

DESIDER

AN INSIDE LOOK AT DEFENCE EQUIPMENT & SUPPORT



**PROTECTING OUR NATION, OUR TERRITORIES AND OUR ALLIES
TODAY, TOMORROW, TOGETHER**

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The Executive Lens

(with Lt General Simon Hamilton)

I like to think of the summer as a good time for reflection. It's a chance to look back and look ahead to an autumn of important activity.

We laid our Annual Report and Accounts for 2024/25 before Parliament this month. This year's report paints a picture of continued strong performance, with DE&S meeting 90 percent of our strategic procurement and support milestones, even at a time of increased demand from our front-line mission partners.

Our teams awarded over 900 new contracts and managed over 700 projects, securing capabilities for our armed forces and growth for the UK. This includes delivery of the final 12 out of 50 Apache AH-64E attack helicopters and the 95th Ajax armoured vehicle, as well as the rapid procurement of a new mine-hunting vessel HM Stirling Castle, and extensive support to NATO Exercise Steadfast Defender 25.

We have been able to deliver our core programme of work while at the same time implementing the most significant improvements to our ways of working for over a decade. Thanks to the hard work of our people, and contributions from colleagues across Defence, in March 2025 we launched our new operating model.

This is already helping us free up our people's time by reducing bureaucracy and duplication, and empowering them to deliver more for our armed forces. There is plenty to be proud of, but a great deal of work still to be done in the months ahead to embed the operating model.

It is important that we learn from our experiences. The Annual Report highlights the external challenges that DE&S faced in delivering complex programmes against forceful headwinds, including rising global costs for materials, stretched supply chains and unexpected technical issues, as well as difficult decisions regarding resource priorities. Overcoming these obstacles is not easy and we continue to work with our suppliers to establish recovery pathways.

DE&S and our partners across Defence are beginning to enact the recommendations of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR). The SDR envisions a more lethal, more integrated fighting force, equipped with war-fighting readiness and supported by advanced digital capabilities, including autonomous effectors and AI-powered sensors.

The work of making that vision into a reality began with the Defence Reform programme and the formation of the National Armaments Director (NAD) Group. While still 'under development', I have high hopes for the NAD Group.

This is collaboration at an unprecedented scale, involving around 27,000 people. As a group, we have the levers to design and buy better, exploit new technology and support our front-line personnel. The positive impact of aligning multiple organisations with such varied specialisms – from innovation to international collaboration – under a single banner will be powerful.

The NAD Group represents a sea-change in how we work with partners across the defence enterprise. We will join with UK academia and industry, leveraging early market insight and emerging innovation, to solve the challenges facing our armed forces. We will support greater investment in our industrial base, deeper collaboration across the supply chain, and a focus on export markets and international partnership. A new Defence Joint Industrial Council will provide our enterprise with space for discussion, idea-sharing and open communication.

And DE&S, as UK Defence's procurement and support experts and a central part of the NAD Group, will continue to play an important role, delivering and maintaining battle-winning capabilities and continuing to support the nation's economy.

Looking ahead, this autumn will see the publication of the Defence Industrial Strategy and Defence Investment Plan. These will shape and guide how we deliver the SDR's industrial vision for the UK to become a defence powerhouse of innovation, production and export. The formation of the NAD Group and the wider work of Defence Reform ensure that, when the Defence Industrial Strategy is published, UK Defence will be ready to action it.

I would like to end by congratulating Air Chief Marshall Sir Richard Knighton, who will take up the post of Chief of the Defence Staff from September. In continuing the journey of defence modernisation, integration and lethality so ably started by Sir Tony Radakin, this is a defining moment for UK Defence and all of DE&S stands ready to support him in this work.

SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

"The deterrent effect of a productive, resilient, thriving industrial base"

Jim Carter, MOD Director General for Commercial and Industry, introduces Desider to the newly expanded function that is strengthening the UK's defence industrial base.



I lead the strategic direction and execution of all commercial activity across the MOD.

This means I'm responsible for shaping and fostering a new relationship with our industry partners and helping to transform our procurement system, as well as leading over 2,500 professionals in the Commercial and Industry function.

The new Strategic Defence Review (SDR) presents a hugely exciting opportunity for Commercial and Industry. The SDR sets out, and the Defence Industrial Strategy will reinforce, an ambition to forge a new relationship with industry, improve the pace of delivery, and to be more proactive in managing the defence supply chain.

With the increase in defence spending, the clarity of the SDR's ambition and the changes enacted through Defence Reform to radically transform our procurement and commercial approach, it feels like the stars are aligning.

Eagle-eyed readers will spot our function's name change from Defence Commercial to Commercial and Industry. This reflects the need for a greater focus on industry engagement and on improving management of the end-to-end defence supply chain.

