

# DESIDER

AN INSIDE LOOK AT DEFENCE EQUIPMENT & SUPPORT



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

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# The Editor's Lens

## **Welcome to the August edition of Desider.**

Soon after this edition is published, many of us will gather in London for DSEI UK 25, the largest event in the UK defence calendar. With over 1,600 exhibitors, more than 45,000 visitors and a kilometre's worth of exhibition stalls, it's a great opportunity to explore new capabilities and discover the start-ups and innovators pushing at the edges of emerging technology.

The theme for this year's DSEI UK is 'Preparing the Future Force' and that could not be more relevant to the work taking place across UK Defence and inside DE&S. In fact, it's the driving impetus behind the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and the MOD's Defence Reform modernisation programme.

Building on these, the Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) is due for publication in early September and you can expect it to be a hot topic throughout the Excel exhibition centre.

The DIS continues on from the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy, which identified Defence as one of eight priority UK sectors. Its ambitious goal is to make the UK a defence industry world-leader by 2035 through sustained investment and reform, and a stronger, more effective partnership with industry and our armed forces.

Its vision is of Defence as an engine for growth, with a thriving UK industrial base to power it, where every pound spent on defence makes us safer and grows our economy.

A common thread – found across our strategic defence thinking and at DSEI – is the need for greater integration and an awareness of the potential this has to unlock deterrent strength and economic prosperity. We need to be looking at Defence as a shared endeavour, between public and private sectors, government and business, innovators and investors, the UK and our allies.

Taken together, the DIS, the SDR, the upcoming Defence Investment Plan and Defence Reform represent the largest, most comprehensive programme of transformation, integration and investment into UK Defence in a generation.

This is the first DSEI since the UK published the SDR and the MOD established the National Armaments Director (NAD) Group, as part of Defence Reform.

Across the NAD Group, we're bringing down old barriers and connecting people in new ways, empowering them to work together with greater synergy and impact. At the start of August, for example, the UK Defence Exports team moved over from the Department for Business and Trade to join the NAD Group's new International Collaboration and Exports organisation.

For the first time, the NAD Group will be at DSEI as one group, under a single banner, with a shared space in the Tech Zone. A very literal, physical display of our new group integrating and working together. We are also hosting a UK Capability Showcase, where a range of cutting-edge sovereign capabilities will be on display.

Our armed forces are some of the best in the world, but they are only as effective as the defence enterprise that equips them and only as strong as the allies they fight alongside. And we must continue to drive greater integration across our defence enterprise.

Now, the shared task – across the defence enterprise – is to solidify the UK's deterrent strength, grow our economic prosperity, deliver platforms that are more lethal, interoperable and exportable, and support our allies to achieve the same.



## SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

# Seeking out meaningful opportunities for collaboration, co-development and co-creation

**Avril Jolliffe, Director-General International Collaboration and Exports, explains how the new organisation she is leading will support Defence and drive real UK growth.**



**With the creation of the International Collaboration and Exports (ICE) organisation, we've brought together a team of highly skilled professionals with decades of experience of working with allies and international partners to deliver cutting edge capabilities, while driving economic benefits for the UK.**

ICE teams have a clear focus: maximise UK engagement with international markets, help our defence industry access new opportunities, and work with allies and partners to design and build together.

As the Director-General of ICE – part of the MOD's National Armaments Director (NAD) Group – my role is to solidify this new team and help my people support the UK's growth and defence missions. We are seeking out meaningful opportunities for collaboration, co-development and co-creation with our allies, where this can help deliver the right equipment for our armed forces and build the base for future UK economic growth.

We have an amazing group of people in ICE, who are passionate about defence exports and collaboration. This includes the defence exports team from the Department for Business and Trade, who joined us last month, and is responsible for the

UK's defence exports promotion. The expertise, experience and networks they bring will be invaluable.

It is important to recognise that when we help UK industry successfully access international markets, we are actually doing a number of things. First, we're increasing their production rate and we should see, as a result of that, a net reduction in costs to the UK because we're spreading non-recurring engineering costs and production costs.

Second, we're increasing the number of partners that we can fight alongside because we are building a common equipment base. In the past defence trade and export has been viewed as purely transactional, but this is about more than just selling kit. When we operate with our allies on shared platforms, our supply chains are more resilient and our military strength is greater.

Third, other nations will have new capabilities, bright ideas and different ways of doing things that we can benefit from. By working together in partnership, we can be much stronger.

And fourth, we can have a real impact on people's lives here in the UK by driving defence investment and growing our industrial base. The MOD has been given a sizable increase in spending by the Government and we have to be good guardians of this. Part of that is turning this investment into demonstrable growth for the UK: to be part of the growth narrative.

I want ICE to be able to make a direct connection between the work we do every day and benefits for UK citizens because we've helped boost growth in the UK. Communities across the UK should be able to recognise that the tax pounds spent on Defence lead to benefits flowing back into their communities.

When I look out across the NAD Group and beyond, I can clearly see how ICE teams are going to inform future defence solutions. They will bring international market insight into the process of developing and delivering capabilities, including opportunities for collaboration or potential exports.

