

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 January edition of Desider and a happy new year to all our readers.

We begin our first edition of 2026 with two long-form leader columns.

Our own DE&S CEO, Lieutenant General Simon Hamilton, kicks things off with a look ahead at UK defence procurement in 2026, following by Trevor Taylor, the highly respected RUSI Director of the Defence, Industries and Society Programme. Both articles are essential reading for anyone seeking an insight into the state of play for defence development, acquisition and support.

Trevor describes DE&S as an organisation facing “opportunity-filled disruption”, a phrase I might also apply to the context facing UK Defence as a whole in 2026. There’s no doubt that this will be a year filled with disruptions of all kinds; geopolitical, economic and technological.

When faced with disruption our best option is to focus on military, logistic, and economic resilience. If there might be storms on the horizon, we need to make sure our house is as strong, secure and well-protected as possible, so it can weather whatever comes.

Looking at DE&S and our sibling organisations in the National Armaments Director Group today, the UK’s defence enterprise feels more resilient, and more energised, than it has been in years.

I hope you agree that this energy is reflected in many of the stories we feature this month, including in how fully UK Defence has adopted new technologies to drive greater impact. The Q40 satellite navigation receiver, the Octopus interceptor drone and the Gladiator synthetic training system could not be farther apart in size, scope or purpose. And yet they share common characteristics. They are all making the most of new innovations to drive efficiencies, and better protect our people, our allies and our communications.

There are great things happening in the new UK

Defence Innovation team, and you can expect to read about their work in upcoming editions.

The Octopus interceptor story appears in a round-up of Ukraine stories, which captures another aspect of our growing resilience: the strength we find through stronger alliances and international collaboration. The UK’s support for Ukraine, which began soon after Russia’s full-scale invasion, has remained steadfast ever since, growing to include not just direct equipment delivery, but also development cooperation and investment. Our next edition will cover the Ukraine conflict in more detail, when we mark the anniversary of the conflict.

Sticking with the subject of partnerships, this edition also celebrates a record achievement for UK Defence, which last year supported over £20 billion worth of defence export deals. These agreements draw the UK and its allies closer together, while injecting fresh investment into our domestic defence industry. The International Collaboration & Exports team is another one you will be hearing more from this year.

I’d like to end by congratulating Major General Phil Prosser on his new role in the NAD Group. Phil will be taking up the role of Chief of Defence Logistics and Support from October of this year. Desider is proud to have worked with the current CDLS Vice Admiral Andy Kyte on several occasions, and we look forward to welcoming Phil to our pages later this year.

Thank you for reading our magazine and I hope you continue to find our stories of defence procurement, innovation and support insightful, educational and interesting. After 206 editions, this magazine is still going strong. We remain a trusted source for defence news, but we believe there are ways we can make our publication even better for our loyal readers. We have big plans in 2026, though I won’t give the game away yet. You’ll just have to keep reading to find out.

SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

"A transformed Defence that doesn't just keep pace, it overtakes the threat"

DE&S CEO Lieutenant General Simon Hamilton kicks off the new year with a look ahead at UK defence procurement in 2026.

It doesn't take a crystal ball to see that 2026 is going to be a challenging year for every person committed to the defence of the UK and our allies.

But these are challenges we should be excited about addressing. In many ways UK Defence goes into the new year in a better position to face turbulent times, grab new opportunities and exploit them to their full potential than at any point in the last decade.

Around the world, we are operating in a more unpredictable, contested space, with tough economic and geopolitical headwinds blowing in from many directions, and threats to our security, both overt and in grey zones, on the rise.

As defence professionals, our job is to continuously balance and rebalance risk factors to ensure the best outcome for our nation and our allies. We cannot eliminate 'risk' or stop it evolving, but we can, and are, building agility and resilience into our systems to make sure we are prepared for the unknown and able to respond with speed and strength.

Our government remains committed to a robust, modernised Defence and to year-on-year increases in

defence spending between now and 2029. Alongside this, the significant structural reforms we began making last year – including the standing up of the NAD Group – are ensuring that an increased budget is made to work as hard and stretch as far as possible.

As CEO of DE&S, I'm focused on how we can meet our operational requirements by procuring and delivering battle-winning, life-saving solutions with greater tempo and scale, in the most efficient and effective way.

There's no doubt in my mind everyone working in DE&S and across Defence is fully dedicated to this task, and, as we start the new year, I want to ensure the structures surrounding them and the systems at their fingertips are aligned to that goal.

And, as a member of the NAD Group's senior leadership, I'm pleased to see DE&S fit into this greater whole, as part of a system of systems that encompasses the entire lifecycle for each capability, from its digital prototype to its export opportunity and its eventual disposal.

