

News story: UK marks 350th UK deterrent patrol

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon has today marked the UK's 350th nuclear deterrence submarine patrol by hosting talks on collective global security with NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the North Atlantic Council.

The UK Defence Secretary welcomed Jens Stoltenberg and all 29 NATO ambassadors to the home of the UK's independent strategic nuclear deterrent, Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde. Sir Michael also took the opportunity to confirm that the UK will continue to play a leading role in NATO's deterrence missions and will modernise and upgrade the Clyde Naval Base through £1.3 billion investment over the next ten years.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

From our nuclear submarines that stand ready to defend us against the most extreme threats to our way of life, to nearly a thousand UK troops based in Eastern Europe, our commitment to the NATO Alliance, the cornerstone of European security, is clear and unwavering.

NATO is a nuclear alliance. Only by having a deterrent of our own are we able to help guarantee our nation's security and that of all our NATO allies.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said:

I welcome the UK's strong contribution to NATO, from its commitment to defence investment to its operational deployments. The nuclear forces of the Alliance, including those at Clyde Naval Base, are the supreme guarantee of the security of allied countries and populations.

HMNB Clyde has been home to the submarine based nuclear deterrent for five decades. The UK Government is investing £1.3 billion over the next 10 years to update and upgrade its engineering and training facilities. The Base will be home to the entire UK submarine service by 2020, and supports 6,800 jobs today, which will rise to 8,500 in the 2030s.

The NAC's visit included a tour of a UK Vanguard class deterrent submarine and the Base's extensive Trident Training Facility.

Designing and building the new Dreadnought class of four ballistic missile submarines is one of the largest and most complex programmes that the MOD and

UK industry has undertaken. The UK has shown its commitment to the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty having reduced the number of deployed warheads on each submarine from 48 to 40, the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120 and remains committed to reducing its stockpile of nuclear warheads to no more than 180 by mid-2020s.

The NAC also toured a Royal Navy frigate taking part in Exercise Joint Warrior, the UK-led multinational exercise that will begin days after the visit, on Sunday 1st October. It is one of the largest military exercises of its kind in Europe, bringing together 35 naval units from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and the US, as well as aircraft from Canada, France, Norway, the UK and US. As Scotland's largest military establishment, HMNB Clyde is also the operational headquarters for Joint Warrior.

[RAF Police Rugby suffer defeat with last kick of the game](#)

THE RAF Police came within a whisker of victory at a rain-sodden Cardiff Arms Park when they played South Wales Police in a thrilling contest.

Early pressure from the bigger home side quickly got results and they notched up a try on the 10 minute mark. After a failed conversion, the RAFP bounced right back but ball handling was difficult as the rain became torrential.

Bold forays by the RAFP, particularly No15 Corporal Callum Macmillan were stopped by South Wales Police bodies. He again stepped up moments later when he challenged a Welsh attack only to be clattered by a marauding forward. The half ended with South Wales Police leading 5-0.



SWP were out of the blocks following a quick restart and almost immediately extended their lead with another try which they converted.

The RAFP bounced back with a great run by Callum Macmillan. The rain came down heavier but still the Snowdrops showed drive and guts.

After RAFP No8 Corporal Andy Melbourne was brought down just yards from the SWP try line, the RAF men were awarded a penalty which the No12 Acting Corporal Jack Lowe duly slotted over bringing the score to 12-3.

This heralded a fierce RAFP fight back which saw them win a scrum five yards from the South Wales Police line. The pressure paid off when big RAF forward Andy Melbourne stormed over for a try. Despite Jack Lowe missing out on the conversion, the Welsh were kept on the back foot and with the score at 12-8

the RAFF sensed the game was theirs for the taking.

Continued RAFF pressure paid off again when Jack Lowe went over for a try. He duly converted and took the 'Flying Pigs' into the lead with the score at 12-15.

But the Welsh were not done yet. Minutes later, their big No12 scythed through the RAFF defences to score in the far corner. The kick was just wide but they pulled ahead again bringing the score to 17-15.

With just minutes left on the clock, the RAF again pushed forward and won a penalty which Jack Lowe coolly kicked home. With the score at 17-18, they were ahead again, but the day was not yet done.



The Welsh police punted the ball into the RAF half as the seconds ticked away, but before the ref blew for time they were awarded a penalty and with literally the last kick of the game, South Wales Police went for the kick and took the spoils with the final score 20-18.