I see myself and my team as being a potential lever. One the NAD Group can offer back into the Military Strategic HQ, so we're able to have a more meaningful and deliberate discussion about where we want to exploit an international relationship or supply chain opportunity, where we want to take risk and how we can mitigate them.

The ICE team is still developing, but these are significant steps that enable a more integrated and cohered approach to international defence collaboration and exports.

This is a growth narrative, a benefit narrative and a defence narrative. I hope you join us in writing the next chapter.

**MBDA**

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Through FC/ASW, MBDA is developing decisive Anti-Surface Warfare, Deep Precision Strike and Counter-A2AD capabilities, with two complementary effectors, launched from air and naval platforms, combining the survivability benefits of high speed/maneuverability and low observability needed for tomorrow's contested battlespace. FC/ASW builds on the strong track record of cooperation within MBDA, which has delivered hugely successful programs such as Storm Shadow / SCALP, Meteor and Aster. FC/ASW is bringing together the best European expertise / know-how to deliver the most technologically advanced and mature response to the need for operational superiority and freedom of action.



## FEATURE

# Why DSEI UK 2025 is championing defence innovation and SMEs

**Grant Burgham, Director of DSEI UK, tells Desider about how the event is opening new doors for SMEs and non-traditional innovators across the global defence and security landscape.**



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

## **What does it take to unlock the next generation of defence innovation?**

At DSEI UK we believe the answer lies in creating the best arena for the defence ecosystem. One that brings together decision-makers, end-users, major primes and, just as importantly, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Each edition of DSEI UK offers a reflection of the global defence and security environment at a particular point in time. In 2025 that environment is more contested, complex and interconnected than ever. DSEI UK is evolving in response, both in its scale and its focus. This year we are supporting a broader community of defence companies than ever before.

This September we expect around 50,000 participants from across the world to attend at Excel London. This level of engagement shows that DSEI UK remains an essential date in the defence calendar. But what makes DSEI UK distinctive is not just the scale of who attends, but how innovation and technology run through every part of the event.

Technology has its own dedicated area of the show floor but it is also present across every domain, from land systems and naval platforms to electromagnetic effects, infrastructure, logistics and data integration.

This reflects a wider shift in defence itself. The line between traditional defence suppliers and the commercial tech world continues to blur. Many of the most significant developments in recent years have come from outside the established supply chain. Dual-use technologies are increasingly central to national security.

This is why supporting SMEs and non-traditional entrants is a core priority. Alongside the presence of 18 of the top 20 Western defence companies, we are seeing growing numbers of smaller companies bringing in new approaches and deep scientific expertise. For many of them, DSEI can be a gateway into Defence. It is a rare chance to engage directly with users, buyers and global partners in one place.

One area where this is most visible is in the Tech Zone. This part of the show continues to grow rapidly, and for 2025 we have expanded the space to meet increased demand. Exhibitors will include companies working in artificial intelligence, quantum systems and cyber resilience. These are critical priorities for today's armed forces. In many cases they are being delivered by recent entrants or spinouts from academia and industry.

We are also working closely with trade association ADS to provide a significantly expanded UK Pavilion. This will host a wide range of start-ups and SMEs, many engaging with Defence for the first time. Others are already working at the edge of capability development and looking to scale up. DSEI UK gives them the visibility and access they need to take that next step.

Our support for SMEs goes beyond the domestic picture. With delegations from more than 90 countries and over 40 national pavilions, DSEI UK offers opportunities for international growth. We are working closely with UK Defence and Security Exports to help UK companies reach new markets and to give overseas SMEs a route into the UK's defence sector.

We know that barriers to entry remain, with long timelines and sometimes hard-to-navigate procurement processes. But by convening the entire ecosystem in one place, DSEI UK helps reduce those barriers and promote more open engagement between government, industry and innovators.

As Director of DSEI UK, I am proud that the event is growing not only in size but in purpose. It continues to reflect the priorities of the defence and security community, and to offer a space where future capability can be imagined, developed and delivered.

The conversation begins in London this September. I hope to see you there.



## FEATURE

# Celebrating 10 Years of Defence Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation

**Ange Baker and Andy Morris celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation programme, delivered in conjunction with Team Leidos.**

**As the Head and Deputy of the Commissioning and Managing Organisation (CMO), the DE&S team that oversees the Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation (LCST) programme, we are pleased to mark 10 years since UK Defence embarked on a journey of modernisation across its warehousing, distribution and commodity areas.**

The CMO blends military and civil service expertise, with specialists brought in from industry over 10 years ago to help assure the LCST enterprise. Andy came from a well-known commercial logistics company and has been with the CMO since 2013.

LCST is a £7 billion, 13-year programme led by Leidos as the prime contractor, with Kuehne+Nagel, TVS Supply Chain Solutions and Agility as partners in Team Leidos. With 14 million demands fulfilled, the majority from a new fulfilment centre in Donnington, it has achieved what it set out to do a decade ago.

LCST has enabled UK Defence to move into an era of efficient, automated logistics, with investment in warehouse consolidation and modernisation covered through the benefits realised in the programme. LCST is on course to deliver almost £400 million in savings for Defence. This has been achieved at the same time as reducing carbon emissions across the warehousing and distribution operations.