The NAD Group is evolving into a dynamic organisation, bringing together expertise in science and innovation, digital technology, infrastructure, support, acquisition, integration, and

international collaboration and exports. Working together, we are becoming more resilient, innovative and, ultimately, more ready for the future.

2025 was a pivotal year of change for the UK's defence enterprise.

With our partners across industry, government and the armed forces, we built a new canvas for our work, and in 2026 we will begin to add in the details, colour and definition.

Over the next few months, we will be taking some big steps towards fully standing-up the NAD Group. This will be the first full year where we are led by a new permanent NAD, Rupert Pearce.

His appointment is a signal to our enterprise, allies and adversaries that the UK is serious about driving military strength and economic growth.

These changes will help us meet the huge investments being made in Defence with greater collaboration and partnership; between teams and departments, with industry, and with our allies.

There will be a continued focus on the autonomous and digital systems we need to deliver the integrated 'sense, detect and effect' operational webs that ensure greater lethality and tactical advantage.

Data will be key, with unified

SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

information architecture and advanced sensors across all domains working together to inform accurate, rapid decision-making.

DE&S and the NAD Group as a whole will continue to work with our industry partners to deliver on these ambitions. I'm personally committed to listening more to my colleagues in industry and to ensuring that their insights help to guide our work.

UK Defence will place greater emphasis than ever before on

supporting UK companies, especially start-ups and small to medium-sized enterprises, to build Defence into an engine for growth as well as security.

A key moment for UK Defence in 2026 will be the Defence Investment Plan (DIP), the UK's blueprint for how and where we will prioritise defence resources to guarantee we deliver the best technology to our front-line forces, and importantly, invest in and grow the UK economy. We expect to publish the DIP in the coming weeks, once this

pivotal document is completely ready.

My vision for the coming year is to be fit for the future; to support the rapid modernisation of our war-fighters, and drive innovation, resilience and growth across the UK and with our allies.

We need a transformed Defence that doesn't just keep pace, it overtakes the threat. We need to work differently. We need to be as resilient, as fast paced, as innovative as possible. And I have every faith that we will do just that.



NEWS

Ukraine support round-up

The UK continues to be a steadfast ally of Ukraine's war effort. Here we summarise some recent stories about the ways in which the UK is supporting Ukraine.

UK accelerates £200 million funding for deployment to Ukraine

The UK Government has allocated £200 million of funding to prepare the UK Armed Forces to deploy as part of the Multinational Force for Ukraine (MNFU).

The funding will equip UK forces to secure Ukraine's future and reinforce long-term security guarantees. It follows the declaration of intent signed by leaders of the UK, France and Ukraine in Paris, which confirmed that British and French troops will deploy to Ukraine in the event of a peace deal.

The £200 million has been allocated for this year and will specifically fund preparations for an MNFU deployment, such as upgrades to vehicles, communications systems, new counter-drone protection and additional force-protection equipment.

Following the announcement, the Defence Secretary John Healey said that investment would ensure "the UK's Armed Forces are ready to deploy, and lead, the Multinational Force Ukraine, because a secure Ukraine means a secure UK."

UK production of interceptor drones due to begin

Production of British-built Octopus interceptor drones will soon begin, boosting Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russian attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure.

Developed by Ukrainian engineers and refined by British industry, Octopus interceptors use front-line battlefield data to stay one step ahead of Russia's Shahed-style drones. Octopus drones are low-cost, quick to produce and designed for mass manufacture. Each one costs less than a tenth of the drone it is designed to destroy, giving Ukraine a sustainable way to defend its skies at scale.

Battlefield data is fed directly into UK production lines, allowing rapid upgrades and faster delivery to the front-line. The design is updated every six weeks to continuously out-pace Russian tactics.

The UK aims to produce and send thousands of Octopus drones back to Ukraine each month.

UK to develop new tactical ballistic missiles for Ukraine

The UK will develop new tactical ballistic missiles to boost Ukraine's firepower and its ability to defend itself from Russian attacks.

Under Project Nightfall, the UK has launched a competition to rapidly develop ground-launched missiles with a range of more than 500 km, designed to operate in high-threat battlefields.

Project Nightfall is focused on rapid prototyping, spiral development, resilience to electromagnetic interference and the ability to scale manufacturing quickly, particularly in the UK. It plans to award three industry teams with £9 million development contracts to design, develop and deliver their first three missiles for test firing within 12 months.

Nightfall missiles will be capable of being launched from a range of vehicles, firing multiple times in quick succession and withdrawing within minutes – allowing Ukrainian forces to hit key military targets before Russian forces can respond.

Nightfall is intended to provide Ukraine with a powerful, cost-effective long-range strike option, with minimal foreign export controls. They will carry a 200 kg conventional high-explosive warhead, and will be able to meet a production rate of 10 missiles per month, with a maximum price of £800,000 each.

