Iraqi Security Forces who continue their advance having liberated Mosul and Ninewah province. The RAF recently marked the third anniversary of operations against Da'esh which also involves Reaper remotely piloted aircraft, air-air refuelling tankers and surveillance aircraft. More than 5.5 million people have been freed from Daesh's rule and over two million displaced Iraqi civilians have returned to their homes. In Mosul alone, it is estimated that over 265,000 people have returned.

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