LCST connects with every single member of the UK's Armed Forces – from the uniforms we wear to the rations we eat and the medical equipment and supplies we rely on. Team Leidos procure and support around 70,000 different items and store or handle over 200,000 more across the wider Defence inventory. Having spent around £2.1 billion on



those products, it is a large enterprise with constantly changing requirements; LCST has introduced 2,213 new items for uniforms alone over the last 10 years.

The distribution statistics are impressive; more than 400 operations and exercises have been supported, including many to assist Ukraine. The Global Removals part of LCST has helped around 200,000 military personnel move around the world.

As well as the need for flexibility and capacity to support front-line military needs, another key lesson from LCST has been the importance of staying close with partners and building strong relationships to be able to resolve tasks and challenges in a timely and effective way. The Leidos Operations team, embedded within the MOD Defence Supply Chain and Operational Movements (DSCOM) HQ, has been an invaluable part of this. Fully integrated with military planning staff, Leidos can offer commercial

distribution options so that DSCOM can select the right mix of external and MOD-owned options to meet global defence requirements.

Andy has seen the programme through from inception. While there have been ups and downs over that complex and transformational period, the overall trajectory has been hugely positive. Lessons continue to be learned and with time still to run, the ambition to continuously improve and refine all aspects of LCST remains our focus in 2025.

Enhancing data exploitation and optimising the storage network are two such areas. One of the recent evolutions has been the opening of a new 75,500m<sup>2</sup> storage facility and railhead at MOD Longtown in Cumbria.

Happy anniversary LCST. Here's to continued delivery of this fundamental, bedrock defence capability for the UK's Armed Forces.

## NEWS

# High-altitude balloons show defence potential following successful trials

**UK Defence has successfully tested uncrewed high-altitude balloons capable of conducting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.**

**Project Aether aims to assess the potential of unmanned air systems for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), as well as for wide-area communications and long-duration missions.**

In an important step forward, balloon trials have been conducted in South Dakota, as part of Project Aether, an initiative launched by DE&S' Future Capability and Innovation (FCI) team. The team has since transitioned to become part of UK Defence Innovation (UKDI) under the National Armaments Director (NAD) Group.

The South Dakota balloon trials were led by UK company Voltitude in partnership with Landguard Systems Limited (UK) and Aerostar (US), using UK-developed technology. During the trials, more than 15 high-altitude balloons (HABs), comprising Voltitude's Micro HAB (mHAB) and the Aerostar Lightning HAB, were used to maintain coverage over an area of interest for seven days.

With a current ISR payload capacity of up to 3 kg, the Voltitude mHAB test balloons travelled at altitudes between 60,000 and 80,000 ft, double that of a commercial flight. The mHABs were able to operate continuously for an average of three days. The Aerostar Lightning HABs were able to carry a larger payload of up to 23 kg and were able to fly for an average of four days during trials before requiring any maintenance.

The balloons operated as a constellation for the first time during the South Dakota trials and provided near-continuous ISR coverage. The trials proved that they could travel uninterrupted at extreme altitudes for long periods without maintenance, offering a reliable surveillance and communications capability, which also delivers value for money. The capability will offer the UK Armed Forces a low-cost but highly effective means of monitoring the battlefield and providing updates to commanders on the ground.

Head of the UKDI Prove and Exploit team James Gavin said, "Defence procurement is making strides in the innovation space and DE&S is looking more at the art of the possible, pushing the boundaries and scoping new technologies. These latest trials have been incredibly fruitful and pave the way for more collaborative working with our allies to develop capabilities that will benefit our armed forces."

The findings from these trials will be used to build on this significant advancement in stratospheric surveillance. The next step for UK Defence will be to explore whether HABs can carry heavier payloads for longer durations, with the aim of enabling missions lasting between six and 12 months.

In addition to supporting future ISR missions, the balloons could be used to deliver reliable communications and fast internet connectivity to disaster zones or remote areas. They also have the potential to support climate research by providing data for weather forecasting.

The development of these balloons supports the vision outlined in the Government's Plan for Change: to enhance homeland defence and NATO security with updated capabilities and innovative new technology.

Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle said, "This innovation is about giving our Armed Forces the edge – better awareness, better communications and lower maintenance needs – supporting the Government's Plan for Change. Stratospheric technology like this could transform how we operate in complex environments, keeping our people safer and better informed than ever before. This successful trial is another example of UK Defence pushing boundaries, with real potential to strengthen our future capabilities."



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## FEATURE

# Type 31 frigate programme advances

**As HMS Active reaches another construction milestone, the DE&S Type 31 Build Acceptance Team explain how the programme continues to move forward.**



**HMS Active, the second of five Type 31 frigates being built by Babcock for the Royal Navy, has completed her drop stern operation at her assembly hall in Rosyth.**

This latest milestone signifies that HMS Active has reached a high level of structural maturity and marks further progress in the Type 31 programme. The drop stern process involved thorough checks by the DE&S Type 31 Build Acceptance Team and Babcock to ensure all the key structural parts of the ship were complete. The temporary supports holding the ship's hull in place were then removed, allowing shaft line installation to begin. These shafts will transmit power from the gear box to the propeller and need to be installed to very tight tolerances via brackets welded to the ship's structure.