The detailed Nightfall requirements were shared with industry partners that had signed the required confidentiality and security arrangements in December 2025. The deadline to receive Nightfall proposals is 9 February 2026, with development contracts to be awarded soon after.





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SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

How DE&S should respond to “opportunity-filled disruption”

Trevor Taylor, Director of the Defence, Industries and Society Programme at the Royal United Services Institute, gives his prescription for how DE&S, and UK Defence, might evolve in the year ahead.



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

DE&S is an organisation facing extensive change, which I might characterise as opportunity-filled disruption.

In the coming months it will become, for many staff, both a more demanding and interesting place to work. These two adjectives are compatible for motivated people: demanding and interesting jobs can stimulate dedication and commitment in those tasked with their delivery. Change presents an opportunity for defence acquisition staff to learn and grow, to regenerate their collective public reputation, and move beyond accusations that the UK's procurement system is broken.

A starting point is to recognise that defence procurement and support, key DE&S responsibilities, form a genuinely difficult realm of activity because so many balls have to be juggled in a dynamic threat and technology environment. This is a message to be absorbed by DE&S' stakeholders, as well as its staff.

Consider three major dimensions of change in the defence sphere.

First in terms of adversaries, the deterrence of further Russian aggression, even after a ceasefire in Ukraine, is an urgent need. The January 2026 commitment to deploy UK forces into Ukraine is one element of deterrence, but equally important will be a credible western readiness to deny Russia any hope of quick future success. This means that UK forces need to be structured and ready for a prolonged military campaign. Logistics and supply chain assurance and agility must be priority agenda items for DE&S.

Second in terms of allies and alliances, the risk of extensive reliance on any one nation has undeniably increased and demands NATO and other alliances look carefully at their capabilities and supply chains to ensure these are resilient.

And third the accelerating rates of technology change in

SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

many areas mean that the separate stages of the development and procurement cycle appear to have lost some of their validity. There is now little chance that a detailed and precise requirement set, intended to be the basis for a contract, will remain valid during the time taken to select a contractor and agree terms, let alone deliver a product, especially for major platforms and systems. Electronics, computing, data transmission and storage possibilities, as well as threats, will all have moved on within even a five-year period.

Reflecting that, DE&S should explore flexible, less detailed requirement documents, which are more able to evolve regularly and sometimes quickly. The demonstration phase will often bleed into manufacturing, as it did from an early stage in the US with the F-35 aircraft.

UK Defence should thus be seeking to acquire major systems that have been designed for agile upgrades and modification from the outset.

A possible model for this is the Global Combat Air Programme with its emphasis on an initial minimum viable capability and an in-built amenability to change.

Such amenability can involve additional early cost, for instance, for computer storage space and electric power provision that may not be needed for any immediate purpose. Helpfully, GCAP has been a government-industry partnered effort from its inception.

The next consideration has to be what the Government, through its policies, is expecting from defence acquisition. Simply put, it is seeking a wide range of benefits from spending on defence equipment and services. Expected acquisition benefits include capable armed forces linked with UK operational independence, the sustainment of valued in-country defence industrial capabilities, and the generation of economic prosperity across the UK.

As well as demands from the military, in many areas DE&S will also need to consider industry's need for continuity of work. Mitigating this problem, if the UK can be a successful exporter, both industry and national prosperity should be beneficiaries.

These factors alone, plus other considerations, stress the importance of partnered rather than confrontational relationships between government and industry. Mutual trust should be an important aspect of partnering. Trust has to be earned by both sides and involves some risks, but it also means lower costs and faster progress.

The promotion of innovative solutions to defence challenges through the better mobilisation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is also on the Government's wish list. This is not obviously compatible with a historic governmental inclination towards suppliers with a track record of relevant experience and a solid funding base.

Two other problems are that participating in formal competitive bidding can be costly and time consuming for small firms, while the MOD profit margins allowed through single source contracts (around 10 percent) fall below those expected by venture capitalists. This group tends to spread risky investments, recognising that many will fail, but relying on a few to be very profitable. They are often looking for profit rates above 20 percent.

What some see as a significant preference among many government commercial staff for the cheapest bid is not easily compatible with using defence money to deliver on such an array of objectives. 'Value' involves many factors that need to be weighted, but different stakeholders are likely to have different preferences.

To support the delivery of these benefits and objectives, the Government has created the National Armaments Director (NAD) and charged him and the NAD Group with leading a broad stable of enabling organisations, of which DE&S is but one part.

If this is to work, it is important first that NAD Group organisations see themselves as members of a single team rather than separate bodies each with a 'stovepipe' mentality about the importance, indeed primacy, of their own area of responsibility. Compromise and flexibility will be needed throughout.