Victorious captain Inspector Paul Crowley of South Wales Police said he was delighted to win a "hard fought" contest. "We wanted to break their game up and for the first half it worked, but later in the second half they upped their game and we were on the back foot." The police Inspector praised the spirit the game was played in, saying it was a "fantastic occasion".

RAFF team captain Corporal Callum Hales praised a "gritty performance" from the Snowdrops. "They contained us in the first half, but in the second half they realised they were playing a good team and they panicked."

"We played a controlled game in really poor conditions and really pulled together – like we do in the military. I was really pleased with the way we played tonight."

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[News story: Burial of 19 unknown British WW1 Soldiers in Ypres, Belgium](#)

19 unknown British comrades in arms who lost their lives on the battlefield during World War 1 (WW1) have finally been laid to rest in the New Irish Farm Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Cemetery in Ypres, Belgium on Thursday 28 September.

Unusually for a single service the ceremony involved casualties from English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Regiments. The service itself was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services and was conducted by The Reverend Iori Price CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.



Local piper, Pierre Dervaux, leads the procession into the cemetery – Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Sue Raftree, JCCC said:

It is very unusual for there to be 19 First World War soldiers from English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Regiments buried in one ceremony. It has been a privilege for the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre to organise this service.

The soldiers were found following ground work at an industrial development at Briekestraat, Ypres in Belgium. The location, thought to be the original Irish Farm site, is an original war time cemetery created by the army under war conditions. It was believed that all those buried there had been transferred to the New Irish Farm Cemetery, some 300 meters away, but this discovery has proved that they hadn't.



Local children from the Peace Village lay wreaths for the 19 unknown soldiers – Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Investigations undertaken by the JCCC established that of the 19 soldiers:

- 4 served with the Essex Regiment
- one with the Monmouthshire Regiment
- one with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders
- one with the Northumberland Regiment
- one with the Royal Irish Regiment

As no regimental artefacts were found, the remaining 11 will be buried as 'Known Unto God'. During the burial service all the coffins were in the burial plots with the exception of 1, which was carried in as the focus of the ceremony by the Essex Regiment, now the Anglians.



A bearer party prepare coffin to be lowered into the ground – Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Reverend Iori Price CF said:

We are always mindful of the costs of conflict and the need we have to persue peace for all. At such a moment as this, when we have gathered to bury those fallen in conflicts, we reflect on the great price paid by our service personnel then and the motivation that encouraged them.

The headstones were provided by the CWGC and Liz Sweet, CWGC's Director of External Relations in Western Europe said:

We, at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, are delighted that the sacrifice of these 19 soldiers has been recognised by today's event and will now be cared for in perpetuity by the Commission.

The Ushtar Eagle Has Landed

The UK's NATO ally Albania hosted over 200 RAF Reserves and Regulars in numerous locations around the country as they trained together developing operational teamwork and friendships on Exercise Ushtar Eagle 17.

Exercise Director and Officer Commanding 8 Force Protection group, Wing Commander Phil Hateley said:

"The UK is committed to NATO, and despite the fact we have are leaving the European Union we are still committed to European security, and our deployment of troops in Albania is a clear demonstration of that. Coming to Albania has given us many opportunities that we could never replicate in the UK. The freedom to be able to go and conduct military training in and amongst local villages is the hallmark."



Drawn from 18 individual RAF stations across the UK, Reserves from specialisms including the RAF Regiment, RAF Police, logistics, medical, intelligence and Media Operations worked alongside their Albanian counterparts to hone their war-fighting, peacekeeping and humanitarian skills.

The Balkan country provided a stunning backdrop for a series of gruelling drills and training scenarios that UK and Albanian troops could carry out on operations together in the future. Gunners and soldiers bonded together over tactical training, physical exercise and some social time in the evenings.



Interest in Ushtar Eagle reached presidential levels in the first week with a visit from the Albanian President, Ilir Meta, who watched a combined tactical demonstration by the RAF Regiment Reserves and soldiers from the Third Battalion of the Albanian Army. He was joined by the British Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Stuart Peach, who was in Albania's capital Tirana for a NATO conference.

An Albanian naval establishment close to Durrës was the setting for members of 2503 and 603 Squadrons and the Third Battalion of the Albanian Army to storm a building suspected of being a "terrorist safe house". Under the cover of smoke the combined assault team entered the building, making an "arrest" and extracting the "suspect" with the

help of RAF and Albanian police.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

“I would like to thank the Albanian people for the warmth of their welcome and the exceptional training facilities they provide. We have come a long way together through our shared military history and shared experience in NATO. I am confident as the UK Chief of Defence that our future is much more secure as a result of our alliance.”