The DE&S Type 31 Build Acceptance Team credits the successful drop stern operation to the strong working

relationships established between its naval architects, MOD colleagues and industry partners. The team emphasises that "it's imperative for all stakeholders to work together effectively".

Reflecting on the latest milestone, Naval Architect Francesco Fronda said, "It is a privilege to be part of the Build Acceptance Team delivering a successful drop stern operation. This key milestone represents the culmination of a significant engineering and fabrication effort, marking the transition to the next phase of consolidation of propulsion shaft brackets and construction as HMS Active takes shape in the assembly hall."

HMS Active's drop stern milestone follows the float off HMS Venturer earlier this year. HMS Venturer, the first Type 31 frigate to be constructed, rolled out of her assembly hall in Rosyth and entered the water for the first time in June.

Following these milestones, the Type 31 programme is now in its multi-ship build phase. While HMS Active continues to take shape, construction work is progressing on HMS Formidable and HMS Bulldog is expected to begin being built in 2026.

The Type 31 is based on Babcock's Arrowhead 140 design and can be tailored to meet the specific requirements of export customers. Once complete, the five frigates will be at the heart of the Royal Navy's surface fleet, deterring aggression and maintaining the security of the UK's interests.

David Lockwood, Babcock CEO, said, "Right here in Scotland we are building five complex warships in a single yard in just a decade; world-class performance. This is an incredibly proud moment for everyone in Babcock and the wider programme."

The Build Acceptance Team acknowledge that Type 31 is a demanding programme. However, they have maintained programme momentum throughout 2025.

Steve Ranyard, DE&S Type 31 Team Leader, said, "Type 31 is an ambitious ship build programme, seeking to establish a new ship build facility and deliver a world-leading frigate to the Royal Navy at pace. The build progress achieved in 2025 demonstrates that the "Type 31 is an ambitious ship build programme, seeking to establish a new ship build facility and deliver a world-leading frigate to the Royal Navy at pace. The DE&S delivery team sits at the heart of the Type 31 enterprise, creating the environment that enables all of our stakeholders to perform at their best."



## NEWS

# New integrated data system will boost lethality for British Army

**A novel Dismounted Data System, delivered under Project Asgard, will significantly improve soldiers' speed and accuracy in identifying and neutralising enemy targets.**

**Project Asgard is a shared endeavour between the British Army, Defence Digital, DE&S and industry. Its aim is to deliver integrated battlefield digital systems that provide troops with a decisive advantage against enemy forces.**

The Dismounted Data System (DDS) is the first technology to be tested and accepted under Project Asgard. This is a dismounted situational awareness capability that provides command and control functions, and has an open extensible architecture that allows Robotic and Autonomous Systems (RAS) to be fully integrated.

The DDS gives the Army the ability to network these elements for the first time. Dismounted soldiers, who are operating on foot, need to be able to adapt to changing battlefield conditions, respond to diverse threats and make rapid decisions under stress. Thanks to the DDS, the time taken to detect enemy targets and act is significantly reduced. Soldiers can survey an area using a digital map to identify threats, then remotely control drones to target and neutralise them.

Project Asgard was first announced in October 2024 and contracts were awarded to Rowden Technologies in January 2025. A prototype of the DDS was deployed just four months after contract award.

Chief of the General Staff General Sir Roly Walker credits this rapid delivery to positive working relationships. He said, "This quick turnaround was achieved through collaboration between industry technicians and military tradecraft experts, bringing together a consortium of military, civil service and industry partners to deliver the best possible product in the shortest amount of time."

The DDS was tested and used during NATO Exercise Hedgehog in Estonia, where British troops validated its efficiency and lethality.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Carman, 1st Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment said, "In my 21 years in the Army, I haven't seen a piece of kit that has changed and improved the way we fight as much as DDS."

Project Asgard is part of a broader initiative to build a unified digital targeting web across the UK Armed Forces by 2027. Drawing inspiration from the reconnaissance or 'recce-strike' model used by Ukrainian forces against Russian troops, Asgard combines digital surveillance technology with the ability to strike identified targets.

As a part of the digital targeting web, Asgard is allowing our forces to find, identify, track and then target opponents faster and more accurately than ever.

Sir Roly Walker added, "Project Asgard proves we can do things differently. It's not just a pathfinder for transformation; it's a transformation in how we find, fund, and fight with cutting-edge capabilities. Asgard exponentially reduces the time to see, decide and strike. What took hours now takes minutes."

Members of the UK Defence Innovation, Prove and Exploit team, who recently transferred from DE&S to the National Armaments Director Group, have been working with the Army, DE&S, Defence Digital and UK industry to drive Asgard's swift progress.

James Gavin, Head of the UK Defence Innovation, Prove and Exploit team, said, "Asgard is a great example of how collaboration between the Army, DE&S, Defence Digital and UK industry can accelerate technology into operational use, greatly increasing the Army's lethality on the battlefield and securing our position as a modern fighting force alongside our NATO allies. This is an example of how defence is adapting and delivering rapidly to meet the ever-evolving needs of a modern army."





