

# DESIDER

AN INSIDE LOOK AT DEFENCE EQUIPMENT & SUPPORT



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



# In this issue



**4**  
**MICHELLE SANDERS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR COMMISSIONING - URGENT & OPERATIONS**



**6**  
**EXTERNAL LEADER: JUDITH GOUGH**

**8**  
**PROJECT RENOVATOR**



**10**  
**DEFENCE SME DRAGONS' DEN EVENT**



**12**  
**Q40 RECEIVER REACHES TECHNICAL MATURITY**



**14**  
**HIGH NORTH COMMANDO FORCE DEPLOYMENT**



**20**  
**UK BOOSTS UNDERSEA SURVEILLANCE**

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# The Editor's Lens

## Welcome to the February edition of Desider.

After four years, February has become a month grimly associated with the ongoing war in Ukraine. The bravery of its armed forces and the fortitude of Ukraine's people, as they live through another bitterly cold winter beneath the ever-present threat of aerial attack, continues to be an inspiration.

The UK continues to do all it can to support Ukraine, while building up the resilience of our defence systems and strengthening our partnerships with allied nations.

As Michelle Sanders describes in her great senior leader column, our support to Ukraine has evolved significantly since February 2022. Back then, we moved quickly to draw from our stockpiles and deliver military equipment and assets as soon as the requests came in.

We've paired Michelle's leader column with an insightful piece from Judith Gough, former UK ambassador to Ukraine and now a leading defence expert. Judith celebrates Ukraine's whole-of-society response to Russia's invasion and asks what lessons the UK could learn from this.

Today, our support for Ukraine remains steadfast, but now has a dual focus on meeting the immediate challenge and fostering a longer-term, sustainable defence partnership.

The recent commitment to provide new air defence missiles and systems worth over £500 million shows our heart is still very much in the former. And important agreements - including the UK-Ukraine 100-Year Partnership and the advanced tech-sharing pact - and the well-established Task Force Hirst trade missions, represent another step towards the latter.

We're pleased to cover another example of long-term support, with an article on the UK's leading role in Project Renovator. This NATO-led project is rehabilitating Ukrainian hospitals and training local medical staff, giving severely wounded soldiers a place to recover and find new purpose.

The anniversary is also a warning of the threat all of Europe faces from Russia. The UK and our allies must be at peak readiness to deter and, if needed, overcome this challenge.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, UK Chief of the Defence Staff, and General Carsten Breuer, German Chief of Defence, recently published a shared op-ed that makes the case for this crystal clear.

"This is a reality we must prepare for; we cannot be complacent. Moscow's military build-up, combined with its willingness to wage war on our continent, as painfully evidenced in Ukraine, represents an increased risk that demands our collective attention."

In 2026, a key aspect of this is working with our industry partners to make sure we keep pace in the innovation race. And we have no fewer than five articles this month giving you an insight into how this is being done.

Our first two features focus on a crucial aspect of this, the ways in which we are helping start-ups and SMEs develop their capabilities, engage with defence commercial processes and find the private capital they need to scale up and realise their full potential.

UK Defence Innovation (UKDI), part of the NAD Group, is developing a "nationwide ecosystem of remarkable start-ups and SMEs" through targeted investment and guidance. To show how this works we have two case studies of companies that have benefited from engaging with UKDI experts.

Pairing perfectly with this, we have a recap of a recent Dragons' Den-style event, where 10 tech innovators, whose products could have civilian and defence uses, had an opportunity to pitch to private investors.

And, at the other end of the procurement journey, we have stories from Europe's frozen north, the skies above Cornwall and the inside of a future guided missile.

The UK Commando Force has deployed to Camp Viking in Norway with an upgraded Over Snow Reconnaissance Vehicle that is now even better at operating in deep snow and behind enemy lines in a region that could be the front-line of a future conflict.

On the south coast of the UK, a demonstrator of Proteus – the UK's first fully autonomous full-size, uncrewed helicopter – has taken its maiden flight. And the Q40 Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receiver is now ready to provide positioning and navigation for missiles and other platforms that's more robust and more cost-effective.

Each of these is a step forward in making sure the UK and our allies are ready to stand together, and deliver safety and security.

## SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

# “This is fast procurement and I am proud of how we have been able to adapt.”

**Michelle Sanders, MOD Deputy Director**

**Commissioning – Urgent and Operations, marks the fourth anniversary of the Ukraine war with a look at how the UK’s ongoing support continues to evolve.**

**It has been four years since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine began.**

A lot has happened since then. The true heroes are in Ukraine, but everyone working in UK Defence should be proud of all they have done – and continue to do – to support the Ukrainian people.

To date, we have actioned over 2,100 requirements and provided more than 115 million items of lethal and non-lethal equipment. By the end of this financial year, the UK will have delivered a further £4 billion worth of support, bringing the total to £13 billion committed in military support to Ukraine. From drones to sleeping bags to millions of rounds of ammunition; each item we deliver demonstrates that we will stand with them for as long as it takes.

I lead the Urgent and Operational Commissioning team within the Options and Commissioning area of the MOD National Armaments Director (NAD) Group. My team is tasked with coordinating the delivery of the majority of UK military support to our Ukrainian allies, whether through granting-in-kind or commercial procurement. I joined the team in 2023, a year after Russia’s invasion. At that time, the team was part of the DE&S Operations Directorate and consisted of about 30 people.

At the start of the conflict four years ago, we were solely granting items from UK stockpiles. Now, as part of the NAD Group, the size of our team and the volume of activity we undertake to support Ukraine have both grown significantly. There are now around 90 UK personnel working

in my area, with a focus of procuring equipment for Ukraine.

As the war has progressed, the UK has continued to play a leading role in supporting Ukraine. Today, we work seamlessly with colleagues in Task Force Kindred, part of the Military Strategic Headquarters. The task force works with the Ukrainian armed forces to define military requirements and then determine what the UK can deliver and the best way to do so. Then we coordinate with teams across the NAD Group to do just that.

Close working with allies and partners through various international mechanisms allows us to align our efforts with those of other nations as well.

Requirements have grown in volume and become more complex. There is a sense of, “We need to get this out to the front-line, how quickly can we do that?” Our teams have had to change to manage that.

This is fast procurement and I’m proud of how we have been able to adapt. While we’re still following necessary processes, we have replaced old bureaucracy with new commercial frameworks and ways of working. As a result, we’re getting things placed on contract in as little as 10 days after receiving a requirement demand.

And in Ukraine itself, we have been working with the Defence Medical Services (DMS) to deliver part of Project Renovator.

The NATO-led project is helping to re-equip medical rehabilitation facilities for wounded service personnel across Ukraine, with the first building handed over earlier this year as part of that.