The interactions between organisations, and the individuals within them, including the DE&S staff I mentioned at the start of this column, must recognise the importance of open and cooperative internal and external relationships rather than relying excessively on documented processes. The right balance will be difficult, especially for new staff who may feel the absence of written guidance, but it is worth pursuing.

A final consideration is that the NAD Group does not have responsibility for managing all the Defence Lines of Development (such as people and doctrine). As such, inter-governmental and departmental cooperation beyond the NAD Group will be needed.

NEWS

Challenger 3 reaches key milestone

The British Army's next-generation main battle tank has passed a major development milestone with its first crewed live-firing trials on UK soil.

Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) has successfully completed a crewed live-firing of the Challenger 3 main battle tank, the UK's powerful, battle-winning new capability.

The latest trials, held at an MOD site in Scotland, marked the first UK firing of a newly developed main battle tank in more than 30 years. This is a landmark achievement and a testament to the close collaboration between RBSL, DE&S and the British Army programme team.

The trial followed a carefully phased firing programme, beginning with remote operation before progressing to crewed firing by RBSL personnel. This is part of the assurance of the tank's capabilities and systems before it enters service.

Challenger 3 is equipped with the 120mm smoothbore L55A1 cannon manufactured by Rheinmetall Waffe Munitions. It fires the latest kinetic energy anti-tank rounds alongside programmable multi-purpose ammunition.

The programme now moves into its next phase, with additional crewed firing activity and initial reliability growth trials planned for later this year as Challenger 3 progresses towards full operational capability.

Dave Clark, DE&S Challenger 3 Main Battle Tank Project Leader, said, "The first crewed live-firing of Challenger 3 marks a major programme milestone and another significant step towards delivering the Challenger 3. It is testament to the outstanding effort of the joint DE&S, Army and RBSL team who, despite challenging Scottish weather, successfully demonstrated the impressive capability of this platform. Another milestone down – and more to come."

Challenger 3 is the centrepiece of the British Army's armoured modernisation programme and will deliver a step change in lethality, survivability and digital integration. The platform will sustain the UK's heavy armour capability out to at least 2040.

Army Senior Responsible Owner Mark Colley said, "This milestone reflects the benefits of the close collaboration between the MOD and industry. The successful crewed firing of Challenger 3 demonstrates tangible progress in delivering the



modernised, main battle tank that the British Army needs."

The contract has also attracted a £40 million inward investment in RBSL's Telford facility, utilising a European supply chain, the majority being skilled UK-based SMEs spread throughout the UK, from the West Midlands, Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne to the Isle of Wight.

Rebecca Richards, RBSL Managing Director, said, "This is a hugely significant achievement for the Challenger 3 programme and a testament to the skill and dedication of the teams delivering it.

"Firing the vehicle first remotely and then with a crew in the turret reflects the enormous amount of work that has gone into ensuring the design is safe, robust and ready. Seeing Challenger 3 fire successfully with a crew in the turret demonstrates just how far the programme has progressed and marks a proud moment for UK armoured vehicle development."

NEWS



The UK and Germany sign £52 million artillery contract

State-of-the-art mobile artillery, which can hit targets up to 70 km away, has been secured thanks to a new deal.

As a result of a £52 million joint procurement with Germany, the UK will receive an Early Capability Demonstrator (ECD) of the cutting-edge Remote Controlled Howitzer 155 mm (RCH 155) artillery system.

This demonstrates the deepening defence cooperation under the 2024 Trinity House agreement, which committed both nations to greater military collaboration. A further two ECDs will go to Germany for joint testing.

Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry Luke Pollard said, "The British Army will soon have new artillery that can fire on the move. This builds on lessons from Ukraine, enabling our army to hit targets 70 km away and move fast away from returning fire so they can fire again."

"The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the importance of being able to fire rapidly and move, and it is such lessons that are informing our procurement decisions and helping us deliver on the Strategic Defence Review."

The RCH 155 delivers a long-term solution for the British Army's Mobile Fires Platform requirement. It is mounted on to a Boxer armoured vehicle from where it can spring into action in seconds, fire eight rounds per minute out to a range of 70 km, and immediately redeploy, making it faster and harder for adversaries to target.

The RCH 155 can strike in any direction without repositioning and, thanks to advanced automation, it can be operated by just two crew members. It represents a step-change in mobile artillery – combining devastating firepower with the ability to rapidly reposition.

Edward Cutts, British Army Senior Responsible Owner for Mobile Fires, said, "This joint demonstrator programme exemplifies the strength and ambition of the Trinity House Agreement. By working hand-in-hand with Germany, we're not only accelerating the delivery of world-class artillery capability for the British Army, but doing so more efficiently and cost-effectively than either nation could achieve alone."

As part of the contract, the UK and Germany will share test data and facilities. This ensures both nations get world-class equipment, accelerating procurement timelines while reducing costs, delivering better value for taxpayers and an enhanced capability.