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**HEXAGON**

## FEATURE

# The new enterprise approach supporting Merlin and Wildcat helicopters

**Bringing together DE&S teams and mission and industry partners, the Rotary Wing Enterprise (RWE) is delivering sustained, integrated helicopter support.**

**The Rotary Wing Enterprise (RWE) is an exciting and innovative programme that seeks to rationalise helicopter support contracts from 2026/27, providing better value for money and increasing availability.**

The RWE includes the Merlin, Wildcat, Apache and Chinook helicopters. They are under two separate teams and prime contractors: Merlin and Wildcat with Leonardo Helicopters UK, and Apache and Chinook with Boeing Defence UK.

RWE brings the organisations that operate, maintain and support these helicopters together, including Front-line Commands, DE&S and industry partners, into one aligned enterprise to provide sustained helicopter support.

The Merlin and Wildcat Rotary Wing Enterprise (MaW RWE) is the single support and training solution for the Merlin Mk2, Merlin Mk4/4A, Wildcat Mk1 Army Helicopter and Wildcat Mk2 Helicopter Maritime Attack.

Merlin and Wildcat helicopters have been supported over the last two decades through the Merlin and Wildcat Integrated Operational Support contracts. While these were innovative in their time, the next evolution is needed to reflect the changing world UK Defence operates in.

The complexity and inherent interdependencies of today's helicopter support environment means that issues can rarely be resolved by one party. Reflecting this, the MaW RWE will replace isolated decision-making and parallel

customer-supplier relationships with a single integrated enterprise, using shared data, tools, systems and processes.

In doing so, it will deliver increased operational availability, successful planned live and simulator-based tasks, and improved fleet health with Merlin and Wildcat fleets that are maintained and operated to the highest standard. Fundamental to this is a fresh perspective and a new culture built around enterprise behaviours, where constraints are addressed together and performance improvement is prioritised.

Captain Simon Brierley Royal Navy is the DE&S MaW RWE Team Leader, responsible for leading the programme. He said, "The MaW RWE's new organisational design will empower our teams and promote collective creativity through integrated joint teams focussed on output not function. Breaking down traditional barriers to form closer personal working relationships, sharing and exploiting the data across the enterprise."

The new enterprise approach is focussed on readiness and mission success, streamlining maintenance tasks and exploiting shared data to deliver faster repair solutions, and increased reliability and availability of parts. The MaW RWE will help teams resolve technical issues as close to the helicopter as possible through the evolution of operations centres, which enable embedded authorised partner representatives to directly help Force Commanders deliver their tasks.

The MaW RWE is also investing in digital solutions and systems to modernise Merlin and Wildcat support, assist with planning, and improve MaW RWE data capture and exploitation. Its members will share unified, accessible data and work in a collaborative environment that ensures issues are detected early and resolved in a structured way that supports long-term prevention.

Nigel Colman, Managing Director for Leonardo Helicopters UK, said, "Key to the success of the RWE design phase has been the close collaboration across the Front-line Commands, DE&S and Leonardo, enabling a truly holistic and enterprise-wide approach. MaW RWE is focused on ensuring Defence can continue to achieve the operational outputs of the Merlin and Wildcat fleets and Leonardo is proud to be a part of that."

The MaW RWE team has successfully employed this one team approach during the programme design phase. It will be expanded further during the implementation phase and through broader organisational change, as they transition from existing ways of doing business.

With the same approach being taken between DE&S, Joint Aviation Command and Boeing to deliver improved Apache and Chinook output, RWE represents the future of collaborative support to the front-line.





## NEWS

# UK and Türkiye agree step towards export of Typhoon aircraft

**A multi-billion pound deal to export Typhoon jets to Türkiye – which would secure thousands of UK jobs – is a step closer following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.**

**In July, Defence Secretary John Healey and Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the International Defence Industry Fair in Istanbul.**

Building on years of defence cooperation, they agreed that a future Typhoon exports deal would strengthen Türkiye's advanced combat air capabilities and help sustain the 20,000 UK jobs involved in the Typhoon supply chain.

The work of establishing the MOU was led by a team of MOD specialists who managed the highly complex arrangements underpinning the agreement and brought these together in a coherent way. The team was able to write the MOU and confirm it with their Turkish partners in just two months, calling on their experience, existing relationships and agility to deliver this.

The signing of the MOU brings the UK one step closer to the potential export of Typhoon fighter jets to Türkiye. Ongoing negotiations on the potential deal with Türkiye are being spearheaded by a Typhoon project team as part of the MOD's new International Collaboration and Export (ICE) organisation.

It comes as the Defence Secretary John Healey makes the drive for new defence export deals a high priority. The Defence Secretary said, "Today's agreement is a big step towards Türkiye buying UK Typhoon fighter jets. It shows this government's determination to secure new defence deals, building on our relationships abroad to deliver for British working people."

"Equipping Türkiye with Typhoons would strengthen NATO's collective defence, and boost both our countries' industrial bases by securing thousands of skilled jobs across the UK for years to come."

"The Strategic Defence Review stressed the importance of exports, and now with our new defence exports office, we are developing Defence's role as an engine for



economic growth, as a foundation of the Government's Plan for Change."