We're improving the demand signal we send to industry, helping industry plan their resources, capabilities and skills to meet a growing demand through the SDR, the Defence Industrial Strategy, the Defence Investment Plan and our acquisition pipeline. We're adopting a portfolio-driven acquisition approach, which is more adaptable, accountable and market-aligned, and using category management to help us approach the market in the optimum way.

Engaging with industry earlier in the procurement process, where there is more space to harness their thinking and innovation, and making sure we integrate exports and international capability partnerships from the outset will be key.

Recognising that our supply chains need to be more resilient, adaptable and collaborative means transforming our approach to how we shape and manage them. This includes how we balance supply chain risks, how we remove the barriers that block smaller companies from working with Defence, and how we collaborate with industry through forums like the Defence Industrial Joint Council. We see the critical role we play in driving growth and prosperity, and that's why we're adopting a UK-first approach.

The ongoing Corporate Services Modernisation programme is transforming our operating model and the digital tools and systems we operate with. We're exploring new ways to increase productivity and reduce waste, including ways to better adopt and exploit AI tools, to be better able to meet this challenge. Underpinning this, we have to track and measure the impact we are having and where further improvements are needed.

We're also welcoming some new teams into Commercial and Industry, such as the National Shipbuilding Office, as part of the Defence Reform initiative's rewiring of UK Defence. It is important that we recognise and embrace the differences and strengths each new team brings, while working hard to cohere our function as a new group.

The next year will be very busy for Commercial and Industry, as we deliver on the SDR's recommendations and meet a demanding programme of record, but it will also be our time to shine.

Through the interactions I've had with our industry partners, I know that they are up for meeting the challenges we face as a defence enterprise. They are excited about the radical reform of the defence system and the bold ambitions of the SDR.

Ultimately this is about driving capability through quicker to get it into the hands of the war-fighter, because we all recognise the deterrent effect of a productive, resilient, thriving industrial base.

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Tempest

Securing the UK's combat air capability into 2035 and beyond



FEATURE

From project to product: Building an enduring transformation capability

Matthew Jacobs, Chief Product Owner at Scrum Inc., makes the case for change as a continuous managed capability.



Enduring and adaptive transformation reframes change as a managed capability. Instead of pausing to 'do' transformation, organisations embed it into their operating rhythm. This reduces friction, enhances responsiveness and builds resilience.

It enables real-time action on lessons learned. Teams can adjust their ways of working as challenges arise. Over time, small, targeted improvements often yield greater impact – and lower cost – than periodic reinvention.

By making continuous evolution the default, organisations remain ready, relevant and responsive, even as conditions shift beneath them.

When transformation becomes a product, agility ceases to be aspirational; it becomes embedded - institutionalised in operations, decision-making and culture.

Operating model shifts required

To make transformation a durable product, an organisation's operating model must move from set goals to incremental ones. They must embed continuous learning and adaptation, and design budgets that support a sustainable delivery and continuous evolution of the system. They must build flexibility, coaching and support into teams and support them with institutional knowledge – codifying tools, playbooks and patterns into a reusable, evolving resource.

Implications for UK Defence

In the UK Defence sector, where adaptability must coexist with rigor, this transformation approach provides a pragmatic and scalable path forward. It enables organisations to adapt to mission demands, procurement complexity, and geopolitical volatility, without disrupting operational integrity.

For industry partners, it builds enduring readiness, fosters closer partner integration, accelerates capability delivery, and shortens the path from insight to execution. By institutionalising agility, defence organisations can remain mission-ready and shape a supply chain that is strategically aligned, resilient under pressure and primed to scale innovation at speed.

Conclusion

Transformation is no longer an event – it is a core capability. By shifting from project to product, organisations embed adaptability into their operating model. For the defence supply chain, this mindset delivers sustained relevance, faster response and strategic alignment in an environment where stability depends on continuous evolution.

The below represents the views of the author and not of Desider, DE&S or the UK Ministry of Defence.

The pace of change today – driven by new technologies, shifting threats and evolving expectations – has outpaced traditional transformation models. UK Defence organisations face a clear choice: adapt faster or risk obsolescence.

This has led to a new paradigm: the enduring and adaptive transformation. Unlike finite projects, an incremental, continuous approach embeds adaptability into the operating model itself. It recognises transformation as an ongoing capability. The goal is an approach that learns, adapts and improves as standard practice, reducing disruption and avoiding the high cost of repeated reinvention.

The case for enduring and adaptive transformation

In Defence, sustained adaptability is a strategic asset. Static operating models are poorly suited to today's volatile, complex environments. The organisations that thrive are those able to detect change early, respond decisively, innovate as standard and evolve continuously.

