

News story: Ministers announce Ajax delivery milestone in Wales

The ministers viewed a demonstration of the new Ares protected mobility vehicle, part of the £4.5 billion Ajax family of armoured vehicles, at the factory in Merthyr Tydfil. The platforms will now continue going through a process known as Government Acceptance Training (GAT) before they are handed over to the Army.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

I am delighted to see the Ares in action. This vehicle, and the others in the Ajax family, will give the British Army a multi-role, mounted fighting power and reconnaissance capability fit for the future. We continue to invest in the best equipment for our Armed Forces, and I'm delighted to support such strong investment in Wales

The ministers were also given a tour of the facility which was only opened in 2016, bringing around 250 jobs to the area. The MOD is the biggest provider of apprenticeships in the UK and many of those the ministers met were manufacturing and mechanical apprentices, keen to talk about their work in the factory. The Ajax build programme is also sustaining 300 jobs at General Dynamics' nearby Oakdale site.



Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin met with apprentices working on the Ajax programme at the factory in Merthyr Tydfil.

Backed by a rising defence budget, last year the MOD spent £870 million with Welsh businesses, helping to build a stronger economy and keep Britain safe, with Ajax representing the biggest single order for a UK armoured vehicle in 30 years. MOD investment in Wales works out to £280 per capita.

Minister for the UK Government in Wales Guto Bebb, said:

The UK Government is delivering on its ambitions for economic growth in Wales and is helping to improve people's lives. Here in Merthyr Tyfil, General Dynamics are building next generation vehicles for the Army, providing jobs and skills that drive a stronger economy for Wales and for the UK.

The six variants in the Ajax programme – Athena, Ajax, Ares, Apollo, Atlas and Argus – are due to come into service in 2020, providing a full suite of medium armoured vehicles and capabilities. The 'GAT' process for the Ares platforms is now being undertaken by the Army, conducting acceptance for both the British Army and Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) at the facility in Merthyr Tydfil.

The range of Ajax variants will form a key component in the Army's modernised warfighting Division conducting full-spectrum and network-enabled operations. They will operate in combined-arms and multinational situations across a wide-range of future operating environments.

The news comes after several other milestones revealed at the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) exhibition last week. These included:

- The start of manned live firing trials for Ajax, including trials of the CT40 cannon, chain gun and smoke grenade launchers.
- The award of a subcontract to Raytheon UK for power switching systems.
- The first appearance at DSEI of digital training systems being delivered by subcontractor Lockheed Martin, including small arms handling and turret crew trainers.

Press release: Defence Secretary strengthens UK-Qatar Defence relationship

During a visit to the Gulf state today, Sir Michael Fallon and his Qatari counterpart, Khalid bin Mohammed al Attiyah, signed a Statement of Intent concerning Qatar's proposed purchase of 24 Typhoon aircraft.

The UK and Qatar share a close and longstanding Defence relationship, and today's Statement of Intent further reinforces this, deepening military cooperation between the two, and the opportunity to further enhance the security of all partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

After a number of years of negotiations between our two countries, I am delighted to have been able to sign today with Qatar's Defence Minister, this Statement of Intent on the purchase of 24 Typhoon aircraft by Qatar.

This will be the first major defence contract with Qatar, one of the UK's strategic partners. This is an important moment in our defence relationship and the basis for even closer defence co-operation between our two countries. We also hope that this will help enhance security within the region across all Gulf allies and enhance Typhoon interoperability across the GCC.

The security of the GCC, of all Gulf countries, is critical to the UK's own security.

The UK and Qatar share mutual Defence interests, including countering violent extremism, and ensuring peace and stability in the region.

Not only will the purchase of Typhoon aircraft further strengthen this strong

bilateral relationship, it will benefit Qatar's military capability, and increase security co-operation and interoperability between the UK and Qatar and other GCC Typhoon partners.

The Typhoon is a multi-role combat aircraft that has long-term potential to be at the forefront of air power for many years, and today's Statement of Intent demonstrates continued confidence in Typhoon and British manufacturing.