The Typhoon workshare agreement would see more than a third of each aircraft manufactured in the UK, with the rest produced by Eurofighter partner nations. Final production at BAE Systems' Warton facility would include radars from Edinburgh and engines from Bristol.

Charles Woodburn, BAE Systems Chief Executive, said, "This Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Türkiye and the UK underscores the importance of their long-standing defence cooperation through NATO and the critical role Typhoon plays in security and defence in Europe and the Middle East."

MOD's International Capability and

Strategy team, supported by what was then the Department for Business and Trade's UK Defence and Security Exports (now part of the NAD Group's defence export team as of 31 July) and the British Embassy in Ankara, led the inaugural capability talks to identify new areas for joint development and cooperation, signalling the UK's commitment to the defence partnership.

The UK also continues to invest in its own world-class Typhoon fleet, which will remain the backbone of the UK's air defence until at least the 2040s. The RAF's existing Typhoons are being upgraded over the next 15 years, further supporting skilled UK jobs.



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**SYSTEMATIC**

## NEWS

# UK Carrier Strike Group continues its Indo-Pacific deployment

**As the Carrier Strike Group arrives in Australia, Desider looks at one of the teams supporting its deployment and at the Group's largest joint exercise.**

**In July, the Carrier Strike Group arrived in Australia, continuing its eight-month deployment, and demonstrating the UK's commitment to Indo-Pacific security.**

Led by the Prince of Wales aircraft carrier, the Carrier Strike Group also includes destroyer HMS Dauntless, frigate HMS Richmond, and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) tanker Tidespring, supported by F35-B aircraft, and Merlin and Wildcat helicopters.

Several DE&S teams helped the Carrier Strike Group prepare for its departure and have continued to support it throughout its journey.

Biofouling – the collection of unwanted matter on a ship's hull – can transfer invasive aquatic species and can pose a serious threat to human, animal and plant life. To prevent this, Australia enforces strict regulations and requirements on all international vessels seeking access to its ports.

The DE&S SALMO Underwater Engineering (UWE) team has provided a range of practical in-water solutions to ensure the Group's full compliance with the Australian Government's biofouling management requirements and to allow it to dock in Darwin, the main city in Australia's Northern Territories.

SALMO UWE worked closely with teams across the Carrier Strike Group to coordinate underwater maintenance and cleaning operations throughout their outbound journey. The process involved in-depth hull cleans, a thorough biofouling inspection and a detailed report which had to be submitted prior to the Group's entry into Australian waters.

Across all four platforms, approximately 400 diving hours were dedicated to cleaning, inspection and evidence capture.

The Prince of Wales carrier alone required an area roughly equivalent to three football



pitches to be cleaned. This extensive work began in Portsmouth before deployment, where a large Remotely Operated Vehicle was moved up and down the hull to capture all of the growth, before the carrier moved to Glen Mallen to continue the cleaning and inspection.

The underwater cleaning across the platforms has since been carried out at three locations along the Group's route, in Crete, Oman and Singapore, with SALMO UWE personnel deployed to co-ordinate and support the effort.

After the Carrier Strike Group arrived in Australia, it joined over 35,000 personnel from 19 nations in Exercise Talisman Sabre 25. Running from 3 July to 4 August, more than 3,000 British forces personnel took part in the largest military exercise Australia has ever hosted.

From British Gurkhas to US Marines to Australian Defence Force amphibious specialists, a multinational force conducted military exercises across thousands of miles in Australia. The aim was to strengthen how nations work

together to safeguard global trade routes and maintain regional stability.

Talisman Sabre included live-fire and field training exercises, incorporating force preparation activities, amphibious landings, ground force manoeuvres, and air combat and maritime operations. All three branches of the UK Armed Forces were engaged, with the Royal Marines playing a central role throughout the exercise alongside a Ranger Battalion from the Army and RAF Voyager aircraft.

Commodore James Blackmore said, "This is a real demonstration of the UK and our partners' war-fighting capabilities. Exercise Talisman Sabre is also an opportunity for the UK to develop new levels of integration between systems and capabilities with the US, Australia and other partners, enhancing our interoperability even further and to unprecedented levels."

The exercise strengthens operational cooperation with international partners, ensuring our collective ability to maintain the rules-based international order that underpins global trade and security.



## NEWS

# MOD Police receives two new Intercept and Escort craft

**The DE&S Boats team has delivered the first two of 24 new craft to MOD Police at HM Naval Base Clyde, marking the start of a fleet modernisation programme.**

**Two rigid hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) have been delivered to MOD Police Marine Unit under the Intercept and Escort Craft (IEC) contract.**

Awarded to Zodiac Milpro UK in Swansea, the £13 million contract will see ageing boat classes replaced with a single standardised fleet. This will deliver improved operational effectiveness for MOD Police maritime patrols.

The new fleet replaces boats from the early 1990s. Their standardised design will increase the level of protection given to defence infrastructure, while simplifying training requirements as officers only need to learn how to operate one craft type, improving deployment flexibility and reducing operational costs. The new fleet also meets modern health and safety standards that will protect officers' exposure to vibrations while at sea.