The pivot: From project to product

Most organisations begin their transformation journey with a defined change project and a clear mandate. This phase attracts elevated funding, focused leadership and high visibility. This has a built-in end date. The project has fixed timeframes and is resourced to deliver defined outcomes.

When the project concludes, the real test begins. How to maintain momentum and avoid sliding back into old routines?

The solution is to evolve the project into a product, pivoting from time-bound initiative to sustained organisational capability.

Products are enduring. Their value lies in delivering continuous benefit, not reaching a finish line. Here, the product is the organisation's ability to adapt – evolving structures, behaviours and capabilities in response to changing conditions.

This shift requires rethinking how transformation is funded, governed and evaluated. The transformation team becomes a permanent capability – Strategy as a Service – focused on sustaining organisational effectiveness, enabling improvement, and supporting teams in owning their change.

FEATURE

AI tools: Saving time, boosting productivity and transforming operations

The work of UK Defence is being supported by a range of new AI tools, helping to greatly speed up processes and simplify tasks.

UK Defence is embracing the power and potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and is committed to the ambitious, safe and responsible use of AI tools.

AI offers a massive range of opportunities for defence modernisation, from the back office to the front-line. This includes accelerating operational tempo by enabling better informed and quicker decision-making, and enhancing the efficiency of processes and support functions to free up staff from laborious or repetitive tasks.

AI-powered Large Language Models (LLMs) are already saving time and increasing productivity across DE&S and the MOD. LLMs can help people understand complex documentation in a natural, conversational, question and answer format, similar to ChatGPT. They have the potential to save significant time and resources if used correctly.

As a result of work undertaken by the DE&S Automation & AI team to help UK Defence move from 'AI ready' to 'AI native', MOD staff now have access to new secure AI tools. These have been designed to quickly gather information, interrogate documentation, speed up research and glean novel insights, while ensuring far greater levels of security than with commercial AI tools.

Here, Desider highlights two LLM chat-bots currently in use and a third that will soon be live. These are just a sample of the AI tools developed by the DE&S Automation & AI team. The MOD continues to explore how these can enhance the work of Defence, while ensuring a balance between encouraging innovation and exercising caution on their associated risks, such as accuracy, bias and security.

Steven Hodson, Head of the DE&S Automation & AI team said, "We are taking advantage of powerful AI tools to greatly increase the efficiency of our core processes. Chat-MOD reaching over a million prompts marks a significant milestone in UK Defence's journey to exploit AI. It has proven our ability to deliver scaled enterprise AI capability. Coupled with our work on assurance, training, education and support, we're bringing the workforce on our AI journey and setting us up for success as we roll-out further AI products."

1) Chat-MOD

Chat-MOD, launched by the DE&S Automation & AI team in partnership with the Defence AI Centre, is a secure version of

ChatGPT. Chat-MOD is helping MOD personnel boost productivity by supporting them with a range of regular tasks including drafting emails, retrieving information and summarising text, such as meeting minutes.

Since it launched in February 2025, over a million prompts have been inputted into Chat-MOD and it now has over 35,000 users. It is estimated to have saved MOD personnel around 86,000 hours of work.

2) IRIS

IRIS is designed to help teams more rapidly respond to parliamentary questions (PQs) and freedom of information (FoI) requests. It provides seamless search and summarise functionality across historic MOD responses to PQs and FoI requests.

The IRIS tool has been live since January 2025 and has already supported 3,500 queries from over 200 users across the MOD. In each case it has saved staff around 30 minutes, amounting to roughly 1,650 hours in total.

3) Conversational AI for data insights

The DE&S Automation & AI team is currently building conversational AI into further applications to help users better understand their data and gain new insights.

In one case, when MOD personnel use the Motherlode application, a user-friendly Q&A chatbot will run alongside this, providing guidance and assistance in finding and explaining information. Motherlode is an AI tool that processes maintenance data for the Royal Navy to detect engineering problems at the earliest possible point, enabling personnel to order or have ready spare parts ahead of issues arising.

The chatbot is being trained on user guidance and documentation from Motherlode, allowing it to understand user queries effectively. Users will be able to ask questions and get helpful live support. For example, asking the chatbot to explain the calculation metrics behind a graphic, or remind them what specific acronyms mean. This is pivotal in enabling all across Defence to become AI native.

NEWS



First autonomous minesweeping system delivered to Royal Navy

The Royal Navy has accepted three new systems - collectively known as SWEAP - into service, enabling crewless minesweeping operations for the first time.

The Combined Influence Minesweeping (SWEAP) system will protect the lives of Royal Navy personnel by allowing them to clear sea lanes of dangerous mine threats from a safe distance.