In addition to supporting Royal Air Force operations protecting the UK in the skies above Britain and globally, the Typhoon has already been purchased by eight nations around the world.

News story: UK Defence Chief appointed as NATO Chairman of Military Committee

UK Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach has been elected as the new NATO Chairman of the Military Committee, the Alliance's senior military officer.

Following a lengthy election campaign, Sir Stuart was today elected by other NATO Chiefs of Defence. It is anticipated that CDS will take over the role in June 2018.

Becoming the first Briton to hold the position for 25 years, this appointment will see Sir Stuart as NATO's senior military officer and act as the principal military advisor to the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

CDS Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

It is a huge honour to have been chosen to be the next Chairman of the Military Committee, one of the most important positions in NATO, central to European security.

I am excited to take on this next challenge at such an important time for NATO, at a time when the alliance must modernise to face new and ever adapting threats. Having spent the last year in the hugely rewarding position as Head of the UK's Armed Forces, I know I am ready to take on this challenge.

I would like to personally thank all of those who supported me through this campaign and voted for me in the election.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

That Air Chief Marshal Peach has been elected to this position by his fellow Chiefs of Defence across NATO underlines the esteem in which he is held by his peers.

No-one understands better the challenges that NATO faces and I am sure that he will serve the Alliance with the same professionalism and rigour with which he has furthered Britain's interests throughout his distinguished career.

While Sir Stuart's appointment is testament to his ability and achievements, it is also a demonstration of the leading role that the UK plays in NATO and the importance of the Alliance to the UK.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

I would like to congratulate Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, who has deservedly been appointed as the next Chairman of NATO's Military Committee.

Sir Stuart has been an exceptional Chief of Defence Staff, unwavering in his dedication and commitment to the UK's Armed Forces.

NATO is vital to Britain's security at a time of increasing threats across the globe. This appointment underlines our leadership role in NATO and I know Sir Stuart will relish these new challenges.

Outgoing Chairman of the Military Committee General Petr Pavel said:

I welcome the election of CDS Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach. I have no doubt his vast experience as Chief of Defence but also as a Military Committee member, will allow him to chair the Committee with great aptitude, ensuring the North Atlantic Council continues to receive sound and unfettered military advice from the Military Committee to guide their work. I wish him the best of luck in his future position.

Sir Stuart has been in the role of CDS since July 2016 part of his long and successful military career after joining the RAF in 1977. Highlights of his career include commanding the UK's intervention in Libya in 2011 and becoming the first Commander of UK Joint Forces in December that same year.

The appointment of CDS will reassure NATO allies across Europe in the face of an increasingly assertive Russia. The UK has been standing by allies in the region, leading an Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia and contributing troops in Poland, contributing to NATO Maritime Groups, committing Typhoons to Air Policing Missions in Romania, and training thousands of Armed Forces in Ukraine.

CDS will take over from General Petr Pavel, of the Czech Republic, who has been in the role since 2015.

[News story: Hurricane Irma: UK government response in numbers, 15 September 2017](#)

Military

Naval

- RFA Mounts Bay, pre-stationed in the region, provided initial assistance to Anguilla to clear the runway. It then continued to British Virgin Islands to establish security of supplies, and fix basic infrastructure and shelter to people. After travelling to US Virgin Islands to resupply, she returned to Anguilla to deliver reconstruction materials and arrived in the British Virgin Islands on Tuesday with further supplies and delivered humanitarian aid and disaster relief on Wednesday.
- On Tuesday night, HMS Ocean embarked on the 10-day journey to the Caribbean to provide further support to those affected by the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma. She is carrying 60 pallets of emergency relief stores to assist with the longer term recovery effort, including plywood, timber and construction equipment, as well as 200 pallets of Department for International Development (DFID) aid. This includes 5,000 hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and a torch, 10,000 buckets and 504,000 aquatabs.