Interestingly, our involvement in

Renovator began when DMS approached DE&S and asked, “We need to buy some drills for orthopaedic surgery, can you help?”. What started as, arguably, a small thing has grown into us delivering thousands of pieces of equipment to help wounded soldiers through their recovery, including Koalaa upper limb prosthetic kits. These lightweight prostheses have helped patients, especially bilateral amputees, take back their independence and given them greater dignity and self-sufficiency while they wait for longer-term prosthetic solutions.

We have continued to support Operation Interflex, providing equipment and logistical support in the UK so that expert trainers from the British Army, and 13 allied nations, can ready Ukrainian personnel for combat. Over 62,000 Ukrainians have now been trained here. That’s an amazing figure and the result of a real team effort across UK Defence.

Interflex is just one example, and there are many more, from digital specialists to delivery teams across the MOD, and with our defence industry partners, of the ‘One Defence’ mindset we have maintained throughout. There has been a collaborative effort across the whole defence enterprise, and I believe teams have managed to maintain morale because they can see that they are really making a difference.

Certainly, over the three years that I’ve been a part of Urgent and Operational Commissioning, there has been a real team spirit, with people feeling that they are doing something truly valuable.

## SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

Teams have had the chance to meet Ukrainian personnel coming to the UK to train as part of Interflex, and we have seen before-and-after pictures of the medical facilities that Renovator is helping to refurbish.

My team also works with the International Fund for Ukraine, which consists of the UK and 13 other nations, all committed to supporting our ally. By late last year, the fund had reached £2 billion in pledged support. Each country contributes to the pot and then the UK leads the procurement on their behalf, guided by the needs our Ukrainian allies identify. For example, they will say to us, our priority right now is air defence or one-way effector drones, and we go out and get them.

Looking forwards, we're also helping to build up Ukraine's sovereign defence industry and its military deterrent. Such

that when there is a ceasefire, they are strong enough to deter future threats from Russia.

Through Task Force Hirst, we have been running trade missions to forge connections between British and Ukrainian armed forces and industries. We're building up their industry and opening opportunities for our industry at the same time. We have been lucky enough to have a number of senior MOD representatives welcomed in Ukraine, alongside leaders of defence membership associations and businesses. The question we are working to answer is how to form business partnerships that will benefit both nations and persist for a long time.

Last year, we placed a £1.6 billion contract with Thales UK on Ukraine's behalf to supply them with more than 5,000 lightweight multirole missiles (LMM). The deal trebles production of

LMM at Thales' Belfast plant, supporting the city's economy and an extensive UK supply chain, and at the same time it helps protect Ukraine's cities from attack. We delivered the first missiles in October.

It is funded by a loan, taken out by Ukraine and underwritten by UK Export Finance, following a deal signed in 2024 that allows our allies in Kyiv to draw on £3.5 billion worth of support to acquire military equipment from UK companies.

The 100-year partnership we signed with them last year is thriving, and I'm so proud of the part my team and I are playing to keep it that way.

Through the NAD Group, we are going to keep supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes, empowering their front-line forces today and their long-term growth for tomorrow.



## SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

# What can the UK learn from Ukraine's whole-of-society response?

**Judith Gough, former British Ambassador to Ukraine and defence expert at PA Consulting, explores how Ukrainian society responded to Russia's invasion and what this can teach UK Defence.**



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

**When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, many doubted the Ukrainians would be able to withstand the onslaught. After all, Ukraine was defending itself against the world's fourth largest army and a country assessed to have the world's largest nuclear arsenal.**

But anyone who had lived and worked in Ukraine – as I have done – knew that the Ukrainians would mount a whole-of-society response and would fight bravely, determinedly and innovatively to defend their homeland and its right to exist.

The defence of Ukraine has been a collective international effort, but the backbone and fundament of that defence has been

the Ukrainians' will to fight, their resilience and innovation.

There is much that other European countries – including the UK – can learn from this whole-of-society effort. Lessons that are sobering, as well as inspiring.

Ukraine's resilience did not emerge overnight; it has been forged through decades of fighting to preserve the country's unique identity, culture, territorial integrity and prosperity. An estimated one in five Ukrainians died during the Second World War, four to seven million died in the starvation inflicted by Stalin in 1932-33, and thousands more lost their lives to purges and conflict.

These horrors are imprinted in the DNA of Ukraine. Survival practices learnt throughout the turbulence and violence of the 20th century were drawn on by Ukrainians to defend themselves from Russia's invasion in 2022. For many, family lore became a survival strategy.

Throughout the ages, Ukraine has relied on perpetual vigilance and a whole-of-society response. We do not have the same ingrained reflex in the UK, but we can learn from this, nevertheless.

A cornerstone of Ukraine's resilience has been the continued functioning of the state. Despite invasion, drone and missile attacks, and occupation, core institutions have remained operational and new organisations have been founded – not least the new Defence Procurement Agency.

Decentralisation reforms enacted since 2014 have proven critical. Empowered local governments were able to coordinate evacuations, distribute aid and maintain municipal services, even when national-level coordination was under pressure. Mayors and regional administrations became front-line actors in resilience, leading their local communities and working closely with Ukraine's armed forces.

This has worked in tandem with the rapid mobilisation of civil society. Volunteer networks maintained supply chains to the front-line and have contributed significantly to innovation, fundraising and humanitarian support. Ordinary Ukrainians have supplied Ukraine's armed forces with food, medical kits, protective equipment, clothing and drones.

These grassroots initiatives have at times even outpaced formal procurement systems in speed, adaptability and flexibility. Tech-savvy volunteers have provided digital solutions and coordinated logistics, while crowdfunding campaigns have raised significant amounts of money. Volunteers have acted as a force multiplier for the state, bridging gaps and agilely responding to urgent needs.

Back in 2015, I remember early Ukrainian attempts to develop their drone capability. Innovation and production were by a small but diverse group of volunteers who stripped down commercially available products and built them back better. They toiled for long unpaid hours in makeshift workshops.

These innovators operated through volunteer networks and close relationships with individual military units; they were reluctant to move towards integration with the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. The group feared that being part of the state system could slow them down. In this case, bypassing the state also enabled more efficient feedback loops.

Russia had already illegally invaded Crimea and was inciting conflict in the Donbas. Products were rapidly tested on the battlefield and were followed by swift evaluation, allowing adjustments and re-engineering to take place within eye-wateringly short time frames.

This model pre-dated Russia's 2022 invasion, which meant it was ready for swift upscaling and intensification of a tried and tested model when full-scale war arrived. Individual military units became 'innovation labs', testing new tech that can later be scaled centrally.

The upsides and lessons for British innovation and procurement are clear. But there are also some drawbacks to Ukraine's approach. Scaling production remains a challenge, as does securing funding. Competition between military units helps drive innovation, but it also means that Ukraine is operating multiple bespoke solutions, risking longer-term integration and interoperability issues, as well as supply chain inefficiencies and reduced oversight. This approach tends to work best in the heat of a crisis, but can be challenging if systems require longevity, standardisation and tight coordination.