The Albanian Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Brigadier General Bardhyl Kollçaku, who also attended the demonstration, said:

“This is a demonstration of the excellent cooperation we have between the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania, and the assurance that this cooperation will extend and will continue even more in the future in the interests of peace and security, not only between our countries but also in the region and beyond.”

Moving from the coast to more rural areas in the mountains for the second week the exercise featured section attacks, patrolling through Albanian villages, ambushes and defensive tactics. Enduring temperatures over 35 degrees the RAF and their Albanian counterparts trained from dawn till midnight, pushing themselves physically and mentally. The gunners received a warm but curious welcome from the local population as they went about their daily business.



LAC Alex Hand, from 609 Squadron, and the youngest Reservist on the exercise, said:

“Opportunities like this to train abroad are one of the reasons why I joined the Reserves. I have been pushed out of my comfort zone but loved every minute of it. Working with the Albanians has been very interesting and meeting other Reservists from around the country has made me realise the scale of the organisation I belong to.”

This is the first time the RAF Reserves have worked and trained so closely with the UK's NATO ally Albania. The two countries are developing a close working relationship after the Royal Navy and British Army previously completed exercises and training.

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RAF exchange officers contribute to US rescue and aid effort

Royal Air Force personnel serving on exchange with the US Air Force have played an important role in the relief efforts following the devastation wreaked by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

Aerospace Battle Manager Flight Lieutenant Rob Parr is currently serving on an exchange tour in Oklahoma. On 31st August he was aboard an E-3 AWACS aircraft flying over Houston, Texas where Hurricane Harvey had caused significant damage. He said:

"I flew two missions on board the USAF E-3G Sentry, one 6.4 hours long, the other 13.4 hours long from Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. Our job was to provide enhanced radio communication between the helicopter assets and ground based elements to help better co-ordinate the rescue efforts."



The team aboard the aircraft tracked the status of hospitals, landing zones and provided coordinates and taskings to helicopters undertaking rescues.

"With so much confusion on the ground surrounding who needed to be rescued and what facilities were open, the whole crew felt like we were making a real difference, especially when we would get a call from our ground agency giving us only a street address and cell phone number and vague details of what the survivors' status were.

"Then we were able to figure out where the location was and task an asset to go and assist. It was also great working with such a wide range of civilian, Coastguard, Navy, Air Force and Army assets all trying to help out the best they could."

As a direct result of the assistance rendered on the two flights Flt Lt Parr participated, a total of 51 rescues were conducted recovering 218 survivors including three pregnant women and six patients in critical condition.



Summing up the sorties Flt Lt Parr said: "The mission was great, it was probably one of the most rewarding and interesting missions I've done in my seven years of flying on AWACS."

When Hurricane Irma struck the Caribbean Flt Lt Matt Jenkinson piloted a C-17 transport aircraft from its base in North Carolina to Illinois, one of 36 C-17s evacuated from Charleston AFB ahead of the storm. Once there he was put on three hours standby.

“I flew two Hurricane relief Operations” he said. “One was immediately before Irma struck where we landed four hours before the storm arrived to deliver a search & rescue team and medical & blood supplies. The second was after the storm had passed through – again delivering urgent supplies.”

He added, “We took an Air Traffic Control tower into St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands along with water & food provisions then headed, via Tampa for fuel, to Texas. There we loaded 130 US tons of water and food and took it to St Croix the following day. We received a waiver to operate on night vision goggles into the airfield at night.”



The military personnel exchange programme in its current guise commenced in 1971 when the RAF and USAF agreed to allow each other's personnel to fill reciprocal positions. Designed to maximise the special relationship the UK shared with the US, the benefits to many areas of air force activity were immediately apparent. In consequence the exchange programme grew steadily to encompass agreements with the US Navy, Marine Corps, Army and Coast Guard.

The range of specialisations also broadened and now embraces everything from Air Transport, Fast Jet, Rotary and ISR platforms, to Project Engineers, Research and Development, Intelligence, Cyber, Space and Force Protection specialists to name but a few. The programme with the United States today stands at an exchange of 55 RAF personnel who have swapped places with 40 Americans now stationed in the UK. Similar exchanges take place with a number of other nations and RAF personnel serve around the world.

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