Aircraft

- Over 200 personnel arrived on Tuesday 12 September, including stabilisation advisers, medical support and military.
- Over 200 military personnel arrived in Barbados on Wednesday 13 September
- We have 1 Wildcat Helicopter with Mounts Bay and 2 RAF Puma aircraft currently operating in the region.
- A third Puma helicopter has arrived in the Caribbean ready to assist in transporting personnel and aid, as well as a Voyager plane which transported 80 personnel from the Lead Commando Group.
- A C-130J and A400M has been making shuttles from Barbados to required destinations across the region to deliver key support, including British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Anguilla.
- One Antonov cargo plane with supplies arrived on Tuesday 12 September.
- The UK continues to work closely alongside international partners.

Following a request for assistance from French President Emmanuel Macron, an RAF C-17 arrived in France to provide heavy-lift support to French aid efforts in the Caribbean. Equipment and vehicles including a tipper truck, digger and a specialist bulldozer were loaded aboard for transportation to Guadeloupe, and the aircraft arrived yesterday

Personnel

- There are now over 1,100 UK military personnel in the Caribbean region.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) staff and consular expertise

- FCO Rapid Deployment Teams (including Red Cross support) are in the region in 8 locations (British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos Islands, Curacao, Puerto Rico, St Maarten, Guadeloupe, Barbados).
- Consular staff have been deployed to Curacao and Guadeloupe to help British nationals evacuated there and we now have a Rapid Deployment Team in Sint Maarten to provide further assistance.
- Consular teams in Cuba and the US are working closely with tour operators and local authorities to ensure British nationals are getting the support they need.
- The dedicated crisis hotline has so far taken almost 2,700 calls.
- Public Health England is sending 3 specialist staff to work with the Chief Medical Officers of the territories to help assess the risks to public health from the damaged infrastructure and disruption to health and social services.
- Lord Ahmad, Minister for the Caribbean, Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth, arrived in the Turks and Caicos Islands on Thursday 14 September. He met the Governor, Premier, and Deputy Premier.
- On Thursday 14 September the Foreign Secretary hosted discussions with the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the French Deputy Foreign Minister Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne on the response to Hurricane Irma.
- The Foreign and Development Secretaries will be leading an event at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Monday to discuss the impact of Hurricane Irma on the Caribbean, the response, and to discuss present and future support.
- Throughout we are working closely with the governments in the Overseas Territories, who are leading most areas of restoration. We are working closely with commercial partners in seeking local and regional solutions.

Police

- Over 60 UK police deployed to the region, in addition to 16 Caymanian police and 6 Bermudian Police

Aid

- £32 million already announced for disaster relief with a further

£25million committed.

- The government has made £2.5 million available to the Pan American Health Organisation to ensure critical health services are provided in the region, and to reduce the risk of disease spreading. This is part of the initial £32 million pledged.
- UK government will aid match public donations to the Red Cross appeal up to £3 million, and so far the British public have helped raise £1.3million, with the UK government matching the £650,000 of private donations.
- DFID Field Teams have been sent to British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, Antigua, Barbados and the Dominican Republic.
- Over 60 metric tonnes of DFID aid has now arrived and is being distributed across the region, including nearly 3,000 shelter kits, which can provide shelter for over 13,000 people and 4,990 solar lanterns (which can provide light and power for over 20,000 people), and over 8,000 buckets.
- HMS Ocean has been loaded with 5,000 hygiene kits, 10,000 buckets and 500,000 Aquatabs, all UK aid funded.
- 9 tonnes of food and water procured locally on Monday 11 September for onward delivery. Thousands more shelter kits and buckets are on the way from UK shortly.
- The UK has helped to distribute water bottles to 700 of the most vulnerable households affected by Hurricane Irma on the British Virgin Islands.
- The UK government is being supported by companies in the private sector, including:
 - Thomson and Thomas Cook who have delivered over 8,000 buckets on commercial flights
 - Virgin, who offered free transport to dispatch relief items including nearly 2,000 shelter kits, to Antigua on Tuesday.