Ukraine's tech sector has also played a critical role in sustaining resilience. It adapted quickly, relocating staff and continuing to generate revenue. At the same time, the tech sector developed battlefield innovations that have enhanced military capability – from drones to open-source intelligence platforms. Many with IT skills became cyber warriors, defending against cyber-attacks and mounting offensive cyber operations.

Swedish-Ukrainian tech company Beetroot is a good example of the nexus between volunteerism, innovation and tech in Ukraine. Since the invasion, Beetroot has helped tens of thousands of people with its relief fund, focused on providing long-term

humanitarian support, including distributing aid and providing IT equipment to enable remote work and connectivity. The Beetroot Academy has expanded its educational programmes to help war-affected Ukrainians retrain in web development, programming and data skills. Rather than relocate abroad, Beetroot has continued to operate in Ukraine with hundreds of employees in cities across the country.

Recognising the centrality of rapid technology innovation to full spectrum warfare, in 2023 the Ukrainian Government established Brave1 – a defence technology platform and innovation cluster designed to accelerate the development, adoption and deployment of cutting-edge military technologies. This centralised hub brings together government institutions, defence forces, tech companies, investors, volunteers and the media to rapidly turn ideas into battlefield-ready solutions.

By pooling expertise, coordinating priorities, and channelling funding to high-impact projects, Brave1 aims to shorten development timelines and deliver competitive advantage on the battlefield. Since its inception, Brave1 has grown into the largest defence-tech venture investor in Ukraine. It is not simply a funding mechanism – it is an ecosystem where innovators and engineers can develop their ideas with comprehensive support. In the heat of war, speed is of the essence, and Brave1 has been successful in shortening the time for its certification procedures. The time between a project's submission and its approval takes two to three months on average – much shorter than would happen in other Western countries.

We cannot allow our admiration for the Ukrainians to romanticise their resilience or whole-of-society response. The cost of Russia's war against Ukraine has been terrible – tens of thousands of soldiers dead, thousands more lives tragically disrupted through injury, displacement and loss, widespread destruction and economic contraction. Resilience at this scale is not something that can be taken for granted: it relies on a unifying mission, continued resources, leadership, trust and support from allies and partners.

Ukraine's response is neither accidental nor effortless. It is the product of decades of struggle and subsequent focused learning since 2014. Key factors have been its decentralisation efforts, a vibrant and motivated civil society, technological capability and a powerful commitment to fight and defend Ukraine. For the UK, there are important lessons here, not least the value of a whole-society response, shared responsibility, and the ability to mobilise quickly and coherently in a crisis.

As the war continues, resilience remains Ukraine's superpower. If the time comes, will it be ours?

## FEATURE

# Project Renovator: NATO initiative transforms lives of wounded Ukrainian soldiers

Through Project Renovator, the UK and partner nations are revitalising hospitals in Ukraine, helping them to provide essential care to Ukrainian personnel.



**Four years into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a NATO-funded programme is quietly transforming the lives of Ukrainian soldiers who have suffered devastating injuries on the front-line.**

Project Renovator has seen five medical rehabilitation centres established across Ukraine. The UK was the first nation to join the project and is responsible for refurbishing and equipping one site while providing support to the remaining sites, with DE&S instrumental in making this life-changing work possible.

The Renovator hospitals are a haven for injured soldiers, providing comprehensive care to address the devastating injuries and facilitating their return to service or integration into civilian life.

DE&S serves as the delivery lead for equipment and infrastructure at the UK Renovator hospital. This includes installing rehabilitation facilities, increasing bed capacity by 250, and even constructing a hospital-wide

heating system capable of acting as back-up in the event of power outages.

Colonel Simon Doyle, UK Renovator Project Director, said, "This has been an enormous team effort from our Ukrainian hosts and colleagues, industry and the UK. Standing here now it is difficult to believe that the full-scale invasion had put this facility totally out of action, and now it is helping return defenders to the fight with the brand-new high-quality facilities they deserve."

In addition to building renovations, the project delivers advanced medical equipment and training for doctors, surgeons and physiotherapists, both in the UK and at the Renovator site. This multi-disciplinary approach ensures that Ukrainian medical professionals have the skills and resources needed to provide world-class rehabilitation care for years to come.

DE&S has procured over £5 million of medical equipment and supplies for Renovator, including over 21,000 items ranging from physical training kits, gym equipment, clinical equipment, diagnostics capabilities, and prosthetics to support rehabilitation and training.

It also continues to share lessons learned with partner nations Norway, Sweden, Lithuania and Latvia, who support four more medical sites.

Last year, Defence Secretary John Healey announced £20 million in funding, doubling the Government's investment in the scheme. "I'm proud that the UK is stepping up to ensure wounded Ukrainian soldiers get the best possible treatment," he said.

For the Ukrainians receiving treatment, this support is transformative.

Olena, a 45-year-old army sergeant and mother of two, became a triple amputee after a drone struck her vehicle near Kupiansk. With help from British military medics working

alongside Ukrainian staff, she has made remarkable progress. "To begin with I never thought I'd be able to transfer from my bed to the wheelchair, but now I can," she said. "You can see the result."

Oleksandr, 48, who lost both legs below the knee to artillery fire, said, "In the beginning it was hard for me just to sit in the wheelchair. But, gradually, going to the gym with rehabilitation experts helped. I knew then I would get through."

Colonel Victor Korchenok, Site Deputy Commander, said, "The UK was the first nation to support Renovator, providing infrastructure development, modern rehabilitation, surgical and diagnostic equipment, and training for our professionals."

As Ukraine faces casualty figures unseen in Europe since the Second World War, Project Renovator offers both immediate hope and long-term support – helping soldiers return to defend their country or rebuild their lives.



## FEATURE

# Boosting innovation across the UK

**Investing in SMEs across the UK ensures that defence and security benefit from unique perspectives, innovative ideas, specialised knowledge and regional traditions.**

**Innovation thrives in every region of the UK, from established tech clusters to industrial heartlands, historic urban centres to rural communities.**

UK Defence Innovation (UKDI), which now incorporates the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), funds and nurtures a nationwide ecosystem of remarkable start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

This approach delivers better solutions, strengthens local economies, creates high-skilled jobs and builds resilient supply chains.

Deputy Director of UKDI Anita Friend, said, “Innovation knows no boundaries, and we know that breakthrough defence and security solutions are being developed in every corner of the UK. UKDI is committed to finding and funding the best ideas, wherever they originate. By investing across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, we’re delivering cutting-edge capabilities, strengthening local economies and building a resilient, nationwide innovation ecosystem.”

## Deployable antennas transforming satellite capabilities

Orbiting Earth, a miniaturised satellite about the size of a domestic washing machine unfurls a dish antenna with millimetre precision, increasing its surface area 16-fold.