The SWEAP system consists of an uncrewed surface vessel and sophisticated payloads. The autonomous surface vessel can tow a variety of sweep configurations behind it. Controlled from a Portable Operations Centre based either at sea or on land, each configuration is optimised to deliver a variety of magnetic, acoustic and electric signatures to trigger different types of mines. The SWEAP system's innovative technology can even defeat sophisticated modern digital sea mines which detect and target ships and submarines passing nearby. The uncrewed system is able to replicate a ship's signature, tricking the mines into detonating safely.

The delivery of SWEAP is the latest milestone in the DE&S-led Mine Hunting Capability programme. The programme aims to transition the Royal Navy from conventional ship-based Mine Warfare & Clearance Diving to autonomous off-board systems, making the disposal of sea mines safer and more efficient.

Andy Lapsley, Mine Hunting Capability Team Leader at DE&S, said, "These

three SWEAP systems will help to ensure Royal Navy personnel can combat the evolving global threat of naval mines more effectively and more safely. The new technology, which will also help maintain the freedom of manoeuvre for UK ships and submarines when defending the UK at sea, is aligned with the aims of the Strategic Defence Review to increase utilisation of new autonomous equipment to support the Royal Navy to patrol the North Atlantic and beyond."

SWEAP's 'sense and avoid' capability works together with other similar autonomous systems, such as the Maritime Mine Counter Measures (MMCM) system and SeaCat Unmanned Underwater Vehicles. The delivery of these uncrewed systems is sustaining freedom of manoeuvre for Royal Navy vessels and making international waters safer.

Jonathan Reed-Beviere, Mine Hunting Capability Programme Director for the Royal Navy, said, "The Royal Navy receiving its first fully autonomous minesweeping system is truly transformational... The portable, flexible system is vital to protecting ships from modern mine threats. Operated remotely from land or sea, it will keep our sailors out of danger and will restore a minesweeping capability the Royal

Navy has lacked since 2005."

SWEAP was developed by Dorset-based TKMS Atlas UK Ltd (formerly Atlas Elektronik UK), as part of a £25 million contract. The contract has supported more than 50 highly skilled jobs in Dorset and around the UK, backing the Government's Plan for Change by driving Defence as an engine for economic growth.

Antoni Mazur, Managing Director of TKMS Atlas UK, said, "It's an incredibly proud moment to see these cutting-edge minesweeping systems enter service with the Royal Navy.

"We have worked with the MOD for decades to develop our minesweeping expertise and deliver this capability as a true, UK innovation, supporting highly skilled local jobs and the manufacturing base. We look forward to continuing to work with the Royal Navy and the Mine Hunting Capability team for the success of the transition to an autonomous mine counter-measure capability for the UK."

The Royal Navy took receipt of the MMCM system in March. Along with SWEAP, this system eliminates the need for sailors to enter mine danger areas and marks another milestone in the transformation to autonomous mine hunting capabilities.



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FEATURE

DE&S personnel commended in King's Birthday Honours 2025 list

People from across DE&S have been honoured by His Majesty The King for their services to UK Defence.



Rear Admiral Steve McCarthy

The UK Honours System celebrates individuals for their outstanding merit, service and acts of bravery. Honours are bestowed on people by His Majesty King Charles III. This includes a number of DE&S personnel who have gone above and beyond in supporting the UK Armed Forces.

Rear Admiral Steven McCarthy, Director of Maritime Environment in DE&S, is one of the people to have been commended. He has made crucial decisions that have supported the through-life availability and capability integration of Royal Navy ships, Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships, and MOD boats.

On being made a Companion of Order of the Bath, Rear Admiral McCarthy said, "I'm delighted, humbled and surprised in equal measure to be awarded a CB in the King's Birthday Honours list. It's been a huge privilege to help and guide generations of engineers to navigate their professional formation, confident to live by our values, keeping seafarers safe and speaking truth, no matter how difficult that may sometimes be."

Commodore Phillip Game, Director of Sense, Decide and Communicate in DE&S, has also been recognised for his exceptional work in keeping the Royal Navy operational.

After being made a Commander of Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.), Commodore Game said, "I feel deeply honoured to have been recognised with this prestigious state award, which came as a brilliant surprise and it has been fantastic to share the news with family, friends and my colleagues in DE&S, the Royal Navy and beyond. I really hope that they all share in the 'glow' as none of my professional achievements would have been possible without them."

Reflecting on the achievements of DE&S personnel, Deputy CEO Lt Gen Simon Hamilton said, "To see so many of our people recognised in the King's Birthday Honours for their efforts going above and beyond is truly inspirational and I thank them and everyone at DE&S who is working to the best of their abilities to support our Armed Forces. Huge congratulations to everyone who has been honoured."

