



This is an annual publication which provides information on the numbers and types of equipment and formations of the UK Armed Forces. Equipment and formations statistics have been presented based on the UK Armed Forces components: land, maritime and air. Also provided are data sourced from the Department for Transport (DfT) on militarily-useful British-registered vessels.

Data is provided as at 1 April each year (except DfT data which is as at 31 December each year).

## Key Points and Trends

### Maritime

- At 1 April 2017 there were **11** submarines and **73** vessels in the UK Armed Forces (**64** vessels in the Royal Navy Surface Fleet; **nine** vessels in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary). The number of submarines is in line with Joint Force 2025 commitments set out in the Ministry of Defence 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

### Land

- In the UK Armed Forces, there were a total of **4098** Key Land Platforms at 1 April 2017, consisting of:
  - **1763** Armoured Personnel Carriers
  - **1907** Protected Mobility Vehicles
  - **428** Armoured Fighting Vehicles.
- This is a total decrease of 31 platforms since 2016, largely due to a reduction in the number of Mastiff Protected Mobility Vehicles (from 421 in 2016 to 396).
- At 1 April 2017, there were **31** Regular Army Battalions in the Infantry and **14** Army Reserves Battalions.

### Air

- At 1 April 2017 there were **714** Fixed-wing and **353** Rotary-wing aircraft in the UK Armed Forces. The proportions of 'in service' Fixed-wing and Rotary-wing aircraft are similar to those observed in 2016.
- Following the withdrawal of Black Hornet from service during 2016/17, there were **281** Unmanned Aircraft Systems as at 1 April 2017, a 37% reduction since last year.

**Responsible statistician:** WDS Head of Branch Tel: 030 679 84458 Email: [DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk](mailto:DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk)

**Further information/mailling list:** [DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk](mailto:DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk)

**Background quality report:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2017>

Would you like to be added to our **contact list**, so that we can inform you about updates to these statistics and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing [DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk](mailto:DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk)

## Contents

Introduction..... Page 2

### Key Findings:

Maritime Equipment and Formations ..... Page 3

Land Equipment and Formations .....Page 4

Air Equipment and Formations .....Page 5

Further Information .....Page 6

Glossary.....Page 8

Excel tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2017>

## Introduction

---

This is an annual publication which provides information on the numbers and types of equipment and formations of the UK Armed Forces. Equipment and formations statistics have been presented based on the UK Armed Forces components: maritime, land and air. Statistics are also provided on militarily-useful British-registered vessels (including passenger, tanker and fishing vessels).

Prior to 2016, equipment and formations statistics were published in the National Statistics publication 'Formations, Vessels and Aircraft'<sup>1</sup>. An internal review was held during March 2016, followed by a six week public consultation<sup>2</sup> which aimed to identify whether the definitions, terminology and coverage of this publication still met users' needs. Based on consultation feedback, a number of changes were made to the publication, including a name change to better reflect the publication's content.

The term 'equipment' for the purposes of this publication refers collectively to vessels, submarines, vehicles, aircraft, artillery and engineering equipment pieces.

Data have been obtained from various Ministry of Defence sources: Navy Command, Army Equipment Department, Army Organisation Branch, Air Command and Joint Helicopter Command (JHC). Data on militarily-useful British-registered vessels has been provided by Department for Transport. Further information about the data sources and data quality can be found in the Background Quality Report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2017>

### A National Statistics publication

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/formations-vessels-and-aircraft-statistics-index>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-mods-formations-vessels-and-aircraft-national-statistics-publication>

## Key Findings: Maritime Equipment & Formations

This section provides key findings on the UK Armed Forces Maritime equipment, and formations which are all, or primarily sea-based, in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

### Submarines

There were 11 submarines in the Royal Navy Submarine Service as at 1 April 2017, consisting of:



**Nuclear Submarines: 7**



**Ballistic Nuclear Submarines: 4**

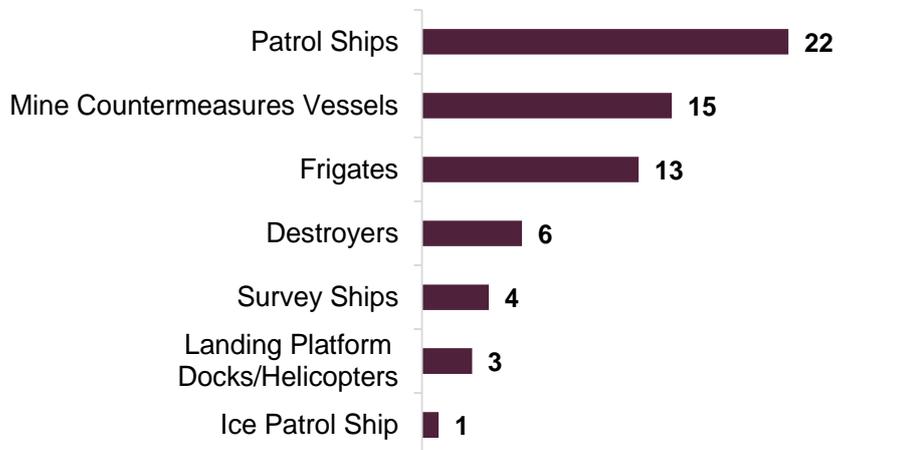
These figures are in line with Joint Force 2025 commitments set out in the Ministry of Defence (MOD)'s Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)<sup>3</sup>.