This collaboration ensures soldiers will be equipped with cutting-edge technology and strengthens the interoperability between UK and German forces, which is vital to NATO's collective defence.

Colonel Rob Hollinrake, DE&S Mobile Fires Platform (MFP) Team Leader, said, "This has been a 'One Team', cross-profession effort, with the DE&S MFP and Boxer teams working alongside the Army's Close Support Fires Programme, with industry partners ARTEC and KANDS, and with our German colleagues in the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support (BAAINBw). The team has worked collaboratively in a challenging and complex environment to deliver under time pressure. It has been humbling to see the dedication, cooperation and effort that everyone has brought to delivering this contract."

NEWS

New Remote Command Centres to support the transition to a hybrid Royal Navy

Sailors will be better protected when detecting and clearing sea mines thanks to new technology giving them greater control over autonomous equipment.

NEWS



DE&S has awarded Thales UK a contract to design, develop and deliver improved command and control of autonomous mine counter-measure capabilities.

An initial agreement will see UK Defence invest £10 million and, under the spiral acquisition principles outlined in the 2025 Defence Industrial Strategy, there is potential for the total investment to grow to up to £100 million.

The new Remote Command Centres (RCCs) will enable Royal Navy sailors to direct and control multiple autonomous boats and offboard systems simultaneously, anywhere in the world, seamlessly integrating platforms, systems and sub-systems. It will allow them to detect the threat of a sea mine and either neutralise it from a safe distance or avoid it altogether.

This investment marks a significant step forward in the transformation of the Royal Navy's mine counter-measures capability under the Mine Hunting Capability (MHC) programme.

Andy Lapsley, DE&S Mine Hunting Capability Team Leader, said, "These next-generation Remote Command Centres will transform how the Royal Navy conducts mine counter-measures operations. This contract demonstrates the potential that can be released by harnessing the combined strengths of DE&S, the Royal Navy and our UK supply chain, as envisaged by the Defence Industrial Strategy."

"Delivering the flexibility, speed and operational advantage our sailors need is a crucial step on our journey towards the hybrid Navy and demonstrates the UK's world-leading position in both mine counter-measures and maritime autonomous systems (MAS)."

The RCC builds on the existing Portable Operations Centre, which Thales has already delivered to the Royal Navy. Both are compact, rapidly deployable command systems for naval mine-hunting operations, which use AI-powered software to plan, control and analyse drone missions. The RCC will incorporate top software products from across the MHC supply chain to give the Royal Navy an even more versatile and effective set of mine counter-measure tools.

Navy Command Programme Director Jon Reed-Beviere said, "The new Remote Command Centres will give Royal Navy personnel unprecedented command and control over our autonomous mine hunting systems. This integrated approach allows us to operate multiple unmanned platforms simultaneously and integrate new capability in the future, dramatically increasing our effectiveness while reducing the risk to our sailors. It represents a paradigm shift in how we deliver mine countermeasures capability."

Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry Luke Pollard said, "By embracing autonomous maritime technology, the Royal Navy is pioneering innovation to help keep our sailors safe at sea. This is backed by a UK defence industry delivering world-class capabilities that exemplify how defence acts as an engine for growth."

Thales will work collaboratively with other mine-hunting capability suppliers, including TKMS Atlas UK, SeeByte and QinetiQ, under MOD direction, to integrate current and future MAS and software into the new RCCs.

Thales UK's significant overall investment in UK mine counter-measures has sustained more than 200 highly skilled jobs – particularly at its Somerset, Stockport and Plymouth sites.

Paul Armstrong, Managing Director for Underwater Systems activities at Thales UK, said, "Thales is honoured to continue its central role in delivering mine counter-measures capability to the Royal Navy, building on our proven heritage."

"By collaborating across the supply chain, we are committed to supporting the UK with world-class technology and fostering growth and high-value skilled jobs across our UK operations."

DVD2026



WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER THE ARMY THE NATION NEEDS

SECURE AT HOME, STRONG ABROAD

DVD2026 will provide opportunities for industry and MOD stakeholders to collaborate. It will showcase cooperation between Defence and industry, our national resilience, and how we are harnessing skills, expertise, British engineering and incorporating the most modern technology to build the Army the nation needs

ATTENDEES WILL BENEFIT FROM

- Enhanced land equipment knowledge and a better understanding of UK industry and the innovations that can protect the nation.
- Strengthened collaboration, aligning land vehicle capability development and supporting industry innovation and national security.
- Increased export opportunities, better informed capability planning and influence in key MOD decisions.
- Direct engagement with Army HQ and National Armaments Director Group staff to understand MOD needs, procurement and support, plus industry collaboration.
- Industry engagement to develop ideas and generate greater understanding of innovation and technology.
- The chance to network with colleagues and peers from around the UK.