The satellite transforms into a sophisticated synthetic aperture radar (SAR) that can take detailed, high-resolution pictures of Earth. This innovation represents Oxford Space Systems’ revolutionary approach to space technology.

“We specialise in taking antenna technology that would normally only fly on car-sized spacecraft and putting it onto something the size of a shoebox,” explains Chris Bee, Business Development Director. “By bringing down launch costs and enabling constellation approaches, we’re completely changing how defence organisations think about space-based intelligence gathering.”

Oxford Space Systems first secured crucial early-stage MOD funding to develop the parabolic antenna technology in 2019. This initial investment enabled the team to develop their wrapped rib antenna manufacturing processes and establish in-house mesh knitting capabilities.

Over the next two years further funding and technical support helped Oxford Space Systems develop and launch its first in-orbit demonstration. In 2025, the company was selected for the MOD’s Oberon project, which aims to launch a demonstrator for an operational high-resolution synthetic aperture radar system. As a supplier to Airbus, who will provide the payload and spacecraft, Oxford Space Systems is delivering the deployable antennas that make high-resolution imagery in any weather possible.



## Innovative building blocks for force protection

Scotland-based SME Quickblock’s innovative building block system enables the Armed Forces to quickly build defensive structures rated for ballistics and blast protection.

Quickblock’s solution started its life as a civilian product, made from a resilient plastic. With MOD funding, Quickblock was able to streamline the design for military use and incorporate armoured materials into the system.

Extensive ballistic and blast trials have proven the overall effectiveness of the system, leading to the development of additional solutions like hostile vehicle mitigation barriers.

Since working with UKDI, Quickblock has achieved remarkable success. The SME won the International Security Expo’s 2024 Innovation Award for its armoured block. The durable plastic blocks have been used to build realistic training scenarios for UK-led medical training of Ukrainian armed forces. The British Army has also adopted Quickblock to enhance its Close Quarter Battle training environment at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon, Wales.

Quickblock CEO Andrew Vincent said, “We are incredibly grateful for the support from UKDI and Dstl. The project rapidly accelerated the development of our product for the defence market and allowed us access to end-users that we would otherwise not have had.”

## NEWS

# First-ever UK Defence SME 'Dragons' Den' event

**Pioneering defence firms were able to pitch their innovations directly to major investors in a first-of-its-kind Dragons' Den-style event.**

**A novel event focused on matching UK defence and dual-use technology innovators with private investors has been run for the first time.**

Delivered by the MOD International Collaborations and Exports' SME Engagement Team, with support from the Commercial and Industry Team, the day centred on a pitching session modelled on the popular Dragons' Den television format.

Hosted by business advisory firm Grant Thornton UK, 10 innovative UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were selected for their dual-use technologies – innovations with both civilian and military applications.

They were given the opportunity to pitch their capabilities to a room of more than 100 people, including venture capitalists, institutional investors and defence stakeholders, each looking to back breakthrough technologies.

Opened by Secretary of State John Healey and National Armaments Director Rupert Pearce in their first joint engagement, the event is part of wider efforts to ensure that Defence is an engine for growth, delivering on the plans set out in the Strategic Defence Review and Defence Industrial Strategy last year.

As the Secretary of State said in his opening remarks, the event aimed to build up and strengthen the relationships between investors and innovators. Such partnerships are essential in order to achieve the ambition for the UK to be the best place in the world to start and to grow a defence business.

In the words of the National Armaments Director, "it's not 'public or private money'; it's 'yes to both'; it's private and public working together as strategic partners."

Events like this show how the MOD can



be a bridge between promising defence SMEs and private capital, to deliver the defence dividend in every corner of the country. It is part of wider work to ensure defence SMEs can access the capital that could see them expand into new domestic and international markets, creating jobs and fuelling growth across the UK.

The team collaborated with the Office for Investment on the Dragons' Den event, a joint unit of HM Treasury, the Department for Business and Trade, and Number 10. The Office for Investment delivers investor-focused sessions across sectors, illustrating the core role the MOD plays in supporting the priority work of promoting investment into UK Defence.

As Rupert Pearce said, "UK SMEs are a powerful force at the heart of the UK defence industry. They have the energy, agility and risk appetite to drive innovation and create novel technology that strengthens our security and benefits our society."

Between pitches, investors were

treated to explanations of how advanced technology is driving innovation for use across every domain, from the depths of the seabed to outer space. Fresh investment could be the catalyst that transforms the next generation of war-fighting technology from the drawing board to the front-line.

The Dragons' Den-style event was developed following feedback from defence companies that access to capital was the major barrier holding them back from expanding into new and international markets.

As well as the free online Export Faculty resource hub for export-minded companies, the team runs regular SME surgeries around the country, meeting SMEs where they are to offer bespoke advice and help them achieve their growth ambitions through exports. Since May 2024, the surgeries have supported over 1,000 UK SMEs.



## INTRODUCING THE SME HUB

### NEW FOR DVD2026

Details of a new opportunity for SMEs will be announced soon, increasing opportunities for SMEs to put their ideas, innovations and products in front of MOD influencers and supporting industry collaboration.

**MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON - [THEEVENT.CO.UK](https://theevent.co.uk)**

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#DVD2026 for regular updates and information.

## NEWS

# UK-made high-performance satellite receiver reaches technical maturity

**The Q40 receiver marks a significant step forward in Position, Navigation and Timing capabilities. It can withstand modern electronic threats, while being cost-effective and scalable.**

**The Q40 Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) has now reached a level of technical maturity that enables it to be widely used by teams throughout UK Defence and by any organisation seeking a more resilient satellite navigation solution.**

GNSS receivers provide platforms and systems with crucial Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) data. Global satellite constellations, such as GPS, Galileo and GLONASS, have made PNT part of every aspect of modern life. PNT forms the backbone of all modern navigation, targeting, situational awareness, search and rescue, and time synchronisation. It underpins finance, telecoms, logistics, energy networks and defence systems. This dependency also makes it a very serious vulnerability.

In recent years, the UK, and its allies in NATO and beyond, have encountered increased threats and interference to their PNT capabilities, in particular the jamming and spoofing of signals.

The Q40 GNSS receiver – a trusted UK-designed and manufactured capability – was developed in partnership with QinetiQ, as part of the MOD's Robust Global Navigation System (RGNS) programme. This began in 2019, with the recognition that existing commercial off-the-shelf GNSS receivers lacked

the resilience needed, while high-end encrypted receivers were costly, complex to source, and unsuitable for certain defence applications.

The MOD invested £67 million, with QinetiQ contributing additional funds, to create a receiver that met both UK Defence and QinetiQ commercial requirements.

With the Q40, the programme has successfully delivered a high-performance PNT receiver, with an assured supply chain, which is designed to withstand modern electronic threats, but remains cost-effective and scalable.