The full list of MOD-sponsored State and Non-State candidates commended in His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours List 2025 is as follows:

Civilian State Honours

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.)

Wayne Bantick - DE&S Core Delivery, Lethality and Protect

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.)

Paul Livingstone - Chief Executive Lockheed Martin UK

Commodore Philip Game Royal Navy - DE&S Core Delivery, Sense, Decide and Communicate

Companion of Order of the Bath (C.B.)

Rear Admiral Steven McCarthy Royal Navy - DE&S Core Delivery, Maritime

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.)

Captain Pollyanna Hatchard Royal Navy - DE&S Core Delivery, Air Rotary Wing and Uncrewed Air Systems

Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.)

Commander Daniel Glover Royal Navy - DE&S Gateway, Commissioning

Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

Warrant Officer Class One Robert Collins British Army - DE&S Core Delivery, Logistics Services and Commodities

Armed Forces Operational Awards and Commendations

Joint Commander's Commendation (JCC)

Squadron Leader Fenella Allery Royal Air Force - DE&S Core Delivery, Air Fixed Wing

Joint Commander's Commendation (JCC)

Lieutenant Commander Lee Duke Royal Navy - DE&S Core Delivery, Maritime

Commander Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Commendation (COMARRC)

Major Rose Lambert British Army - DE&S Core Delivery, Land Environment



Commodore Philip Game

NEWS

New body to harness innovative tech for UK Armed Forces

UK Defence Innovation will work across government to streamline delivery of novel technology, enhancing military capability while driving economic growth.

In future, innovative hardware will reach the hands of military personnel faster as a result of the new UK Defence Innovation (UKDI) organisation, which has been formally established.

UKDI will be the focal point for innovation within the MOD, backed by a ringfenced annual budget of at least £400 million. As part of the National Armaments Director Group, alongside DE&S, UKDI will create high-skilled jobs in the dual-use technology sector and help Defence deliver as an engine for UK growth.

The new body will simplify and streamline the innovation system within the MOD. It will play a pivotal role in implementing the Strategic Defence Review's (SDR) recommendations by breaking down barriers between defence and commercial innovation and ensuring that game-changing technologies can be rapidly identified, developed and deployed.

By moving decisively, working across government, setting out clear pathways and using different ways of contracting, UKDI will enable UK companies to rapidly scale up innovative prototypes. It will make the UK a defence innovation leader by funding and supporting firms of all sizes to take state-of-the-art technology from the drawing board to the production line. It will ensure cutting-edge innovations get into the hands of the UK's Armed Forces faster.

Defence Secretary John Healey said, "Defence is only as strong as the industry that stands behind it and through UKDI we're putting innovation at the heart of our approach. This shift represents a crucial part of our commitment to change Defence, backing the high-growth UK firms developing the pioneering technology of the future to boost our national security and make Defence an engine for growth – fundamental to our Plan for Change and delivering on the SDR."

As part of UKDI's launch, two key initiatives have been established. A Rapid Innovation Team will enable innovation at a 'wartime pace' by utilising commercially available dual-use technology to address the most urgent operational problems. Regional Engagement Teams across the UK will identify and support dual-use innovations from SMEs and academic spin-outs, delivering targeted outreach and business development support.



The organisation will develop over the next 12 months through further design, transition and implementation work while the optimal workforce structure needed to achieve its long-term ambitions is determined. UKDI will be fully operational by July 2026.

This announcement comes alongside another significant development, with UK Strategic Command being renamed as the Cyber & Specialist Operations Command (CSOC). This change reflects the Command's evolved role and enhanced responsibilities, in particular its leadership of the cyber domain. It also follows the MOD having to protect UK military networks against more than 90,000 'sub-threshold' attacks in the last two years.

The new name firmly places leadership of this crucial domain for UK Defence and the Armed Forces with the new Command. It also better represents CSOC's 'Lead Command' responsibilities for those specialist capabilities critical to operational success, including intelligence, Special Forces, deployed medical capabilities, and command and control through the Permanent Joint Headquarters.

FEATURE

Delivering complex, collaborative capabilities

As a member of OCCAR, the UK is able to join forces with allies across Europe to develop and maintain a range of platforms.

While the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation – commonly known by its French acronym OCCAR – might not be a household name in the UK defence sector, some of its programmes – from Boxer to Atlas – will be. But what is OCCAR? And what benefits does the UK get from being a member?

OCCAR is an international organisation which delivers and sustains complex, cooperative defence equipment programmes. It manages 23 defence programmes across the land, sea, air and space domains on behalf of its members states.

OCCAR currently has six members – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – with non-member participant the Netherlands on track to join soon. Alongside them, nine other non-member countries participate in OCCAR programmes: Australia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Turkey.

