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The squadron which will train future Royal Air Force and Royal Navy F-35B Lightning pilots at RAF Marham has been announced as 207 Squadron.

The announcement was made during a visit to RAF Marham by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, to view the progress being made to prepare for the arrival of the fifth generation fighter at the Norfolk base next summer.



Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

"I am very pleased to announce that the Operational Conversion Unit for the UK's F-35B Lightning fleet will be 207 Squadron. The squadron has a proud and distinguished history, not only as an RAF squadron but as one of the earliest squadrons of the Royal Naval Air Service which, with the Royal Flying Corps, came together to form the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918.

"Preparations for the arrival of the first UK Lightnings next year are progressing well. The investment of £250m in infrastructure here at RAF Marham will ensure the station has the facilities to match this world-class aircraft when it arrives next year. As the home of the UK Lightning Force the station will be at the heart of UK airpower for decades to come."



Admiral Sir Philip Jones First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff said:

"207 Squadron will play an important part in the future of both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, and rightly reflects our shared aviation heritage. I was in the United States earlier this month to meet some of the pilots and maintainers who are getting to grips with the F-35B. They're working brilliantly together and today I've seen the same sense of purpose from those readying RAF Marham for their arrival.

"HMS Queen Elizabeth is the first carrier in the world designed from the outset to operate a fifth generation combat aircraft. Crucially, a second ship – HMS Prince of Wales – is on its way, which will give the UK a continuous Carrier Strike capability. I have every expectation that, in time, this combination of carriers and jets will represent a powerful and important strategic conventional deterrent."



The new infrastructure currently being built at RAF Marham includes vertical

landing pads, the renewal of runways and taxiways and new technical and training facilities, offices and hangars.

The first Lightnings will arrive at RAF Marham in summer next year when the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy pilots currently training in the United States, will return as 617 Squadron, the Dambusters. The Lightning OCU will stand up as 207 Squadron on 1 July 2019.

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News story: Defence research and exports support UK jobs

Mrs Baldwin visited Yeovil today to mark a year of the innovative Strategic Partnering Arrangement between Leonardo Helicopters and the MOD. The Arrangement was signed in July 2016 and lays out shared commitments to cost effectiveness, jobs, and exports, recognising the key role both parties play in building national prosperity through exports, sustaining employment and specialist skills, and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the supply chain.

Over the course of a year, the MOD has placed millions of pounds worth of contracts with Leonardo, supporting hundreds of jobs, boosting exports, and driving technological innovation. In January 2017 the MOD signed a £271 million five-year deal with Leonardo to support the UK's world-leading Wildcat helicopters, safeguarding hundreds of UK jobs.

Most recently, in June 2017, the MOD announced a £260 million contract to supply the UK's Armed Forces with the next generation of secure Identify Friend or Foe technology. The work will sustain around 150 jobs at Leonardo's sites in Luton, the West of England, Edinburgh and across the wider UK supply chain.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin added:

Our Strategic Partnering Arrangement with Leonardo is a fantastic example of the contribution that Defence makes to the UK economy: creating hundreds of jobs, attracting millions in investment, and boosting UK exports across the world.

Backed by our rising defence budget and strategic engagement on exports, we are determined to deliver the high-wage, high-skills jobs of the future, making the UK one of the

most competitive places in the world to innovate, build business and help deliver security.

During her visit, Mrs Baldwin was briefed on the progress being made on the second phase of a jointly-funded £8 million Rotary Wing Unmanned Air System (RWUAS) concept demonstrator; cross-Government efforts to support the export of the Wildcat AW159 and Merlin AW101 helicopters; and company plans for continuous improvement and to underpin design engineering capabilities that are vital to ensuring safety and airworthiness.

Leonardo Helicopters make a significant contribution to the economy in the South West and developing plans would see the site in Yeovil become the heart of an aerospace technology centre. The MOD anticipates spending some £3 billion with Leonardo Helicopters over the coming decade, with work on the future coordination of strategic exports between the UK Government and Italy being led by the Department for International Trade.

[News story: @MODPolice Twitter launch](#)

The new MDP Twitter account can be found on the handle [@MODPolice](#).

This will supplement our existing [Ministry of Defence Police](#) (MDP) pages on the GOV.UK website, our [recruitment website](#) and our [Facebook page](#).

Speaking on the launch, MDP Deputy Chief Constable Andy Adams said:

Our Twitter account will provide us with a primary communication tool in order to raise public awareness of the MDP and enhance their understanding of what we do and the specialist policing services and capabilities that we provide.

It will also support us in connecting with the defence communities, stakeholders and customers that we serve by furnishing us with a news feed for regular messaging on continuous vigilance and success stories.

In the event of an operational incident Twitter will also present the means for us to communicate quickly and effectively with stakeholders, customers, staff, the public and the media.

Twitter will be used to support and promote MDP policing operations and wider force initiatives, including the ongoing roll-out of Project Servator.