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FEATURE



2025 UK Defence exports reach record high

From the biggest-ever warship deal to the largest fighter jet export agreement in decades, UK Defence teams supported over £20 billion worth of defence export deals in 2025, the highest value since records began.

Teams from across UK Defence have delivered the best year for UK defence exports in more than four decades.

2025 saw the UK secure over £20 billion worth of growth-boosting defence export deals. These included a £10 billion agreement with Norway to export at least five Type 26 frigates, which will support 4,000 UK jobs across more than 430 businesses, and the sale by Devon-based company Supacat of 18 transporter vehicles to Czechia.

A further 20,000 British jobs were secured through an £8 billion deal for the UK to sell 20 Typhoon jets to Türkiye. This is complemented by the sale of 12 C-130J aircraft to Türkiye at a combined value of over £550 million, safeguarding 1,400 jobs in Cambridge. In addition to boosting the economy, such deals are helping to enhance NATO's collective security.

To strengthen the UK's position as a leading defence exporter, the UK joined the Agreement on Defence Export Controls in 2025, alongside France, Germany and Spain. This will make it easier for British business to export to partner nations.

These achievements come as the MOD embarks on its most significant programme of reform in over 50 years, including establishing the National Armaments Director (NAD) Group and, within it, the International Collaboration & Exports (IC&E) team.

NAD Rupert Pearce said, "These export successes reflect the NAD Group's mission to strengthen international partnerships while driving economic growth at home. By working as one integrated organisation, we're facilitating access to UK defence capability for our allies, creating jobs and prosperity across the country whilst building the collective deterrence we all need."

The UK is aiming to make defence an 'engine for growth'

through increased global sales. Defence exports are creating jobs and boosting economic growth, as well as supporting global security.

Avril Jolliffe, Director General of IC&E, said, "Global security demands an always-on approach to international collaboration and exports. As announced in the Strategic Defence Review, we're creating a single point of focus that connects UK industry directly with international opportunities. This isn't just about selling equipment – it's about building defence partnerships that support collective security and UK economic objectives."

The UK is set to secure further export deals with NATO allies throughout 2026. This includes plans to export systems such as advanced aircraft, the latest maritime technology and systems, and armoured transport vehicles.

Luke Pollard, Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, said, "We are showing again how this government is delivering on our pledge to make defence an engine for economic growth across the country while boosting our security and that of our allies.

"By winning the historic deal to build Type 26 frigates for Norway, we are driving growth in Scotland and across the UK while better equipping our combined navies to counter the threat from Russia in the North Atlantic. And by exporting Typhoon fighter jets to Türkiye, we are securing high-skilled jobs in Lancashire, Scotland and across the UK, and helping strengthen NATO's southern flank.

"We are committed to working with our allies and defence industries to make sure the UK is a leader in global defence exports, and there's more to come in 2026."

NEWS

Contract extension for cutting-edge synthetic training system

A two-year contract extension will sustain the multi-domain Gladiator system, enabling continued training and enhancing mission readiness for the UK's Armed Forces.

DE&S' Synthetic Environments and Training Team has awarded a £16.9 million contract extension to Boeing Defence UK to continue supporting the innovative Gladiator system until 2028.

The Gladiator Support Contract will run for two years and three months, with an option to extend it by an additional three months. This extension ensures the system remains at the forefront of synthetic training for the UK Armed Forces.

It will enable the integration of essential platforms into Gladiator's synthetic training environment while maintaining its operational capability. The new platforms will include Air Command & Control, Fast Air platforms (such as the Typhoon and F-35B Lightning), and Joint Fires land and air platforms.

Gladiator provides high-fidelity, cost-effective operational training in a secure synthetic environment. The MOD-owned system, operated and maintained by a combined team of service personnel, industry experts and civilians at RAF Waddington's Air Battlespace Training Centre, allows for training across multiple domains.

By linking simulators across the UK and with partner nations, Gladiator enables training without the constraints of environmental factors or operational security concerns. As such, it operates at a scale and complexity that cannot be achieved in live environments.

Mark Bunyan, Synthetic Environments and Training Team Leader at DE&S, said, "This contract ensures continuity of a vital capability while we integrate additional platforms into Gladiator. The system represents a strategic investment in our armed forces' readiness, allowing geographically dispersed training systems to come together in a secure multi-domain virtual environment to train together in complex scenarios."

The contract extension aligns with the Strategic Defence Review's ambitions to transform armed forces training. The review emphasises the importance of investing in new facilities and synthetic environments to deliver scalable and cost-effective training solutions.

Group Captain Paul Froome, Senior Responsible Owner for Gladiator in Air Capability within Air Command, said, "Gladiator is critical for enabling aircrew and air C2 aviators to train



collectively in a realistic, networked environment that replicates the complexity of modern multi-domain operations. This contract allows us to continue to integrate platforms and decision-makers in a synthetic battlespace, which builds interoperability, enhances mission readiness and ensures crews can operate as a cohesive force under contested conditions."