The UK is involved in four programmes: the A400M Atlas aircraft, the Boxer modular armoured vehicle, the Principal Anti-Air Missile System, and Maritime Mine Counter Measures.

The UK derives some important benefits from delivering these programmes through OCCAR. Foremost among these is a structure through which the UK can effectively collaborate with allies to deliver and sustain new platforms. This spreads the overall risk and costs across a number of partners, drives greater collaboration and reduces duplication.

OCCAR programmes represent an opportunity to foster closer ties between nations and ensure that, in the future, these platforms are interoperable by design. This helps to make upgrades more efficient and keeps the UK and its allies more secure.

In March, the UK, France and Italy marked a significant step forward in the Principal Anti-Air Missile System programme with the signing of a new contract amendment to accelerate and increase European production capabilities for Aster missiles. OCCAR Director Joachim Sucker signed the agreement on behalf of the three nations. As a result of the contractual change, industry partner Eurosam and its affiliate MBDA will deliver Aster 15 and Aster 30 missile variants to the British, French and Italian Armed Forces within a shorter timeframe. In the UK, Aster



missiles are deployed on Type 45 destroyers, as part of the Sea Viper system, an important component in the Royal Navy's air defence capabilities.

In November 2024, the UK celebrated the Atlas A400M military transport aircraft's 10th year in service. Since the first of the 22-strong A400M fleet was delivered in 2014, it has repeatedly proven itself and become a vital asset for the UK and its allies. The A400M is a product of a successful international partnership, combining expertise from the UK, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and Turkey, coordinated through OCCAR and working with industry partner Airbus. The four-engine turboprop aircraft can deliver 37 tonnes of cargo over long distances. The UK's Atlas fleet has logged 60,000 flight hours, underscoring its role in missions ranging from combat support to disaster relief.

The International and Industry Cooperation (I&IC) team, part of the new National Armaments Director Group, provides guidance, advice and support on delivering OCCAR programmes and represents the UK on the OCCAR Future Task and Policy Committee.

Kate Perry, MOD Assistant Head OCCAR and International Engagements, said: "I&IC is proud to support OCCAR and recognise the work it does in supporting interoperability and collaboration between nations. We are grateful to be able to celebrate shared successes and fortunate to benefit from ongoing international collaboration projects which contribute to strengthening and developing UK Defence."

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NEWS

DE&S sells former Royal Marines hovercraft to support Pakistan Navy

The boats will enhance the Pakistan Navy's amphibious operations and help maintain global security, while delivering an economic return for the UK.

Three Landing Craft Air Cushion (Light) hovercraft, known as LCAC(L), and all associated spares have been sold by the MOD Exports and Sales Team.

The team forms a key part of the UK's export enterprise, delivering essential equipment capability to allies and partners through the government-to-government sale of surplus defence equipment. These help to ensure economic returns while extending the operational life of military capabilities.

The LCAC(L) can operate on both land and water, and was identified as being well-suited to Pakistan's maritime environment. It offers a highly mobile, shallow-water operational capability for operations such as coastal patrol, humanitarian assistance and rapid deployment missions.

The three LCAC(L) hovercraft were previously operated by the Royal Marines and decommissioned from service in 2021. In 2022, DE&S awarded UK-based Griffon Marine Services a contract to refurbish the boats and prepare them for transfer, overseen by the DE&S Boats Team. DE&S also worked with logistics company Peters and May – who specialise in global boat transportation – to coordinate the delivery of the three hovercraft.

Reflecting upon the success of the restoration and sale, Boats Team Leader Pete Lagden said, "Working with Griffon Marine and Peters & May, the Boats Team ensured maintenance, refit, sea trials and documentation were completed on schedule. The team

has worked tirelessly to meet its deadlines. This achievement highlights the exceptional efforts of DE&S and its industry partners."


A handover event was held in London and attended by the Head of the MOD Export and Sales Team, Commodore Richard Whalley. Commodore Whalley said, "This sale continues a long history of excellent defence equipment sales with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and reaffirms our positive defence relations. By transferring these proven assets, we are supporting the Pakistan Navy's ability to enhance its coastal and amphibious operations, supporting our shared goal of maintaining global security, as well as providing a return for the UK's defence budget."

Representatives from the Pakistan High Commission in London were also at the handover event. A Pakistan Navy spokesperson said, "The Pakistan Navy values its defence cooperation with the UK. This is evident through joint exercises, training exchanges, defence acquisitions and collaborative efforts in maritime security. Our recent acquisition of hovercraft from the UK will enhance our defence capabilities, particularly in maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations."