### Vessels

At 1 April 2017 there were 73 vessels in the UK Armed Forces: 64 vessels in the Royal Navy and nine in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA). This is a reduction of three vessels since 2016 following the withdrawal of three RFA vessels: two Small Fleet Tankers and one Forward Repair Ship (RFA Diligence).

Patrol Ships (18 Inshore and four Offshore) make up the largest proportion of Royal Navy vessels, with 22, as shown in Chart 1 below.

**Chart 1 – Numbers of vessels in the Royal Navy as at 1 April 2017**



Source: Table 1

The total number of Destroyers and Frigates (19) as at 1 April 2017 are also in line with SDSR Joint Force 2025 commitments.

### Maritime Formations

The Royal Navy has four Fleet Diving Squadrons which incorporates Fleet, Southern, and Northern Diving Groups and an Operational Support Unit. The Royal Navy also has 15 Reserve Units. The Royal Marines consists of: 1 Assault Group, 3 Commando Brigade, the Royal Marine Band Service and the Commando Training Centre.

**Table 1** provides further statistics on Maritime vessels and submarines.

**Table 2** provides further breakdowns of Maritime formations.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-strategy-and-strategic-defence-and-security-review-2015>

## Militarily-useful British-registered vessels

Militarily-useful vessels are defined as vessels that could be requisitioned in appropriate circumstances in support of the UK Armed Forces.

Based on previous years' data there had been a decreasing trend in the total number of British-registered passenger, tanker and dry cargo vessels. However, there has been an increase by one vessel as at 31 December 2016 since the same point in 2015.

The number of British-registered merchant specialist and fishing vessels continues to decrease, falling by two to 80 vessels since 31 December 2015.

This reduction may be due in part to: a reduction in vessels registered under the British flag or the complete loss of vessels e.g. vessels being scrapped.

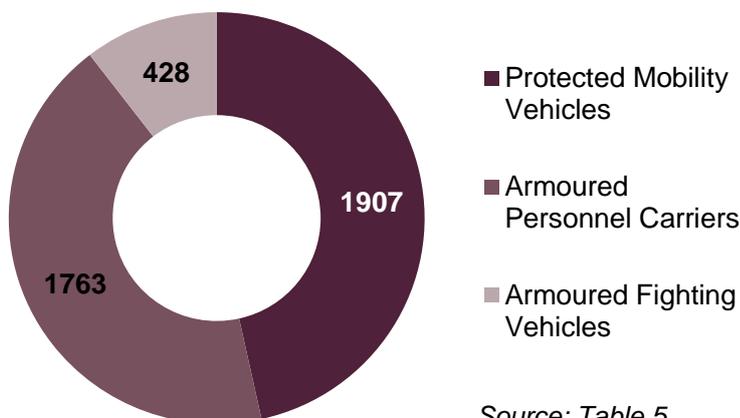
**Tables 3 and 4** provide further breakdowns of militarily-useful, British-registered vessels.

## Key Findings: Land Equipment & Formations

This section provides key findings on the UK Armed Forces Land equipment, and formations which are primarily land-based, in the Army.

### Land Equipment

In the UK Armed Forces, there were a total of 4,098 Key Land Platforms as at 1 April 2017, a reduction of 31 platforms from 4,129<sup>4</sup> in 2016.



Source: Table 5

### Protected Mobility Vehicle:

A wheeled armoured personnel carrier (APC) serving as a military patrol, reconnaissance or security vehicle.

The majority of Key Land Platforms at 1 April 2017 were Protected Mobility Vehicles (47% of the total) and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC; 43%), with Armoured Fighting Vehicles making up the other 10%.

The most common types of land platforms in the UK Armed Forces are:

- Bulldog (APC) - 895
- Warrior (APC) - 769

The UK Armed Forces had 250 Artillery and 162 Engineering Equipment pieces at 1 April 2017. Just over half of the 250 Artillery pieces are L118 105mm Light Guns.

<sup>4</sup> The previously published figure for the total number of Key Land Platforms in 2016 has been revised from 4137 to 4129 due to a duplication error. For further information see the supplementary Excel tables.

## Land Formations

The Army can be split into three main component parts: Combat Forces, Combat Support Forces and Combat Service Support.

The Combat Forces includes the Infantry and Royal Armoured Corps. At 1 April 2017 there were 31 Regular Army and 14 Army Reserves Infantry Battalions, and 13 Royal Armoured Corps Regiments (nine Regular; four Reserves). This is unchanged from 2016.

**Table 6** provides further breakdowns of Army formations (excluding the Army Air Corps which are included in Table 9).

## Key Findings: Air Equipment & Formations

This section provides key findings on the UK Armed Forces aircraft, and formations which are primarily air-based, as at 1 April 2017.