Assistant Chief Constable Paul McLaughlin comments:

The launch of the MDP Twitter account marks a progressive step in enhancing the digital footprint of the force. Twitter will play an essential and vital role in supporting Project Servator.

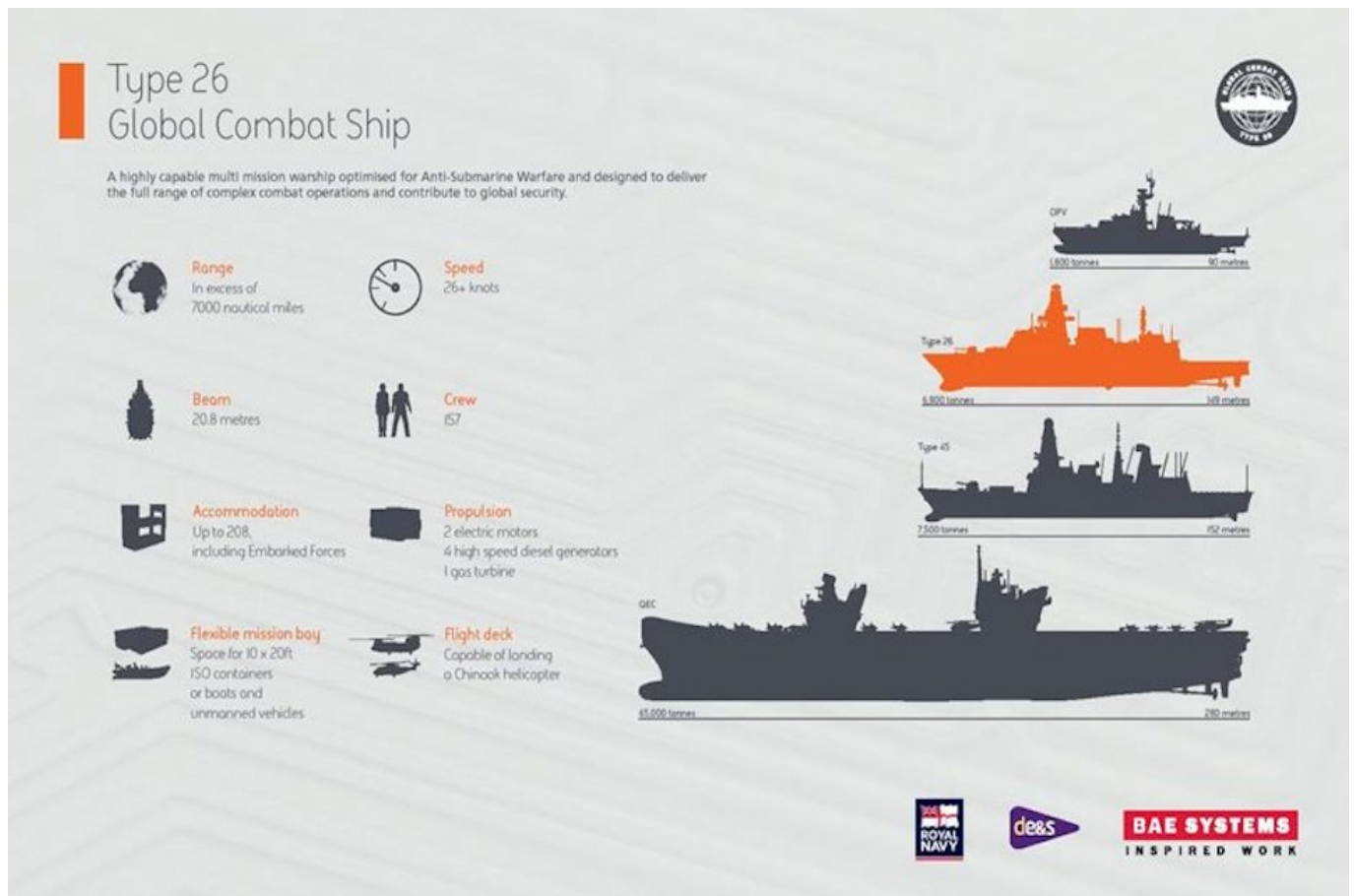
News story: Multi-billion pound defence deal secures thousands of UK jobs

Manufacture of the first three of these new highly capable warships will secure approximately 1700 skilled shipbuilding jobs in Scotland and 1700 jobs throughout the supply chain across Britain until 2035.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon said:

The Type 26 Frigate is a cutting-edge warship, combining the expertise of the British shipbuilding industry with the excellence of the Royal Navy. We will cut steel on the first ship later this month – a hugely significant milestone that delivers on our commitment to maintain our global naval power. These ships will be a force to be reckoned with, there to protect our powerful new carriers and helping keep British interests safe across the world.