Griffon Marine Support, headquartered in Southampton, will continue to provide in-service support for the hovercraft under its own contract with the Pakistan Navy, building on Pakistan's use of LCAC(L)s by its armed forces for over 20 years.

Dan Pountney, Head of Griffon Marine Support, said, "It has been a pleasure working alongside the MOD Exports & Sales Team and the DE&S Boats Team – who we have supported for the past seven years with maintenance, refits, and mid-life upgrades – to prepare the hovercraft for sale to our long-standing customer, the Pakistan Navy. We are proud of this collaboration and look forward to continuing our in-service support for both UK boats and the Pakistan Navy."





The UK and France upgrade their defence relationship

The UK and France are to order more Storm Shadow missiles, while stepping up work on its replacement.

A new agreement between the UK and France will see both countries commit to launch the next phase of their joint project for both deep strike and anti-ship Storm Shadow cruise missiles.

The joint development effort will sustain 1,300 highly skilled jobs across the UK. Upgrading the existing Storm Shadow production lines to bolster national stockpiles will support more than 300 jobs in Stevenage at manufacturer MBDA.

Defence Secretary John Healey said, "The UK and France are stepping up together to meet today's threats and tomorrow's challenges. We are committed to driving defence as an engine for growth, delivering better fighting capabilities faster and ensuring our armed forces can operate side by side – from the High North to the Black Sea.

"This partnership strengthens our leadership in Europe, ensures continued support for Ukraine and sends a clear signal to our adversaries that we stand stronger together."

By deepening defence industrial cooperation with France, the new partnership will boost the UK's national resilience and its ability to deter attacks and defend against threats, reinforcing the contribution to NATO.

It will be developed under the refreshed Lancaster House agreement through a new 'Entente Industrielle'. As well as the agreement on Storm Shadow, it will include:

- Jointly developing the next generation of beyond visual range air-to-air missiles for the RAF
- Starting work on new advanced weapons. This will include a new partnership to develop high-tech radiofrequency weapons
- Exploring ways to harness the power of AI to make missiles and drones more lethal by developing algorithms for synchronised strikes.

Under the Lancaster House 2.0 Declaration, both countries' militaries will work closer together than ever before. Recognising the increased threat to European security, the UK and France will expand its jointly deployable force, refocusing it on defending Europe, moving to warfighting readiness to deter and counter any adversaries.

The Combined Joint Force will be able to command a Combined UK/French Corps for the first time – the highest scale of deployed ground forces from a command perspective – made up of thousands of troops and working side-by-side with NATO allies.

For the first time it will also integrate space and cyber to counter new threats, boosting the abilities of the UK and France's joint forces to quickly respond to developments on the battlefield through increased awareness and responsiveness.

The Combined Joint Force is a crucial step forward in the UK and France stepping up their leadership within NATO, setting a clear path to meet the Government's Strategic Defence Review commitment of NATO's strategic Reserve Corp and stepping up on European security.

The UK and France will reaffirm their joint leadership of the Coalition of the Willing – a group of over 30 nations working together to coordinate military support for Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire. The CJF structures provide the bedrock for the coalition, enabling allies to operate under UK-French leadership.

This will include cooperating further on an integrated missile system to defend Europe. The UK-led DIAMOND initiative will improve NATO's integrated air and missile defence by ensuring that the different air defence systems across the alliance operate better and more jointly across the alliance.

NEWS

DE&S highlights

A digest of DE&S news from the past month.



Front-line drone technology to fuel UK-Ukraine partnership

A landmark agreement between the UK and Ukraine to share battlefield technology has been reached, boosting Ukraine's drone production and linking up the UK's defence industry with the cutting-edge technology being developed on their front-lines.

Ukraine is a world leader in drone design and execution. With technology evolving, on average, every six weeks, the agreement will allow data sets to be shared with UK defence firms, enabling them to rapidly design and build advanced drones, at scale, for Ukraine's front-lines. It will also ensure a defence dividend continues to be delivered across the UK, bolstering Ukraine's defence with deliveries of new equipment while supporting British jobs.

Initially, the industrial partnership is expected to increase information and expertise sharing between the UK and Ukraine on drone-based air defence, but the agreement also paves the way for both countries to work on capabilities for the future.

The first agreements between defence firms in both countries are expected to be rolled out in the coming weeks, with the aim of delivering large numbers of battle-proven drones to Ukraine.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said, "By harnessing Ukraine's battlefield innovation and combining it with British industrial strength, we are not only accelerating support for Ukraine's defence, we are also delivering security for working people through our Plan for Change. This agreement is not just about today's fight, it's about building the defence capabilities of tomorrow, together."