Assisted departure

- The UK is working hard to provide support in every way it can. We are now making urgent arrangements to help the most vulnerable people affected in this crisis to leave the islands of British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, Anguilla and St Martin as soon as possible. FCO staff both in London and in the region are working with the governments of the territories and putting every effort into identifying and locating vulnerable people, both British and foreign nationals.
- We have arranged military-assisted departures for a number of eligible persons from the British Virgin Islands and are planning military-assisted departures for further vulnerable eligible persons in the other affected Overseas Territories.
- Military flights will then transfer these people to Barbados from where they will be able to access urgent medical treatment, if needed, and make arrangements for onward travel. To help those most vulnerable people, we are exceptionally waiving the fees for replacing emergency travel documents.
- We continue to identify and contact the most vulnerable affected persons, ahead of military flights from Grand Turk, Providenciales,

Tortola, and St Martin on 15 September

Breakdown by Islands

British Virgin Islands

Military

- Royal Marines from RFA Mounts Bay have got the airfield operating so we can get more aid and personnel in.
- Over 200 troops are on the ground – including engineers, medics and marines who are working with the local police to provide security

Police

- 16 Caymanian police and 6 Bermudian deployed to assist with security.
- There are currently 54 UK police officers on BVI to support law and order.
- An operation run by British Virgin Island and Cayman Island police officers, alongside the British Royal Marines and police, resulted in the capture of over 100 escaped criminals from Balsam Ghut prison.

Aid

- 5 tonnes of food and water has been transferred to the British Virgin Islands. A flight carrying 3 tonnes of food and water arrived in the British Virgin Islands. This much-needed aid has already been distributed on Tortola alongside 40 shelters in Road Town.
- 640 shelter kits are in transit via the RAF

FCO and consular support

- The UK is assisting the British Virgin Islands government in providing support to affected people of all nationalities.
- FCO media officer on the ground to support the Governor's office. Additional 4 consular officers and 1 IT support officer have been deployed.

Anguilla

Military

- RFA Mounts Bay delivered 6 tonnes of emergency aid; rebuilt and secured the Emergency Operations Centre; restored power to the hospital. Over 70 military personnel and 4 police officers are on the ground.

Aid

- We have delivered an initial 9 tonnes of relief aid, food and water.
- We have procured a generator to restore the water treatment plant and further generators are being procured to return power to public buildings.
- DFID has deployed a team that includes 2 humanitarian advisors to support relief efforts, working alongside 3 FCO officers.

Consular support

- Anguilla has not requested UK consular support. The local government is leading on this. One IT support officer on the ground.
- Cayman Islands government is arranging a 736-100 aircraft to deliver personnel and equipment (including medical equipment) to Anguilla.

Turks and Caicos

Military

- Over 120 military personnel are on the ground.
- 30 troops from the Bermudian regiment will arrive by Saturday.

Aid

- DFID has deployed a field team to support relief efforts. Two humanitarian advisors are already on the island.
- On Thursday 15 September a flight carrying aid reached Turks and Caicos Islands delivering over 150 shelter kits and 720 litres of water

Consular support

- The UK is assisting the Turks and Caicos Islands government in providing support to affected people of all nationalities.
- A 5 person RDT team has deployed to the Turks and Caicos Islands providing technical, media and consular support.
- DFID have joined an assessment led by the government of the Turks and Caicos Islands to determine priority needs.

St Martin

Consular support

- We have over 60 British nationals on both Dutch and French St Maarten including some requiring urgent medical attention. Over 50 British nationals have been assisted to leave.

USA

Consular support

- We are regularly updating our travel advice.
 - The Foreign Secretary has spoken to Governor of Florida Rick Scott.
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Speech: Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood DSEI Speech 2017

It's a real pleasure to be here today at DSEI. I've always enjoyed these things, I've come to them for many years. And anyone who has been in the Armed Forces and served, and I'm still in the reserves as well, you love wandering round and climbing on the equipment.

And if you've left the Armed Forces you're curious to see what will come around the corner next. It's interesting to see that some of the many things we are seeing are actually going to be used not by us, who are getting older in this audience, but by a fresher generation that is perhaps yet to even see it – the youngsters that we want to attract into the Armed Forces, and that is the theme I want to play on today.

In going round the stands I also noticed some interesting products. One stand is selling cross bows, for which there is a role I'm sure. It must be some special forces who can justify the need of that particular weapons system!