It marks a significant step forward in PNT capabilities. It is resilient to electromagnetic interference, and can deliver safer, more reliable PNT, even in contested and degraded signal environments. The Q40 can be used in a broad range of assets, including guided missiles, armoured vehicles, aircraft and ships.

There are two Q40 variants. The Q40 MicroPNT GNSS receiver is optimised for use in Command and Control, by disembarked personnel and within land, maritime and uncrewed aerial platforms. It combines low weight and high sensitivity and can operate up to 600 metres/second.

The Q40 MicroStrike variant is a high-dynamics receiver designed to function at speeds of up to 8,000 metres/second and to withstand extreme acceleration forces. Multi-constellation and multi-signal tracking provides reliability and redundancy in high dynamic environments. This makes it an ideal receiver for complex weapons, guided munitions and fast jets.

Both variants have been developed using the MOD's Secure by Design principles. These embed the highest standards of security and resilience into new capabilities from the very start of their design stage and continue them through the manufacture and support.

MOD PNT experts have validated and verified the Q40 and confirmed that it will meet the PNT needs of UK Defence.

As part of a continuing commitment to Secure by Design, the Q40 receivers are built to incorporate incremental updates that ensure they remain robust even as technology moves forwards and the threats facing the UK and its allies evolve. The next version of Q40 MicroStrike is planned for the second half of 2026 and a third release of Q40 MicroPNT for 2028.



## NEWS

# Fully autonomous Royal Navy helicopter takes first flight

**As part of a £60 million programme, a Proteus prototype demonstrator has successfully completed its maiden test flight from Predannack Airfield in Cornwall.**

**A demonstrator of the Proteus helicopter, the UK's new truly autonomous full-size helicopter, has been operated and flown for the first time.**

Proteus was built by Leonardo for the Royal Navy as part of efforts to explore the potential of uncrewed aerial systems to operate side-by-side with crewed aircraft in a future 'hybrid air wing'.

The flight followed comprehensive 'ground running' trials at Leonardo's Yeovil site, where the helicopter's systems, sensors and engines were tested before Proteus lifted off.

The Proteus demonstrator has been developed by Leonardo under a £60 million programme, awarded by DE&S and now being delivered by the new UK Defence Innovation team. The programme supports 100 highly skilled UK jobs in Yeovil.

The DE&S and UKDI delivery team and Leonardo project team reimagined Proteus from the ground up; a wholly new design for a helicopter where there is no need to accommodate a pilot. Making the most of industry innovation and market-insight, the two teams worked from a high-level statement of requirement with broad latitude to determine the correct solution.

They credit their success to a strong working relationship built on open conversation and mutual trust, even going so far as to present to stakeholders as a unified team. Together they have delivered a new aircraft from design to first flight in around three years.

James Gavin, UKDI Deputy Director, said, "With agility and flexibility, the UKDI team has paved the way on a new approach to delivery. One that supports timely and informed decision-making for future capabilities, focusing not just on the technology but the wider organisational implications and Defence Lines of Development that come with this sort of novel capability."

In place of the crew in the cockpit, sensors and computer systems allow Proteus to understand and process its environment, make decisions and take action accordingly. When considering the autonomous aspect of the helicopter, team leader James Morris said, "Instead of focusing on autonomous control of an aircraft, we developed a full system of systems built on tasked-based autonomy, i.e. ask the system to go 'look over there' and it would take off, transit and seek, and only let an operator know when something looked suspicious. This allows multiple aircraft to be managed (not flown) by a single operator."



With a greater than one-tonne payload, Proteus can carry a range of equipment and conduct tasks in challenging weather conditions, freeing up crewed aircraft to conduct other critical operations.

Commodore Steve Bolton, Royal Navy Deputy Director Aviation Future Programmes, said, "This milestone signals our intent to be a leader in technological innovation, to enhance the fighting effectiveness of the Royal Navy in an increasingly complex operating environment, and to maintain operational advantage against evolving maritime threats."

Proteus has been designed to conduct a range of missions including anti-submarine warfare, and sea patrols. During its first flight, from Predannack Airfield, Proteus was tasked with a short test routine which saw the aircraft operate its own flying controls independently of any human operator, all while under constant supervision and monitoring by test pilots on the ground to ensure flight safety.

Nigel Colman, Managing Director, Leonardo Helicopters UK, added, "Proteus represents a step-change in how maritime aviation can deliver persistence, adaptability and reach. It can conduct the dull, dirty and dangerous missions in challenging environments without putting human operators at risk."

## NEWS

# Enemy weapons detector to be delivered to soldiers five years early

The new SONUS system will ensure British Army personnel are better protected and more lethal.

**British soldiers will be able to more aggressively hunt, detect and locate hostile gunfire, and be better protected on the battlefield, with the early delivery of new technology.**

With SONUS – a new system to detect enemy weapons – UK forces will have access to a capability that can be deployed in under three minutes and that, weighing 70 percent less than its predecessor, is far easier to transport.

SONUS works by detecting acoustic pressure waves from gunfire, mortars and explosions. This form of detection means the system can operate covertly, without emitting an electronic signature, helping troops to avoid enemy fire. It will also enable soldiers to identify targets faster and more accurately, meaning they can take evasive or offensive action more effectively.

Defence partner Leonardo UK has been awarded the £18.3 million contract five years earlier than originally planned. The work to produce SONUS will sustain 250 jobs across the UK, in particular at Leonardo's Basildon site, as well as through 29 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry Luke Pollard said, "We've accelerated our procurement of this equipment by five years to provide additional layers of safety for our personnel through more durable, lightweight systems in a new era of threat. "Making defence an engine for growth is a key priority for this government and this deal sustains jobs across the UK, benefits multiple SMEs and boosts our armed forces."

The SONUS system will be delivered to

5th Regiment Royal Artillery, the British Army's dedicated Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment, over the next 12 months.

Brigadier M. Birch, Senior Responsible Owner for the Land Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Programme, said, "This investment in the SONUS Acoustic Weapon Locating System demonstrates the Army's commitment to delivering cutting-edge technology to the front-line. It will significantly enhance our ability to protect our people and respond to emerging threats, ensuring the Army remains ready to meet the challenges of the future."

Olly Manning, Vice President Mission Systems at Leonardo, said: "Leonardo has over 40 years of experience in passive acoustic weapon-locating technology, with battle-proven systems that have seen operational use with over 13 armed forces – many of whom are NATO members.

"We are looking forward to working in partnership with the British Army to ensure SONUS provides them with an accurate, robust and reliable passive detection system that will keep our Armed Forces safe – now and into the future".

The investment helps deliver on the Strategic Defence Review and Defence Industrial Strategy – improving warfighting readiness, strengthening the UK's defence industrial base, and making defence as an engine for growth.

Through procurement reforms, the Army has prioritised fast-tracking important weapon-locating systems as part of its initiative to modernise and double the lethality of its forces by 2027. Its accelerated delivery was achieved by the Land ISTAR Team, working with DE&S and Task Force Rapstone.