Small defence textiles firm to support Chinook helicopters

Women-led UK industrial textile company Needles & Pins Aerospace is now working with DE&S prime supplier Boeing Defence UK to expertly create linings for Chinook helicopters.

Needles and Pins Aerospace specialises in the design,

manufacture and repair of bespoke protective covers, acoustic insulation and interior soft fittings for military and civilian aircraft. These soft-trim interiors enhance soundproofing and comfort for the aircrew. The small family business also supplies ground support equipment for Chinooks.

Thanks to its recent growth, the company has opened a new, larger facility in Somerset and expanded its team by 25 percent in the past year, with another 25 percent increase planned by the end of 2025. This includes the creation of two apprenticeship roles to support skills development in rural Somerset.

DE&S is proud to support the UK defence supply chain, helping develop skills, supporting communities and protecting the UK.

First flight of UK Chinook with modified protection from heat-seeking missiles

The flight trial process for the Boeing Chinook Infrared Suppression System (IRSS) programme has begun. The first UK flight of a Chinook Mk6 helicopter equipped with the extended exhaust-mounted equipment has now been successfully completed.

This is an upgrade procured by DE&S to deliver a capability which enhances the safety and operational effectiveness of the Chinook. It does this by reducing the infrared signature of the aircraft, making it less detectable to heat-seeking missiles and significantly mitigating the threat posed by these common dangers in operational theatres.

IRSS uses blanking plates to mask hot components and redirects airflow to cool exhaust gases, both of which reduce the infrared signature hostile forces might rely on when firing missiles.

Chinook is the UK Armed Forces' only heavy-lift helicopter and can transport up to 55 troops or more than 10 tonnes of supplies.



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DESIDER

AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT DEFENCE EQUIPMENT & SUPPORT

Desider is the monthly corporate magazine for DE&S. It is aimed at readers across the wider MOD, armed forces and defence industry. It covers the work of people at DE&S and its partners, and other corporate news and information.

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PEOPLE

Ida Sewell

Job title:

US Export Controls Officer - International and Industry Cooperation (I&IC)

What does your role involve?

I work within the MOD's Centre of Excellence for US Export Controls. My role focuses on providing expert guidance and support to project teams across Defence. My colleagues and I help identify equipment and articles subject to US export control laws and regulations, ensuring the correct licences are obtained and maintained throughout their lifecycle. We play a vital role in ensuring ongoing compliance with US export control legislation, supporting the safe and legal use of controlled technology across defence programmes.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

The opportunity to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders to find creative solutions to challenges. It's rewarding to overcome hurdles and see solutions come together. I love learning from others, gaining new perspectives and understanding different viewpoints. Adding the layer of international relations and the political impact of what we do makes the work even more exciting and dynamic.

What is your greatest accomplishment to date?

How quickly I adapted when I joined DE&S – diving into the complex world of defence, learning its language and understanding how programmes operate. I was proud to take that early learning and turn it into tangible impact, from developing branding for a major project to helping establish communications working groups that promoted collaboration across organisations under the One Defence vision.

What keeps you energised about working at DE&S?

There's always something new to learn and with the right opportunities amazing things can be achieved. It's energising to know that, even in a small way, I'm contributing to something meaningful.

Who or what has shaped who you are?

Living in four countries throughout my life has had a huge impact on who I am. It's given me a deep appreciation for the beauty and complexity of different cultures and people, as well as the importance of understanding, connection and hard work. It's taught me how to adapt, build resilience and find my place, while staying true to my values and beliefs. The lessons I've learned – and continue to learn – are ones I try to pass on to my own family, who in turn shape me into the person I am every day.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

As a mum to two young children, they definitely keep me on my toes! When I do get some free time, I love being creative, whether through painting or interior design.

What might surprise people about you?

I can effortlessly switch between English, German and Filipino. My mother tongue is Filipino, but I dream in English and speak German with a slight Bavarian accent! When I chat with my siblings, we take it to another level by mixing all three together, creating our own 'language mashup'. It's chaotic but so much fun!

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

Rise above the blues! A simple reminder that stayed with me to not be afraid to show up in your own way, even when things feel heavy. But just as important, carry kindness with you. Staying true to yourself doesn't mean walking alone, but rather being considerate to those around you, because how we treat others is just as much a reflection of who we are.





A Royal Navy crew prepare to throw a rope line to tugs as HMS Dauntless, part of the Carrier Strike Group, enters Darwin harbour in Australia.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Want to receive Desider direct to your inbox? Email: jonathan.mazliah100@mod.gov.uk

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Top to bottom: RAF 22 Squadron Chinook HC.MK 6, Royal Navy Merlin Mk2, two Army Air Corps AH-64E, and two Army Air Corps Wildcat AH.1 during Exercise Hades Warrior.

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