

News story: Defence Secretary recognises UK efforts in the fight against Daesh with service medal

Sir Michael met with personnel from the Mercian Regiment, Engineer Regiment, Intelligence Corps, and Medical Regiments at Erbil and Taji where they have been involved in training Iraqi Security Forces, Kurdish Forces and Ninewah police.

Speaking to the troops, he announced the Op Shader medal, recognising the valuable contributions made by many serving military personnel who have been tirelessly undertaking the UK effort as part of the Coalition fight against Daesh for the last three years.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

It is only right that those who've performed above and beyond in this fight against the evil of our time get the recognition they deserve. This medal will do just that.

Our troops have made huge contributions to the fight against Daesh, helping end its tyranny in large parts of Iraq and Syria.

They have conducted over 1,500 strikes against Daesh terrorist targets and helped train nearly 60,000 Iraqi Security Forces. The campaign is not over but for those that have served we rightly honour the critical role they have played in helping keep us safe.

Taking a leading role in the Counter-Daesh Global Coalition, the UK has provided over 1,400 military personnel from all three Services as part of its three year involvement.

Following the recent uplift of 44 additional Royal Engineers who deployed to Al Asad Airbase in August, there are around 600 British soldiers on the ground in Iraq. They are primarily involved in training Iraqi security forces in battle winning infantry, engineering and combat medical techniques as well as providing courses on countering IEDs and other critical skills.

Current UK Operational Medals policy requires consideration of risk and rigour to qualify for award of a campaign medal. To date, risk has been defined in terms of requiring an individual to be physically exposed to danger to qualify for medallic recognition and currently there are approximately 3,600 personnel who will receive the medal from May 2018.

The Defence Secretary has directed that this approach be examined to consider how best to recognise the rigour and operational contribution of those outside the immediate theatre of operations.

He said:

The changing character of warfare provides new challenges – not just about how we fight but also how we recognise and support those who serve.

As fighting has evolved we have adapted, ensuring our troops have cutting edge equipment including unmanned systems operated from outside the battle space. Our recognition of service, the risks taken, and the long-term effects must therefore adapt too.

That is why we need to examine how to provide medallic recognition for those making a vital contribution to Op Shader outside the battlespace, from Reaper pilots taking life and death decisions to those who ensure our planes can strike Daesh targets.

On his trip to the Middle East, the Defence Secretary also visited the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, where the UK is working closely with US as the two largest contributors to the Coalition's military campaign. As the command centre for the entire coalition's operations in Iraq and Syria, UK personnel, working alongside allies, are coordinating over 70 nations' activity including over 1500 air strikes and surveillance conducted by the RAF in the UK's three year campaign.

News story: New agreement strengthens UK-Saudi Arabia Defence relationship

The governments of the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have announced a new Military and Security Cooperation Agreement, signed today in Jeddah by the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and the Saudi Crown Prince HRH Mohammed bin Salman.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon said:

The security of the GCC, of all Gulf Countries, is critical to UK

security. I am delighted to have signed today with HRH the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia a new Military and Security Cooperation Agreement between our two countries; this Agreement further cements the UK's long standing relationship with our key Gulf partner.

The agreement will promote cooperation between our two countries across the Defence and Security sectors, helping Saudi Arabia better protect her national security, including counter-terrorism, intelligence, training and education, medical services and logistics.

The agreement was signed during a wider visit to the Middle East, in which the Defence Secretary met British personnel serving in Iraq. He also visited the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, where the UK is working closely with US as the two largest contributors to the Coalition's military campaign.

During his time in Iraq, Sir Michael met with personnel from the Mercian Regiment, Engineer Regiment, Intelligence Corps, and Medical Regiments at Erbil and Taji where they have been involved in training Iraqi Security Forces, Kurdish Forces and Ninewah police.

Press release: Update on Government response to Hurricane Irma and Maria

We remain concerned that Hurricane Maria, which is strengthening as it approaches the Leeward Islands, could hit the UK's Overseas Territories in the Caribbean already affected as well as Montserrat.

FCO, DFID and military teams are working closely with the Governors in the Overseas Territories to ensure we are doing all we can to support the Governments of the islands affected.

Ministers discussed the preparations that have been put in place:

- Over 1300 military troops are staying put in the region – either on the islands already affected or in locations from where they will be able to readily deploy once Maria has passed.
- An additional 42 strong military resilience team has been deployed forward to British Virgin Islands prior to Hurricane Maria ready to support additional needs there.
- A military reconnaissance team has been put on standby to go to Montserrat to assess need if it is hit by Hurricane Maria.
- DFID has established logistics hubs in the Dominican Republic, Barbados and Antigua & Barbuda to ensure swift supply of relief items if required and is procuring additional supplies from Miami and Panama.

- HMs Ocean, which is due to arrive in the region at the end of the week, with 60 tonnes of DFID supplies on board will be deployed according to need once Hurricane Maria has passed.
- On the basis of the latest weather forecast, we are advising against all but essential travel to Montserrat and Anguilla and against all travel to the British Virgin Islands.
- All those in the region are urged to follow the advice of the local authorities.