### Fixed-wing Aircraft



**Typhoons are the most common type of Fixed-wing platform with 137 aircraft at 1 April 2017.**

The UK Armed Forces had 714 Fixed-wing platforms at 1 April 2017, a decrease of ten since 2016. Of the 492 Fixed-wing aircraft (for which 'in service' figures are recorded<sup>5</sup>), 309 (63%) are 'in service', a similar proportion as in 2016 (62%).

**'In service' Fixed-wing platforms:**

All aircraft in active fleet management, which can include aircraft in storage (to preserve airframe hours).

### Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Following the withdrawal of Black Hornet from service during 2016/17, there were 281 Unmanned Aircraft Systems as at 1 April 2017, a 37% reduction since 2016. The majority of these Systems are Desert Hawk-III (221).

### Rotary-wing Aircraft



**Chinook are the most common type of Rotary-wing platform with 60 aircraft at 1 April 2017.**

The UK Armed Forces had 353 Rotary-wing platforms at 1 April 2017. Despite an increase in the number of Wildcat Mk2 helicopters (from 21 to 28), there has been an overall reduction of 19 in the total number of platforms since 2016. Of the 308 Rotary-wing aircraft (for which 'in service' figures are recorded<sup>5</sup>), 227 (74%) were in 'service'<sup>6</sup>, the same proportion as in 2016.

**Table 7 and 8** provide further Fixed- and Rotary-wing aircraft statistics.

**Table 9** provides further breakdowns of Air formations.

## Air Formations

At 1 April 2017, there were 81 squadrons in the Royal Air Force, an increase of one since 2016.

The Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm consists of 16 squadrons and five Headquarters, whilst the Army Air Corps incorporates five Regiments (four Regular; one Reserve).

<sup>5</sup> 'In service' figures are not available for platforms operated under contracts. See accompanying Excel Tables for further information.

<sup>6</sup> The definition of 'in service' differs slightly for aircraft owned by Navy Command.

## Further information

---

### Definitions

Definitions and further information about the types and categories of UK Armed Forces equipment and formations can be found on each of the Services' websites:

Royal Navy & Royal Marines: [www.royalnavy.mod.uk](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk)  
Army: [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk)  
Royal Air Forces: [www.raf.mod.uk](http://www.raf.mod.uk)

Some additional definitions have been provided in the Glossary on page 8 for additional information.

### Rounding

All figures in this report are actuals and have not been rounded.

### Revisions

Corrections to the published statistics will be made if errors are found, or if figures change as a result of improvements to methodology or changes to definitions. When making corrections, we will follow the Ministry of Defence [Statistics Revisions and Corrections Policy](#). All corrected figures will be identified by the symbol "r", and an explanation will be given of the reason for and size of the revision. Corrections which would have a significant impact on the utility of the statistics will be corrected as soon as possible, by reissuing the publication. Minor errors will also be corrected, but for convenience these corrections may be timed to coincide with the next annual release of the publication.

Following the 2017 data collection process, a number of revisions have been made to the 2016 land equipment figures due to duplication errors in the administrative data. Further information is available in the supplementary Excel tables.

## Further Information (continued)

---

### Contact Us

Defence Statistics welcome feedback on our statistical products. If you have any comments or questions about this publication or about our statistics in general, you can contact us as follows:

**Defence Statistics (WDS)**

Telephone: 030 679 84458

Email: [DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk](mailto:DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Pubs@mod.uk)

If you require information which is not available within this or other available publications, you may wish to submit a Request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to the Ministry of Defence. For more information, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/the-freedom-of-information-act>

**If you wish to correspond by mail, our postal address is:**

Defence Statistics (WDS)  
Ministry of Defence, Main Building  
Floor 3 Zone M  
Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2HB

For general MOD enquiries, please call: 020 7218 9000

## Glossary

---

<b>Ballistic Nuclear Submarine</b>	A Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear (SSBN) is a nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered submarine.
<b>In Service</b>	The definition of 'in service' varies across equipment types and between Services. To assist interpretation, a definition of 'in service' has been provided in the footnotes for each table where 'in Service' figures have been used. Note that in service figures are not available for platforms operated under contracts. See footnotes for further information.
<b>Key Land Platforms</b>	Collective term used for Protected Mobility Vehicles, Armoured Personnel Carriers and Armoured Fighting Vehicles.
<b>Militarily-useful British-registered vessels</b>	Vessels that could be requisitioned in appropriate circumstances in support of the Armed Forces. It is required by international law for all merchant ships to be registered in a country, called its flag state. Flag refers to the country in which the ship is registered. Other types of ship might also be used in certain cases. Foreign-flagged but British-owned ships could also be requisitioned in certain circumstances.
<b>Nuclear submarine</b>	A Ship Submersible Nuclear (SSN) is a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine.
<b>Protected Mobility Vehicle</b>	A wheeled Armoured Personnel Carrier serving as a military patrol, reconnaissance or security vehicle. Protected Mobility vehicles were developed in response to the threats of modern counter insurgency warfare, with an emphasis on Ambush Protection and Mine-Resistance. Until recently these vehicles were termed 'Protected Patrol Vehicles'.