

Fact Sheet 14: Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA)

The Review ensures that Defence will contribute effectively to civil crises and emergencies in the UK, balancing this requirement against other Tasks

The ability of civil authorities, such as local authorities and the Police, to respond to a wide range of potential crises (from widespread flooding to a major terrorist event in the UK) has been strengthened significantly in recent years. However, military assets may sometimes be required to provide assistance in specific circumstances. This is known as Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA). The Review has ensured that the right balance is struck between making forces available to provide this aid and other Military Tasks, both at home and overseas.

Aid is provided at national and local levels, drawing on specialist military capabilities and the availability of military personnel around the country

Military aid is usually called upon to provide capabilities which the relevant civil authorities do not have, or cannot generate in sufficient quantity in response to an emergency. At the national level, military personnel work with colleagues across relevant Government departments to plan for and act in the event of an emergency. At the regional and local level, support is provided through the Joint Regional Liaison Officers from all three Services and the Army's Regional Brigades. Military support is currently being provided in preparation for the Olympics, and might also include the provision of search and rescue, bomb disposal, and counter-terrorism capabilities.

Recent examples include responding to flooding in Cumbria and recovering UK travellers stranded by Icelandic volcanic ash

When an Icelandic volcano erupted earlier this year, UK airspace was closed for five days, stranding thousands of people abroad. It also prevented the planned return of military personnel coming back to the UK after six months of operations in Afghanistan. The MOD responded by sending HMS Albion to Santander in Spain to pick up the returning military personnel as well as a further 265 stranded UK travellers, returning them all safely to the UK.



UK travellers board HMS Albion



Volcanic ash plume over the UK

Recent examples (continued)

In November 2009, exceptionally prolonged and heavy rainfall led to severe flooding across Cumbria. The military response included search and rescue helicopters, which took part in a marathon rescue operation lasting over eleven hours. 67 people across four locations in Cockermouth and the surrounding area were rescued.

Following the flooding many bridges were washed away or destroyed and the town of Workington was cut in two. 200 Army specialists from the Royal Engineers and other Regular and Territorial Army personnel, including from the local Regional Brigade, built a temporary replacement bridge – in poor weather conditions – to reconnect the two halves of the town.



Royal Engineers' temporary bridge reunites Workington

The Strategic Defence and Security Review will strengthen existing arrangements to improve the military contribution to national crisis management

To further improve the effectiveness of existing military support we will strengthen central Government's Crisis Management Capability. This will bring together civil servants and police with new permanently based Defence specialists in the Cabinet Office. The strengthened Crisis Management Capability will enhance the Government's ability to prepare, plan and manage its response to domestic security crises.

We will also establish a multi-agency National Maritime Information Centre, with the Armed Forces playing a principal role. This will, for the first time, provide the UK with a comprehensive picture of potential threats to maritime security in UK national waters.

Our regional structures will continue to work with local authorities to ensure that appropriate military support is available where it is required. We will also maintain an ability to augment these regional structures and responses quickly should the need arise.

These actions will deliver a more integrated and more effective response to crises at national and regional level across the UK.