# Radar production deal to boost UK economy and strengthen air defences

**A multi-million-pound contract to equip RAF Typhoons with advanced radar systems will sustain over 1,000 UK jobs and enhance aerial security.**

**DE&S has awarded a £453.5 million contract to BAE Systems and Leonardo UK for the manufacture and delivery of 40 Eurofighter Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk2 radars, which will be fitted to 40 Typhoon (Tranche 3) jets.**

The ECRS radars will ensure the RAF maintains its operational advantage in increasingly contested environments. They will allow Typhoon pilots to identify, engage and neutralise enemy targets from a safe distance and will be integral to their air combat effectiveness.

The UK economy will also benefit from this contract. It will secure 300 roles at Leonardo's Edinburgh site, 100 at their site in Luton, and a further 120 with BAE Systems Air in Lancashire. Combined with the work required to integrate the radars onto Typhoon jets, this upgrade programme will sustain over 1,300 highly skilled jobs across the UK.

More broadly, the UK's Typhoon programme supports more than 20,000 jobs throughout the country each year, contributing £1.4 billion to the economy annually.

Lyndon Hoyle, Head of the Typhoon Delivery Team at DE&S, said, "Following successful flight trials and solid progress in the ECRS Mk2 radar development programme, now is the right time to get on with manufacturing the new radars so they are ready to integrate on to the Typhoon jets at the earliest opportunity. The ECRS Mk2 radar will provide our pilots with world-leading capability to keep our country safe and deter our enemies, while sustaining critical engineering expertise in Edinburgh, Luton and Lancashire. It is, therefore, a perfect example of defence investment as an engine for growth."

The contract award follows successful integration and testing of a prototype developed through collaboration between DE&S, the RAF, BAE Systems and Leonardo.

Air Commodore Nick Lowe RAF Head of Capability for Combat Air, said, "The award of this contract underpins the UK's commitment to provide our warfighters with the very best, cutting-edge capabilities to defend our nation's airspace, protect our allies and deter potential adversaries. It also reinforces the UK's commitment to Typhoon as the backbone of Combat Air within the RAF."

The radars are expected to begin delivery before the end of the decade, with the Typhoon fleet expected to continue to protect UK skies until at least the 2040s.

Defence Secretary John Healey visited Leonardo's Edinburgh site to announce the contract. He said, "As the threats we face increase, and as Russian drones continue to strike Ukraine and violate NATO airspace, this cutting-edge radar capability will keep the UK secure at home and strong abroad for many years to come."

Mark Stead, Senior Vice President of Radar and Advanced Targeting at Leonardo UK, said, "ECRS Mk2 isn't just an exceptional radar – it's equipped with advanced electronic surveillance and electronic attack capabilities which will make the RAF's Typhoons more potent against their adversaries, adapting to new and unpredictable threats."

Richard Hamilton, BAE Systems Managing Director – Europe & International, said, "The Typhoon programme is a fundamental pillar of the UK's national defence and security. The continued investment in Typhoon capability is crucial and ensures we're able to maximise the UK's investment in the aircraft and accelerate combat air technologies critical for defence capabilities."

## FEATURE

# Qualification creates recognised standard for explosives operatives

The Energetics sector now has a standard for explosives skills thanks to a new qualification.

**Ruth Cowley, an MOD Ordnance Munitions and Explosives (OME) Process Worker at Defence Munitions (DM) Kineton, has become the first person in Defence to gain the Level 2 Regulated Qualification Framework Certificate in Skills for Explosives Operatives.**

This new qualification is providing a tangible standard for personnel that are required to demonstrate competency in OME in relation to Explosive Substances and Articles (ESA) National Occupational Standards (NOS).

For the Energetics sector, the qualification establishes defined, common and transferable levels of knowledge and skills, which can support movement within the sector without excessive re-training.

The qualification was designed in collaboration with and is facilitated by The Open Awards, a UK-based awarding body (approved by Ofqual), which provides qualifications and quality endorsements that are recognised by employers and educational institutions worldwide. It has a vocational, modular structure, designed to be executed in the workplace, and can be done as an award (eight credits through 60 hours of guided learning), a certificate (26 credits and 115 hours), or a diploma (37 credits and 160 hours).

For an individual new to OME this may take between three and nine months depending on the level. However, experienced hands can also undertake the qualification, and completion is usually swifter due to 'demonstration' rather than 'new learning'.

With this in mind, Ruth stepped forward to have her knowledge and skills professionally recognised and rewarded. Explaining her decision, Ruth said, "Having worked in OME at DM Kineton for many years now, I thought that the qualification sounded like a great opportunity to have my experience, knowledge and skills formally recognised and rewarded. And with all the hard work I have put into my ESA NOS competency portfolio it was an easy choice to undertake the qualification."

In terms of content of the qualification, all levels have a mandatory 'core' element. For the certificate and diploma, this is then followed by a generic skills element, which is further supplemented by selecting optional units that are specific to either OME processing, logistics or disposal activities, with each unit having a credits value.

To achieve the qualification, evidence of knowledge and skills is either documented or observed to compile a portfolio. This is firstly internally, then externally verified before the qualification is



awarded. Defence Muniton colleagues Troy Scrimshaw and Jason Hill were indispensable in achieving this.

The journey to establishing a professional qualification, although considerable, has provided recognition and reward for individuals with skills and knowledge in the OME stream, while also supporting the professionalisation of OME activities.

Ruth was presented with her certificate at DM Kineton by John Farrow, MOD Director of Logistics Services and Commodities. John commented, "I was delighted and incredibly proud to present Ruth with her NVQ certificate. This is an excellent example of the endeavour and dedication required, which Ruth has shown in abundance, to be the first to complete this qualification within Defence Munitions. I remain steadfast in my support to ongoing professional development and congratulate Ruth on her academic success. Well done!"

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## ADVERTORIAL

# National Armaments Director to outline procurement future at DPRTE

The upcoming DPRTE exhibition will focus on the National Armaments Director Group and small business growth. The event aims to align the defence supply chain with the Strategic Defence Review.



**The full keynote agenda for the Defence Procurement, Research, Technology and Exportability (DPRTE) exhibition has been confirmed. The event aims to strengthen the defence supply chain through increased small business participation.**

Taking place at Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre on 25 and 26 March, the event will explain how the MOD intends to allocate its equipment budget, projected to reach £288 billion over the next decade. This is part of wider efforts to modernise procurement through the newly established National Armaments Director Group. Rupert Pearce, the UK National Armaments Director, will be giving a keynote address at this year's DPRTE.

The exhibition allows industry to understand the operational changes following the Strategic Defence Review. High-level panels will focus on strategic delivery and the evolving relationship between the government and industry. These sessions are designed to help the sector operationalise the Defence Industrial Strategy.