But it did remind me of how war has changed. The Longbow in Agincourt and the advent of that weapon changed the balance of war. After that everyone had the Longbow. There are many examples in military history where a key invention helped win a battle. The tank in the First World War, for example. And we see this in the modern context with cyber security coming in.

Perhaps it's too early to say but we are about to conduct from the SDSR a National Security Capability Review, simply because what has happened over the last couple of years with terrorism, where an individual is content to die to cause violence is forcing us to reconsider how we defend our assets and our people as well.

The scale of this event here reflects the determination and the commitment Britain has to play our role on the international stage. We are living in uncertain times but there are a few nations who want to step forward to change our world as a force for good, and we are one of them.

It doesn't matter what ID card you have in your back pocket but it's about whether you want to be part of that coalition of the willing in stepping forward to actually stand up to tyranny. So whether it's tackling ebola, or coming together to come to a solution on Iran, on the nuclear deal, Britain will continue to step forward and play our role.

This week you've heard plenty about the Government investing our £178 billion budget towards our armed forces and equipping them for these very challenges that we know about, and perhaps the ones we don't know about as well.

From F35 to the carrier, from Ajax to Apache, from Dragonfire lasers to Dreadnought submarines, this is the defence industry, moving together with our Armed Forces to create capability for the future.

We're also playing our part across the world using that equipment. We shouldn't forget that we have troops in South Sudan, Nigeria, the Gulf, in Iraq and over the skies of Syria, in Ukraine and doing training with our Allies across the world as well.

We step forward with our Armed Forces when others need our help. When the Blue Light services need support – Operation Temperer is when we provide that that help, flooding is another example.

So I'm displaying the wide variety of skill sets that anyone in uniform today will need to have to provide that versatility. There's plenty to do to make sure we equip our personnel. But also plenty to do to make sure that what we do make we export as well.

That has been reflected this week, the need to drive up productivity, drive down cost and increase innovation as well. We need to make sure we are making the best kit that we can, attracting the best people to fly, see or use them in any capacity.

The pace of change that is taking place is incredible. I always think that when i have to put on my ipad and create an Imovie with my son that he now knows more about how to use the ipad than I do. I'm sure many of you can appreciate that if you have small children yourselves. And looking at some of this equipment, even though I'm a reservist myself, I wouldn't know how to use them. And there's two sides to that concern. one is simply making sure we can attract the people who can use the equipment. But second of all there's a challenge for those of us who are in uniform to collect all that data and turn it into something that is useful.

Those of you who attended the land warfare conference this year, there was a very interesting study of the scale of data that is now being accumulated from the battlefield. It is enormous. If you have too much data you can't go through the process of turning it into useful intelligence and plans. And when there is pressure on you to make decisions you can see that we're getting to the point where we're overloaded with data as well.

The selection of data is ever so important. But what's also important is who we are recruiting to make sure they understand how to use that data.

I remember working with some Americans on an exercise and we were firing some rocket launchers. On the rocket launchers themselves the instructions were quite simple. It said on it, 'aim towards enemy'. And that was the sole instruction on this entire thing. And that simply makes sense. But some of the kit we're seeing today is far more complicated, required degrees and qualification that we need to look at and attract.

It reminds me of a story a Naval officer told me that equipment must be used in the right way because any ship can be used as a Minesweeper, once.

The vital task of recruiting and retaining is becoming ever more challenging as we adjust to society's changing expectations and the exponential advance of technology.

So today we're not just thinking about plugging critical skills gaps but how we can recruit people with a diversity of skills whether welders or cyber warriors at a time when the notion of a career for life has actually disappeared completely.

Today we're considering how best to retain and develop our nuclear scientists and Apache pilots when faced with face stiffer competition from other industries for their talent. And we have to acknowledge that is very much the case. We need to make sure we attract people in the right ways and there are three approaches I want to share with you.

MOD BROADENING ITS TALENT BASE

First, we're broadening our talent base. We can't afford to miss out on the talents of our people no matter their gender, sexuality, religion or social background. A diverse community brings a diversity of talent into our Armed Forces.