To date, the UK government has allocated £57 million to the immediate response effort and agreed to match up to £3 million of public donations to the Red Cross appeal.

75 tonnes of DFID relief items have either arrived or been procured in the region including much needed food, water, nearly 3,000 shelter kits, 5,000 hygiene kits and 10,000 buckets.

40 tonnes of humanitarian aid has been distributed including over 4 tonnes of food and water on the British Virgin Islands; 720 litres of water to the Turks and Caicos Islands; and over 2 tonnes of building materials to Anguilla.

Read more about the [government's response and advice for people affected by Hurricane Irma](#).

News story: COBR meeting, 18 September 2017: Sir Alan Duncan's statement on Hurricanes Irma and Maria

Minister for the Americas Sir Alan Duncan said:

I'm back in the Crisis Centre because once again we've had another meeting of COBR, which is our emergency committee, because we're looking at an unprecedented sequence of events where having had so many hurricanes there's now a serious danger that we're going to get yet another.

So we are tracking Hurricane Maria and as you can see behind me we've got all the details to see where it's going, and we have to prepare for the worst but hope for the best. But one of the consequences of having these earlier hurricanes is we've got a lot of people and equipment in place.

So what we are very vigorously doing now is trying to anticipate where the damage might lie, and pre-positioning supplies and all of the equipment that can lead to the maximum resilience for these poor people who've been hit once and might be hit again.

So we are focusing of course on our Overseas Territories, which on this occasion might include Montserrat, which was lightly affected last time, but we are working around the clock to do our very best. And I'd urge everybody to follow the [travel advice](#) which we are regularly updating.

Be assured that we are doing our utmost to anticipate where help is needed and to make sure that if this hurricane hits people, and hits them again, we will be there to deliver the need that people will want.

[Sir Alan Duncan's statement](#)

Read the [latest updates on Hurricane Maria and Hurricane Irma](#).

[Press release: UK ready to respond to Hurricane Maria](#)

VIDEOS AND IMAGES – [view and download from Google drive](#)

The UK is in position to respond to further extreme weather in the Caribbean as the approaching Storm Maria is reclassified as a hurricane. The hurricane comes less than two weeks after Hurricane Irma, the most powerful hurricane ever recorded.

UK experts on the ground are working closely with national authorities to prepare for the approaching hurricane. Staff, military assets and relief supplies remain in the region and are ready to respond.

DFID, alongside other government departments, are already working on plans to deal with the hurricane's aftermath and are in close contact with Governor's offices. This includes efforts to get people to public shelters and secure loose materials and debris which could cause further injuries.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

We are under no illusions about the possible impact of Hurricane Maria and are taking every measure possible to prepare communities which have already been devastated by Hurricane Irma.

British troops, police and aid experts are working relentlessly to get help to the victims of Hurricane Irma. Those same individuals will now be tasked with also preparing for the impact of Maria, and to ensure support continues to get to those in need.

Chris Austin, the Head of the UK's Joint Task force, added:

We are planning for the unexpected, we are planning for the worst. We need to demonstrate our own resilience because there is a real chance that Hurricane Maria may significantly impact on our existing efforts to provide relief.

To date, 75 tonnes of DFID relief items have either arrived or been procured in the region including much needed food, water, nearly 3000 shelter kits, 5,000 hygiene kits and 10,000 buckets.

A further 60 tonnes of aid and reconstruction materials is on the way to the region on HMS Ocean, and DFID has chartered a number of flights and vessels which will transport additional relief items to the affected islands.

The UK is also leading the way in the long-term reconstruction of islands hit by Hurricane Irma. Speaking at the 72nd session of the United Nations along with Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, Ms Patel will say that whilst relief effort will go on, plans are being put in place to help rebuild on the islands, more resiliently than in the past, so a future hurricane won't be as devastating.

UK aid is already having a significant impact on many of the victims including Dorothy, a victim of Hurricane Irma in the British Virgin Islands, who said:

I was so happy when the soldier told me yesterday that my house was the first house that was fixed. He said that they had given people things to fix their houses but my house was the first house that a soldier came and fixed. I said God I'm blessed.

I was the happiest person on earth because I was very sad because I had lost everything. With whatever people give me, or what I can get myself, I'll fix up my place so it looks like somewhere I can live.

Notes to Editors

- Maria is currently a Category 1 hurricane with sustained winds of 80mph. The hurricane is expected to strengthen as it heads towards the Leeward Islands (Barbados). Hurricane warnings are in place for Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat and Anguilla.

- 32 aid experts, 1,300 military personnel and 59 police officers are working on the UK's response.
- So far the UK has committed nearly £60 million as part of its response to Hurricane Irma.

General media queries

Email

mediateam@dfid.gov.uk

Telephone

020 7023 0600

Follow the DFID Media office on Twitter – @DFID_Press