The Defence Office for Small Business Growth (DOFSBG) will have a significant presence at the event.

Speaking at the recent establishment event for the DOFSBG, Rupert Pearce said: "A more resilient small business supply chain is essential for maintaining a technological edge and enhancing

industrial capacity. By acting as a central source for advice on tendering, mentoring and networking with prime contractors, we aim to foster a dynamic ecosystem of well-capitalised firms. This focus ensures that innovative British capabilities are rapidly integrated into our warfighting readiness and supports the objectives of the Strategic Defence Review."

The Office is staffed by policy and commercial experts focused on removing barriers for smaller businesses. They will be raising awareness of the recently launched Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) Commercial Pathway. This provides practical guidance to enable MOD teams to support SMEs, increasing opportunities for them to bid for and win work, and in turn encouraging more diversity and resilience throughout the industrial base.

Other high-profile MOD speakers include Luke Pollard, Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, Jim Carter, Director General Commercial and Industry, Victoria Cope, Defence Digital Commercial Director, and Sherin Aminossehe, Director of Growth and Missions.

Donna Sinnick, Chief Delivery Officer at Babcock International, said, "Small businesses can deliver niche technologies fast. They are agile and essential to building resilience in areas like artificial intelligence, cyber and autonomy. This is both a security and economic imperative for the country."

Innovation remains a priority, specifically in the areas of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems. Kateryna Chernohorenko, a former deputy minister from Ukraine, will share lessons on digital transformation during active conflict. Her team successfully launched military applications and scaled battlefield management systems at high speed. These insights are intended to help the UK address emerging capability gaps.

Allied interoperability will also be addressed in a panel led by Sir Stuart Atha, Chair of the NATO Industry Advisory Group. The session will explore how the UK and its partners can bridge the gap between military requirements and industrial capability. This is vital for ensuring equipment is ready for use across the alliance and meets international commitments.

The exhibition provides extensive networking through dedicated zones designed to connect buyers with suppliers. It offers a comprehensive opportunity for the industry to align with long-term procurement goals. DPRTE also features two 'Meet the Buyer' areas, delivered in partnership with MakeUK Defence and ADS.

## NEWS

# DE&S supports High North deployment

**The UK Commando Force's winter operations in Norway are benefiting from an upgraded Over Snow Reconnaissance Vehicle.**

**As they return to the Arctic Circle, this winter marks the Royal Navy Commando Force's first full operational season utilising the Lynx Brutal Over Snow Reconnaissance Vehicle, showcasing its impressive capabilities in extreme conditions.**

The snowmobiles were procured and delivered by the DE&S Specialist Vehicles & Uncrewed Land Systems (SVULS) Team under a £10 million contract with Bombardier Recreational Products.

They were delivered to Camp Viking, Commando Force's Norwegian operations hub in Norway, in February 2025 to be put through their paces by the Surveillance and Reconnaissance Squadron.

The Lynx Brutal is custom-built to operate in deep snow and is ideally suited to transporting commandos and their equipment deep behind enemy lines, helping to create a tactical advantage during special operations.

Commando Force are returning to Camp Viking this year with the deployment of 1,500 personnel, plus their all-terrain vehicles and helicopters from Commando Helicopter Force.

The SVULS team is continuing to support the Commando Force as they prepare for Exercise Cold Response 26 in Norway. Building on lessons learned from data gathered last season, the SVULS Team procured and delivered protective guards for use with the Lynx Brutal. These will better shield both the operator and equipment while in motion. This is a minor but significant equipment enhancement that will improve safety and durability in the challenging Arctic environments.

Exercise Cold Response 26 is the largest military exercise to be held in the country in 2026. Cold Response will demonstrate the unity of NATO and the ability of the alliance to deter threats in the High North. It will

see UK forces operate closely with their Norwegian hosts and with marines from the Netherlands, as they train across fjords and mountains to defend this strategically important region.

"The rapid delivery of this capability was essential to ensuring operational effectiveness," said James Taylor, Section Head for Mobility Platforms within the SVULS Team. "Equally important was the close collaboration between the SVULS team and the end user, which enabled us to fully understand the required platform enhancements and support the ongoing development of the capability. By taking this approach, we successfully enhanced the platform through incremental improvements, ultimately achieving Full Operating Capability (FOC). This approach ensures the equipment is fully operational, sustainable and capable of meeting long-term requirements."

The modified Lynx Brutal is based on a commercially available over-snow vehicle, modified to have a lighter frame, a more powerful liquid-cooled 850cc 2 stroke engine, and improved suspension and tracks. The modifications were jointly developed and assessed by UK and Nordic nations to reduce the development phase while delivering a step-change in performance.

Lieutenant Colonel Chris Armstrong, Commanding Officer 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group, said: "The UK Commando Force is stepping up readiness to war-fight alongside our allies in the High North. As NATO's cold-weather specialists, we are ruthlessly focused on mission rehearsals with our closest partners. Fusing intelligence, bold commando tactics, and cutting-edge technology – we remain poised for operations."



## NEWS

# UK boosts undersea surveillance with £40 million contract

**A new agreement will deliver cutting-edge UK-made sonar systems for the Royal Navy's Merlin helicopters, enhancing their ability to detect and track hostile threats.**



NEWS

**DE&S has awarded Ultra Maritime a £40 million contract to manufacture and deliver a range of advanced sensors, called sonobuoys, for the UK's Merlin Maritime Patrol Helicopter fleet.**

Sonobuoys are an integral part of the Merlin Mk2's submarine-hunting capability. The new contract will enable more sonobuoys to be manufactured and provide an opportunity for Ultra Maritime and the MOD to develop the sonobuoys' existing technology. The first batch of UK-produced sonobuoys will be with the Royal Navy by April.

This sovereign capability will significantly strengthen undersea surveillance and deterrence. Sonobuoys are air-deployed acoustic sensors that use hydrophones to help detect, locate and track underwater threats across vast ocean areas. The hydrophone acts as an underwater microphone, converting acoustic energy (such as noise from a submarine's machinery) into electrical signals.

The sensors operate in two modes: passive listening, which picks up sounds emitted by submarines, and active echo-ranging,

which sends out acoustic pulses and analyses the returning echoes. They can then transmit real-time data, giving operators immediate situational awareness of underwater activity.

This capability is essential for protecting the UK's Continuous at Sea Deterrent, safeguarding its Carrier Strike Group and maintaining broader maritime security.

Captain Colin Maude, DE&S' Merlin Delivery Team Leader, said, "This is a significant investment that assures the provision of UK-manufactured sonobuoys for the Royal Navy. These cutting-edge sensors will sharpen the Merlin's anti-submarine warfare capability, ensuring the Royal Navy can maintain strong undersea surveillance and deterrence, safeguarding UK waters."