The Gladiator programme has also contributed significantly to the UK economy by creating jobs and supporting small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the country. Boeing Defence UK has partnered with 14 SMEs and technology providers, investing over £24 million in the local supply chain.

Thom Beckenridge, Managing Director of Boeing UK, said, "We're proud to continue our partnership with the MOD on this cutting-edge training system. Gladiator represents a step-change in capability for the UK, allowing crews and ground forces from all three services, along with the UK's allies and partners, to train in a secure and seamless virtual environment. Working with our UK technology suppliers, we're delivering an open-source solution that meets current and future training needs whilst supporting over 50 highly skilled jobs across the UK."

NEWS

New five-year agreement ensures continuing Typhoon fleet support

A five-year contract extension, awarded to QinetiQ, ensures the UK's Typhoon aircraft are ready to protect UK airspace and join NATO allies on operations.



RAF Typhoon aircraft will continue to receive mission-critical specialist engineering support following a £205 million contract extension awarded to the QinetiQ-led Engineering Delivery Partnership (EDP).

The five-year EDP agreement, awarded by DE&S, ensures Typhoon jets remain safe, airworthy and able to react quickly to changing situations to protect UK airspace and join NATO allies on operations.

It includes support for the Typhoon capability development and integration programme, as well as for rapid responses to emergent issues and safeguarding compliance with regulatory policy.

The agreement will be delivered by the EDP, through which QinetiQ, Atkins, BMT, Frazer-Nash, KBR and over 380 companies provide the MOD with high-value engineering services to support critical defence programmes.

The contract extension supports 250 highly skilled jobs across the UK, including those at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Teams at locations including MOD Boscombe Down and QinetiQ's facilities in Malvern and Farnborough will deliver the technical expertise needed to keep the fleet operational and to further develop it to meet future needs. Overall, EDP sustains more than 3,000 jobs across the UK and over 290 of the

companies in the partnership are SMEs. The Typhoon is the RAF's primary combat aircraft. These fast jets protect UK skies around the clock through Quick Reaction Alert duties. They also deploy on operations worldwide, and have supported NATO missions in Eastern Europe and conducted strike operations in the Middle East.

Lyndon Hoyle, DE&S Typhoon Team Leader, said, "This contract ensures our Typhoon fleet continues to receive the expert engineering support it needs to remain safe and ready for missions. Working alongside DE&S and RAF colleagues, QinetiQ's team has delivered outstanding technical, airworthiness and safety expertise over many years, and this extension allows us to build on that proven partnership. Their work is essential to keeping these aircraft safe and capable, whether protecting UK airspace or supporting operations worldwide alongside our allies."

The EDP provides technical, airworthiness and safety expertise, and support to capability enhancement. This support is essential for maintaining and developing aircraft that travel at twice the speed of sound and operate in demanding conditions.

QinetiQ has delivered engineering support to Typhoon since the inception of the programme and the proven delivery model under EDP continues to represent value for money whilst meeting the RAF's operational requirements.

Air Cdr Nick Lowe, RAF Head Capability Delivery Combat Air and Typhoon Senior Responsible Officer, said, "The extension of this contract underscores our unwavering commitment to ensuring the Typhoon fighter jet remains at the forefront of operational capability, safety, and technical excellence. This agreement is vital to maintaining the Typhoon's critical role in safeguarding our national security and support to NATO. By continuing this partnership, we are ensuring that our war-fighters have the reliable, cutting-edge tools they need to succeed in their missions, both now and in the future."

Through the contract, QinetiQ will also invest in new digital and AI technologies and methods, increasing the pace of delivery.

Steve Wadey, Group Chief Executive Officer at QinetiQ, said, "This contract is a testament to our commitment to the Government's defence as an engine for growth agenda. We're backing UK businesses, modernising how we deliver and ensuring the operational readiness of our armed forces."

NEWS



News highlights

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

HMS Glasgow reaches milestone as diesel generators fired up

Type 26 frigate HMS Glasgow has reached a significant milestone with her diesel generators successfully started for the first time. This marks a crucial step towards the ship becoming operational and means HMS Glasgow is now generating her own power as she continues to be built at BAE Systems' Glasgow shipyard.

As part of a hybrid propulsion system, the diesel generators provide reliable power for the ship's equipment and will propel her quietly through the water – a crucial capability for the vessel's primary anti-submarine warfare role.

When complete, the eight Type 26 frigates will be the backbone of the Royal Navy's surface fleet, providing critical protection for the UK's Continuous At-Sea Deterrent and Carrier Strike Group.