The versatile crafts will provide a round-the-clock armed police presence across Britain's key naval installations in all weather conditions, including a rapid response capability within 20 minutes of any incident. Officers will use them to support the King's Harbour Master – the naval officer responsible for the safe navigation and security of vessels in naval ports. The multi-purpose RHIBs will also be used to escort submarines, capital ships and designated Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels.

Inspector McArdle, MOD Police Operational Support (Marine), said, "The team and I are very enthused to see these new Intercept and Escort Craft delivered, representing a significant upgrade in our maritime security capabilities. The enhanced manoeuvrability and all-weather performance will ensure we can maintain the highest standards of protection for our naval bases."

The IEC contract reinforces the Government's Plan for Change mission to maintain secure borders and robust national security,

and to support economic growth through efficient defence procurement. The contract supports several jobs at Zodiac Milpro's Swansea facility, where project management and systems integration take place.

Steven Evans, Technical Project Manager at Zodiac Milpro UK said, "The delivery of the first two Intercept and Escort Craft RHIBs to the UK MOD Police marks an important milestone in our work under the IEC contract. This achievement demonstrates an efficient collaboration between Zodiac Milpro, the DE&S team and MOD Police, along with UK design and suppliers providing enhanced technology for tracking, surveillance, navigation and communication capabilities. We look forward to continuing this partnership and supporting the vital work of the MOD."

The 24 craft will continue to be delivered to naval bases throughout 2025 and 2026. Sixteen will be arriving at HM Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde, before three vessels are delivered to HMNB Devonport and the final five delivered to HMNB Portsmouth.

Pete Lagden, DE&S Boats Team Leader, said, "This significant boost in capability is thanks to the collaborative efforts of DE&S, Navy Command, MOD Police and industry. It highlights the importance of this partnership, emphasising how the addition of these advanced and highly capable craft will empower the MOD Police to carry out their critical mission of safeguarding MOD maritime establishments and personnel. This achievement underscores the commitment to providing the MOD Police with top-tier equipment and unwavering support, enabling them to perform a multitude of vital security tasks with precision and confidence. It's a shining example of teamwork and innovation in action, ensuring the safety and security of those who serve."





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## NEWS

# £41 million contract boosts Royal Navy helicopter support services

**The Fleet Helicopter Support Unit contract will deliver two state-of-the-art AW139 helicopters to the Royal Navy and support training for UK and global operations.**

**The Royal Navy will benefit from enhanced helicopter support services following the award of a new contract by DE&S to Dorset-based small-medium enterprise HeliOperations.**

Operating from Portland on the Dorset coast from spring 2026, the five-year Fleet Helicopter Support Unit (FHSU) contract is worth up to £68 million and has the potential to be extended until 2036.

The AW139 helicopters will provide essential support to the operational sea training of Royal Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and partner nation ships and submarines. They will do this by transporting training specialists, equipment and other personnel on behalf of Commander Fleet Operational Standards and Training (FOST). FOST provides naval crews with highly realistic preparation for the threats that they may face on deployment. It also provides training which ensures that individual naval units are able to come together to operate as effective and integrated task groups.

The FHSU contract will help to ensure that personnel get the best possible training. It will also provide comprehensive technical support, maintenance, pilots and crew to Navy Command.

The two new AW139 helicopters will replace a single Dauphin N2. Produced by Leonardo Helicopters, the AW139 helicopter is a modern platform offering increased payload and range, situational awareness for its pilots and enhanced safety including greater ability to sustain flight after a single engine failure. Their modern capabilities will help the Royal Navy to meet its future requirements.



This contract award directly supports the Government's Plan for Change mission to kickstart economic growth by providing job opportunities in south-west England. It is creating 15 new jobs and will sustain 80 existing roles.

Mark Langrill, Director Air Rotary and Uncrewed Air Systems at DE&S, said, "We are delighted to award this contract to HeliOperations. The agreement will provide the Royal Navy with modern, reliable helicopter support, while supporting skilled jobs and economic growth in south-west England, reinforcing our commitment to working with small, high-end British enterprises that deliver for our armed forces."

HeliOperations is headquartered at the former site of the Portland Naval Air

Station, HMS Osprey. The company has experienced recent rapid expansion and has now established a strong presence across three UK-based locations. Beginning with Portland, they subsequently opened facilities in Somerton, Somerset and in Cudrose, Cornwall.

Steve Gladston, HeliOperations CEO said, "The FHSU contract is an important milestone for HeliOperations as part of our continuing development and growth. It provides the opportunity for further expansion of our fleet of AW139 helicopters, development of our infrastructure and greater opportunities for our staff while providing the Ministry of Defence with an efficient and effective service for the delivery of personnel and materiel to the Fleet."



## NEWS

# DE&S highlights

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



## US Air Force aircraft parts to be repaired at DE&S Deca

US Air Force operations across Europe will now benefit from faster, more cost-effective air system component repairs thanks to a partnership with DE&S Deca.

DE&S Deca has established a forward repair hub for US Air Force capabilities in Europe. Components arrive at RAF Mildenhall before travelling to Deca's North Wales facility for diagnosis, repair and reconditioning. The initiative enables critical components used in C-130 Hercules and KC135 Stratotanker aircraft to be repaired locally rather than shipped back to the US.