Backed by a rising defence budget and a £178bn Equipment Plan, the Type 26 programme will bring vast economic benefits to Scotland and the wider UK. The contract is structured to ensure value for taxpayers' money and, importantly, now designed to protect them from extra bills from project overrun. The investment will secure hundreds of skilled jobs at BAE Systems on the Clyde for the next twenty years, and thousands of jobs in the supply chain across Britain.



The Royal Navy's new Type 26 frigate.

These world-class warships will protect the nation's nuclear deterrent and the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers, the first of which, HMS Queen Elizabeth, has recently taken to sea for the first time. The ships specialise in anti-submarine warfare, protecting the UK's overseas territories and interests across the globe. The flexible design will allow the capabilities to be adapted throughout its lifespan to counter future threats.

The deal also reaffirms the commitment made by the Government in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR15) to build eight Type 26 ships. The contract for the second batch of five ships is expected to be negotiated in the early 2020s, paving the way to sustain further jobs in Scotland and across the wider supply chain for many years to come. The Type 26 programme will secure the long term future of the Scottish shipbuilding industry.

Admiral Sir Philip Jones, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, said:

For an island nation, dependent on maritime trade, a strong Royal Navy is essential for our national security and economic prosperity. Today there are over 500 submarines in the world operated by 40 navies. As one of the quietest and most potent submarine-hunters of any Navy, the Type 26 will have a crucial role to play to protect the nuclear deterrent and our two new aircraft carriers.

Although designed to fight and win in the most demanding scenarios, they will also work alongside our international partners to protect and promote the United Kingdom's interests around the world.



A Computer Generated Image of the Royal Navy's new Type 26 frigate.

The Type 26 will be the most advanced anti-submarine warfare ship in its class around the world. The MOD is exploring potential export opportunities where there is strong interest from international customers.

The contract is specifically structured to motivate both sides to deliver to a successful outcome where both parties share in the pain and gain in the delivery of the programme. This will deliver better value for money for the UK taxpayer.

The MOD spent £1.5 billion with Scottish businesses last year and supports 9,700 jobs across Scotland. The Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth Carriers are being built in Rosyth and the new Offshore Patrol Vessels are under construction in Govan and Scotstoun ahead of this summer's Type 26 Frigate steel cut.

News story: Sweden and Finland join UK-led response force

Sweden and Finland have joined a UK-led high-readiness force tasked with tackling threats and responding to crises around the world.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon welcomed the two Scandinavian nations to the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) during an official signing event at Karlberg Castle, in Stockholm, alongside Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist and Finnish Defence Minister Jussi Niinisto.

Launched in 2015, the joint force has continued to develop and will become fully operational next year, which could mean the mobilisation of 10,000 troops to respond quickly to a range of issues, using combat power, deterrence or humanitarian support.

Spearheaded by the UK, Sweden and Finland make the JEF a nine-nation-strong pool of forces, alongside Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Norway. The JEF builds on many years of experience between the UK and these countries.

During the Ebola outbreak a Dutch ship worked alongside the Royal Navy, and the Norwegians provided twice weekly C130 flights to support the UK response to the crisis. This example of joint work is a clear example of the kind of humanitarian support the JEF will be able to provide.

The JEF concept is distinct from existing international organisations, and can operate alone, but has the ability to integrate with other multinational high-readiness forces, and can support NATO, EU, and UN forces.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

In an uncertain world, the UK is spearheading this high-readiness joint force, which will help us tackle growing threats. Together, we pack a more powerful punch.

This is a Force of Friends, and alongside Sweden, Finland, and our other partners in this force, we remain committed to security, in Europe and around the world.

The UK's contribution to the JEF will include lead commando, airborne, armoured, aviation, and air and maritime task groups.

The first exercise took place last year at RAF St Mawgan, in Cornwall. Joint Venture 16 involved 1,600 UK personnel in the JEF force headquarters, known as the Standing Joint Force Headquarters and commanded by a British 2* general, which was put to the test in a dynamic fictional scenario.

Joint Venture 17 is already underway, with a similar number of personnel taking part from the Royal Navy, Army, and RAF, and is testing the UK's operational level command and control, using force elements from JEF partner nations.

These exercises, and future JEF training and operations, enable the nine partner nations to train, integrate, share knowledge, skills and resources.

Sir Michael added:

We are stronger together, and, this joint force clearly shows Britain is standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our international allies.

During the signing event, the Defence Secretary's Swedish and Finnish counterparts underlined their commitment to working with the other JEF members on cooperative European security and managing crises.

Minister for Defence of Sweden Peter Hultqvist said:

The JEF will complement our bilateral and multilateral cooperation focusing both on our close vicinity and a broader global agenda.

Minister of Defence of Finland Jussi Niinisto said:

Both Sweden and the UK are important partners for Finland and joining JEF gives our cooperation yet another dimension. We believe that the cooperation will enhance our national defence capability and deepen cooperation with our partners.