Based at RNAS Cudrose in Cornwall, the Royal Navy's Merlin Helicopter Force is a leader in anti-submarine warfare, continually deployed on the front-line to defend UK waters. The Merlin carries a dipping sonar which, in combination with the sonobuoys, creates an acoustic network to hunt for and track adversary submarines. Ultimately, the Merlin can be armed with Sting Ray torpedoes to eliminate that threat if necessary.

Captain James Hall, Commanding Officer of RNAS Cudrose, said, "Our anti-submarine capability is essential to protect Royal Navy submarines and the UK's nuclear deterrent. The capability offered using sonobuoys forms an essential part of the toolkit used to identify, track and deter submarine threats. We face an increasingly uncertain and contested world, which includes ever-evolving threats to our critical undersea national infrastructure. Our control of the subsurface maritime environment is a key pillar of the Royal Navy's ability to confront global threats and ensure operational success as we defend the nation."

Ultra Maritime recently opened a £20 million anti-submarine warfare manufacturing facility in Greenford, London, for sonobuoy production. The site supports more than 130 jobs, with plans to create at least 50 additional high-skilled roles.

Ultra Maritime is also working with the MOD to develop miniaturised sonobuoys designed for uncrewed air systems, to expand the UK's future undersea surveillance reach and accelerate the transition to autonomous anti-submarine systems.

Wayne Clifton, Vice President and General Manager of Ultra Maritime UK, said, "With adversary submarines growing quieter, stealthier and faster, coupled with the threat of unmanned undersea vehicles, the need to detect, track and localise these platforms has never been greater. Ultra Maritime is proud to deliver sovereign sonar solutions that keep pace with threat and are engineered and manufactured right here in the UK."



# News highlights

1000

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

### Soldiers to get new AI-capable radios, headsets and tablets

A new contract, worth up to £86 million, has been awarded to UK-based company BlackTree Technologies for a new communications system.

The AI-capable Dismounted Data System (DDS) will significantly reduce the time it takes for soldiers to receive reconnaissance and intelligence data, boosting lethality and reducing friendly fire incidents. The system, which includes radios, headsets, display tablets, cables, batteries, pouches and antennas, will provide precise information on surroundings and intelligence.

With all soldiers linked to the same network, DDS can be tailored to different scenarios, allowing troops to receive either, or a combination of, voice or visual data, maximising effectiveness across all battlefield situations.

The new system has already been tested by soldiers on deployment in Estonia on NATO's eastern flank.

An initial £46 million contract with BlackTree Technologies has an option for a further £40 million. The contract supports the Government's commitment to spend more with UK SMEs, with the work creating 12 new jobs in Tewkesbury, Hereford and Birmingham.

The DDS will be delivered to the Army in multiple tranches from September, with the full roll-out of equipment set to be completed in 2027.

### New fund to support defence innovation

The Government has launched a £20 million fund to offer accelerated contracts to small, innovative UK start-ups who have had limited or no business with the MOD.

The contracts agreed through the fund will help accelerate new defence technology to the Armed Forces and gives new companies the foundation and confidence to raise private capital to expand more rapidly. To access the fund, businesses must be fully or part UK-owned.

Contracts awarded through the new fund will be driven by the requirements of the UK Armed Forces, led by UK Defence

Innovation (UKDI). UKDI will lead the search for the best UK technology to exploit, which is broken into sets of technology and capability themes, including AI, machine learning and data science; robotics and autonomy; and enhanced precision weapons.

Defence Secretary John Healey said, "Backed by our record sustained increase in defence spending, we are delivering good jobs and growth across the UK by opening up new routes into the defence sector, giving small British-based businesses the jump-start they deserve."

### Typhoon programme reaches a historic milestone

The Typhoon combat aircraft programme has passed one million flying hours.

Primarily based at two main operating bases at RAF Coningsby and RAF Lossiemouth and deployed forward to multiple locations, for more than two decades Typhoon has demonstrated adaptability across air policing, joint patrol initiatives, combat operations and Quick Reaction Alert duties.

The programme supports more than 20,000 UK jobs, contributing £1.4 billion to the economy each year. And, more broadly, it supports over 100,000 jobs across 400 companies in Europe.

The programme is the result of a successful multinational collaboration between the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain who share collective responsibility for the design, development, manufacture and in-service support of the aircraft. Nine nations currently operate Typhoon fleets, with Türkiye set to become the tenth following a recent export deal.

Lyndon Hoyle, DE&S Typhoon Team Leader, said, "Reaching one million flying hours reflects the exceptional capability, reliability and operational importance of Typhoon to the UK and our NATO allies. This achievement is the result of strong collaboration between DE&S, the RAF, industry and the wider Typhoon enterprise.

"Furthermore, through the current DE&S-awarded long term Typhoon Total Availability Enterprise (TyTAN) contract we have transformed how we support this aircraft, improving efficiency and increasing availability for the frontline."

## PEOPLE

# Kristin Pearson

**Job title:** Project manager in the Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) team.

**What does your role involve?**

I work as the lead project manager in the ROV team. The team was set up around four years ago to build an in-house capability of MOD-owned and operated ROVs. I am responsible for procuring the equipment, as well as ensuring they have through-life support, and we have a happy and effective team of ROV operators.

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

My role fulfils my need for order and strategy from the project management side. And the subject matter of my job really interests me; it scratches an itch to get involved in technical and engineering. It is also a real treat to be able to go on-site and see the equipment in operation. I was lucky enough go out on sea trails for the first MOD work-class ROV system, which is used for surveys and to assess sub-sea shipwrecks.

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

I used to work in event management, which was rewarding, but really hard work and fast paced! As a project manager in events, schedule slippage was never an option and that mindset has always stuck with me. I am proud that I have managed to meet every milestone within my control on the projects I have managed at DE&S. These include two Urgent Capability Requirements.

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

My team. I absolutely love working with them. They're positive, grounded, collaborative and always up for mucking in to get things done. And, most importantly, they're fun, which makes a huge difference day to day.

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

My dad was a London cab driver. Every day, he would spend hours meeting different people. He really helped me understand how to engage with people from all walks of life, and to genuinely enjoy people's company. This is probably why I enjoy the stakeholder management part of my role so much.

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

Other than being a taxi service for my children? I have an amazing group of friends who all enjoy the outside as much as I do. So, when I do get free time, we do plenty of walking and skiing. I have recently tried my hand at sailing too.

**What might surprise people about you?**

My friends always tease me about the number of jobs I had as a young adult. I have done everything from bar work and waitressing to driving a ferry in a theme park! I was also an English teacher in Japan for a couple of years.

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

Well, I can tell you the worst advice I've ever been given, and that is that respect needs to be earned. I do not believe this is true. A great team is built on respect that is a given. It is also built on trust and, most importantly, laughter.





Members of 40 and 45 Commando RM Mortar Troops hone their skills with the 81mm mortar during Exercise Cold Response in Norway.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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