That's why, by 2020, we want 10 per cent of our workforce to hail from ethnic minority communities and 15 per cent to be women. We also want to make sure we extend opportunity to all. We're lifting the ban on women serving in close combat units in the British military. Opening up the Royal Armoured Corps and the RAF regiment to women. And next year the Royal Marines.

We're helping our young people get a better start in life, championing the apprenticeship programme. And I'm really proud to say that the Armed Forces are the country's largest provider with as many as 19,000 people on our books. I think that's a commendable achievement. But we want to increase that number by 50,000 by 2020.

All the while we're hoping to appeal to a broader range of people by introducing legislation to make service life far more flexible.

Making it easier for personnel to temporarily change the nature of their service to work part-time or be temporarily protected from deployment to support an individual's personal circumstances where operational need allows.

INDUSTRY

In wanting to attracting the right people, with the right skills, to the right jobs will mean more than just extra MOD effort, it's about drawing on our Whole Force. So we're using our Reserves to draw in the talent and skills that we need, whether in medicine, communications, or cyber skills, often in those areas where we don't have the necessary standard of support.

The people who possess these high level skills are likely to be more familiar with smart phones than smart bombs. But that shouldn't mean to say they can't have a role, even for a short space of time in helping us do our job.

This is just a reflection of our need to change our outlook on how we use people and use civilian life.

A broader minded perspective is also shaping our approach to plugging the

skills gap which we have to admit is very much there.

Take engineering. We recognise it's in the mutual interest of industry and government to find individuals who have these critical skills. So we're looking at creating skills passports, enabling those with the right talents to move seamlessly between government and industry.

At the same, we've appointed an engineering champion to work with industry partners across the Defence enterprise to help make better use of the existing talent in the workforce.

Meanwhile, under the Defence Growth Partnership we're looking at how we can make careers within MOD more rewarding creating a new programme to train our staff to support exports and future trading relationships.

I know Dave Armstrong will set-out more details later on.

But the headlines involve the creation of new qualifications in export and International trade, a common industry and government career pathway and secondments to allow individuals to develop their skills and gain key experience across both industry and government.

I hope those of you who are in industry will lend us your support and encourage that to be done to support the Armed Forces covenant. The commitment that we've created between business and the Armed Forces to help recruitment and retention of Reservists, the employment of veterans and service spouses/partners and the Cadets movement with supportive HR policies. This has proved very successful indeed and we're almost up to our 2000th company signing up to our Armed Forces Covenant and I think that's a great tribute to the work that's been done.

PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

Finally we've recognised that building the workforce of the future demands collaboration not just across defence but across Government and across the public sector as well.

So we're currently working with the departments of Education and Business to reinvigorate young people's interest in science, maths, engineering, and technology.

At the same time we're working with academia to make sure to tell our defence story and show it for what it really is, a dynamic place of enterprise, of adventure, a place where you get to see the world, and get to make a difference.

Britain has always been blessed with brilliant talent. From John Harrison to Alan Turing to Sir Tim Berners Lee. In Defence it was Air Commodore Frank Whittle who invented the turbo jet. It was British engineer Robert Whitehead who first designed a torpedo launched from a ship underwater. It was Squadron Commander Edwin Dunning who landed a Sopwith Pup on HMS Furious 100 years ago completing the first successful aircraft landing on a moving ship.

And today our people have built the two mightiest carriers this nation has ever seen, satellites that can land on the back of asteroids, lasers that can strike targets 6 km away.

Our challenge is to fire up the ambition of the average 12-year old with the world beating record breaking kit on display in the room today, kit that can help us dive deeper, fly faster, reach higher.

CONCLUSION

So Britain isn't just building the technology of the future, we're building the workforce of the tomorrow. And we're calling on the next generation of innovative heroes to come forward, for it will be on the back of the next Whittles and the next Berners-Lees that our future security, prosperity and reputation, is founded.

The conduct of war, as I mentioned at the beginning, is changing again, as the fourth phase of the industry revolution takes hold, Britain doesn't just want to be part of it, we very much want to lead it.