Project Atlantic Eagle has two pathways. Pathway Atlantic refers to repairs and reconditioning of US Air Force aircraft parts, while Pathway Eagle relates to test programme set (TPS) development, including transportability between UK and US systems. To date, the collaboration has delivered successful proof-of-concept repairs of Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) System components and ARC164 radio transmitters.

This innovative defence partnership demonstrates how UK expertise supports allied operations, while creating valuable skills development opportunities for British workers in strategic industries.

## Former minehunter sold by DE&S joins Romanian Navy

HMS Pembroke has been commissioned into the Romanian Navy where she will now contribute to NATO's mission of supporting security in the Black Sea. The former Mine Counter Measure Vessel was sold by DE&S' Defence Equipment Sales Authority (DESA) – now part of the Exports and Sales team within the National Armaments Director Group. The team is a key part of the UK's export enterprise, delivering equipment capability to allies through government-to-government export and sales of surplus defence equipment.

HMS Pembroke is 52.5 metres long, weighs 485 tonnes and has a range of more than 2,500 nautical miles without refuelling. She uses high-definition sonar to scour the world's seabed for mines and explosives which can then be safely destroyed. DE&S worked with Babcock to refurbish HMS Pembroke before she was transferred to her new home.

The refurbished vessel was commissioned into the Romanian Navy during a ceremony in Rosyth, Scotland. She will now be known as the Captain Constantin Dumitrescu (M217).

## Production complete on first tranche of Jackal 3 Army vehicles

The DE&S Jackal 3 delivery programme has reached a major milestone, with production completed on all 69 of the high-mobility transporter vehicles that make up tranche one.

Designed by Supacat and built by Babcock, the multi-role Jackal 3 is tailored to support the British Army in patrol, reconnaissance and logistics missions.

The Jackal 3 benefits from over a decade of development and advancement since the last iteration of Jackal vehicles was delivered to the British Army. The Jackal 2 was a class leader, but the vehicles delivered by the Jackal 3 programme will offer even better off-road performance. The Jackal 3 programme not only boosts operational capability but also supports skilled jobs in south-west England. Additionally, the contract has created over 100 new jobs across Babcock and Supacat's sites.

The first tranche of Jackal 3 vehicles, completed at Babcock's Devonport Facility, is set to be delivered to the British Army later this year.



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## PEOPLE

# Laura Bidwell

**Job title:**

Heavy Armour Automotive Improvement Programme Manager

**What does your role involve?**

I manage a programme delivering automotive improvements to the Heavy Armour fleet of platforms, addressing performance requirements, improving reliability, and reducing through-life costs and obsolescence. The equipment modifications we're delivering for the main battle tank form part of the input standard for the future Challenger 3 production line.

Broadly speaking, my day-to-day role sees me balancing delivery of procurement contracts with managing repairs through framework agreements and integration activity, as well as delivering support solutions, training and infrastructure requirements.

I'm also part of a challenge cohort that supports DE&S Land Equipment leadership groups. By offering a perspective outside of the management level, I can represent workforce views, provide scrutiny, test ideas and help hold senior leadership decision-making to account. Diversifying leadership spaces in this way offers a level of transparency, which is vital to help build relationships and create positive dynamics.

**What do you most enjoy about your job?**

Working in the Core Delivery area means we're at the forefront of delivering equipment and support to our mission partners, ensuring critical capability is where it needs to be. Stakeholder engagement and management are key to successful delivery and I thrive on building meaningful relationships. Having a brilliant team around me makes all the difference. Together we've built a culture of trust and inclusion while finding innovative solutions to complex challenges often at pace.

**What is your greatest accomplishment to date?**

I've recently been recognised with a Bravo Zulu commendation from DE&S for consistently exemplifying our values and core behaviours, contributing to our operating model transition and supporting my team through it. Another career highlight is being asked to speak directly with Chief of the General Staff General Sir Roly Walker during a visit to our Abbey Wood headquarters.

Personally, as a parent nothing makes me prouder than my kids maturing into confident, respectful and resilient individuals. Their conduct and attitude in every aspect of life means they are role models to others, and they are an absolute joy to be around.

**What keeps you energised about working at DE&S?**

We're doing work that matters. Even in the face of adversity and challenges, all around the organisation I see people delivering great things and I'm proud to be a part of that.

**Who or what has shaped who you are?**

Probably my education. It's given me such a valuable foundation far beyond just academic achievements; how I think, my outlook on life and confidence as I built skills I now use every day, not to mention an incredible group of friends.

**What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

I'm always singing and am part of several groups, including a research project demonstrating that group singing is great for wellbeing. Bristol has more choirs and vocal groups per capita than anywhere in the UK. I'd encourage anyone to join one and give it a go!

**What might surprise people about you?**

I speak French, Spanish, some Portuguese and, with an Italian best friend, I've naturally picked up a fair bit over the years.

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

The three Cs of life are Choices, Chances and Changes. Make a choice to take a chance if you want to see a change. And simply: be kind.







*During Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, an officer aboard HMS Dauntless uses a Stuart's Marine Distance Meter to check the distance to RFA Tidespring.*

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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