The Type 26 programme represents a £7.9 billion investment in UK shipbuilding. It directly supports 2,000 jobs, including apprenticeships, at BAE Systems' Govan and Scotstoun shipyards, with a further 4,000 roles sustained across the wider UK supply chain until 2035.

More than 120 UK suppliers have been contracted for the programme, with BAE Systems committing to invest £1.2 billion in UK manufacturing through sub-contracts.

HMS Glasgow and her fellow Type 26 ships are expected to enter service between 2028 and 2035, and will be based at HMNB Devonport in Plymouth.

Lt Gen Sir Rob Magowan appointed Commander of Cyber & Specialist Operations Command

Defence Secretary John Healey has confirmed that His Majesty The King has approved the appointment of Lieutenant General Sir Rob Magowan as the new Commander of Cyber & Specialist Operations Command (CSOC). He will succeed General Sir Jim Hockenhull as Commander of CSOC in March 2026.

CSOC brings together over 22,000 specialists across 120 sites around the world. Lt Gen Magowan will be responsible for overseeing UK Defence's cyber and specialist forces, including deployments and operations through the Permanent Joint Headquarters, cyber experts, medical support, intelligence, educators and UK defence attachés.

Lt Gen Magowan has had a distinguished career spanning more than 30 years of service, including serving as Deputy Commander of UK Strategic Command – CSOC's predecessor – from 2020 to 2022. After this, he served as Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Force Development).

Lt Gen Magowan said, "It is an immense privilege to be selected to lead CSOC. I feel the burden of responsibility as I prepare to take over from General Sir Jim Hockenhull. And so I should – never in my career have we faced such an acute threat. Our nation depends on us to meet this challenge."

Defence personnel recognised in 2026 New Year Honours

Personnel from DE&S and across UK Defence have been recognised for their outstanding contributions in the 2026 New Year Honours list.

The honours celebrate exceptional service across Defence, including crucial contributions made in the areas of logistics, capability and military communications. The awards honour both military and civilian staff whose work ensures our armed forces have the capabilities they need to protect the nation.

Included in this, Richard Nixon, Team Leader in Options and Commissioning, and RAF Group Captain Andrew March, who works in Core Delivery, have been made Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). Alongside them, Paul Blundell, Core Delivery Team Leader, and Aimee Louise Anderson, Dstl Project Leader, have been appointed as Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

PEOPLE

Teresa Voong

Job title: Executive Assistant to the Head of the Power, Propulsion and Auxiliaries (PPA) Team

What does your role involve?

In my role I'm entrusted with handling tasks that free up the Head of the PPA Team's time, allowing them to focus on their strategic duties and key responsibilities. My role can feel like plate spinning because I manage such a variety of responsibilities. The nature of the work is very reactive and fast-paced.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

Stakeholders are an integral part of my job; I really enjoy meeting and engaging with different people. Gaining insights into their roles and building strong networks helps make the job more interesting and exciting.

I have also had the opportunity to visit MOD sites around the country and see our work in action. I've even been able to board a Type 31 frigate!

What is your greatest accomplishment to date?

Before joining the MOD, I worked for NHS Blood and Transplant. During my time there I streamlined and improved the efficiency of recruitment procedures to increase platelet donations. These changes resulted in four consecutive months of consistently booked appointments, helping to meet hospital demands and save lives.

What keeps you energised about working at DE&S?

As I'm nearing the end of my Business Administration Apprenticeship scheme, I feel a sense of determination for my next challenge. There are lots of opportunities to get involved in work with other DE&S functions, and I am always open to saying yes. I'm excited to see where my next role will take me.

Who or what has shaped who you are?

Being part of the Gender Equity Network at DE&S has been enriching and helped shaped who I am. I'm grateful to work alongside so many inspiring people who have shown me that anything is achievable, even when we're faced with big obstacles.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I enjoy challenging sports, such as long-distance running and CrossFit. I will be running my second marathon in Paris next year.

Alongside all this exercise, I thoroughly enjoy fuelling myself. I am a big foodie and love to try out new food spots with friends and family. If you ever need a recommendation, I'm your person!

What might surprise people about you?

I love to travel but I hate flying. They're even more surprised when I tell them I'm going on holiday to run a marathon abroad.

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

Bets Ciocca, Head of PPA, shared a podcast with me by Mellody Hobson. It was about the ability to take on tough feedback by viewing it as a gift and not something to turn away from. I think being able to utilise tough feedback for development is an important life skill and I have applied this to my everyday life.





The Commando Helicopter Forces Mobile Air Operations Team conduct load lifting training with members of the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron using a Merlin Mk4.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Cover photo:

A Challenger 3 main battle tank during a live-fire trial in Scotland.

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This magazine is printed on Novatech Matt FS 115gsm which is Forest Stewardship Council certified material from well-managed forests and elemental chlorine free.



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