

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE UK GOVERNMENT

Keeping us safe by land, air and sea

Armed Forces personnel have leapt into action, expanding their remit to help fight the virus in every corner of the UK

The new coronavirus, and the disease it brings with it, is a threat every bit as deadly as those that more typically concern the MoD. As such, the UK's Armed Forces have been deployed around the country to help those in need in a variety of ways.

Since 18 March, the newly formed COVID Support Force has been on high-readiness alert to assist the NHS, the police and other public bodies in their response, helping to build emergency hospitals, deliver vital supplies and fly critically ill patients from islands to hospitals on the mainland. In April, for example, combat medical technicians were needed in the Harrogate Nightingale hospital to assist NHS staff with basic patient care. Military reservists have also been called upon, particularly when their own professional skills, such as accounting or construction, have been needed.

Here are some of the other ways in which the UK's Armed Forces have played a role during the coronavirus outbreak...

Planning support
Specialist military planners have been sharing their know-how across the UK. These experts in crisis co-ordination have come from all branches of the Services and collectively have experience in logistics, engineering and medical services. They have been assigned to Emergency Co-ordination Centres in Scotland and Wales, to improve local authority and emergency services' responses.

Testing
Whether it's been working with specialists from Boots Pharmacy teams to train testing personnel,



RETURNING BRITISH NATIONALS	13,500 from India	200,000 from Spain
	4,000 from Pakistan	50,000 from Australia
	2,000 from South Africa	11,700 from Pakistan
	1,500 from New Zealand	9,000 from Morocco
	1,600 from Bangladesh	7,000 from Indonesia

Foreign Office brings loved ones home

Tens of thousands of Britons found themselves stranded abroad when countries began introducing lockdown measures, often at short notice. As flights were being cancelled and restrictions brought in, it became increasingly difficult and soon impossible for many to make their journeys home.

Since March the Foreign Office has been working tirelessly with different commercial airlines and governments around the world to make it happen. Up to £75 million has been provided to lay on special charter flights for Britons stuck in countries where there are no commercial flight options. Special consideration was given to helping the most vulnerable people.

The 30,000th Briton to be repatriated arrived back on 9 May from Amritsar in northern India. In fact, more British nationals returned from India than from any other country. Foreign Office teams in London and in embassies and consulates around the world worked with airlines and governments to keep vital transit hubs open and ensure that travel restrictions in those countries didn't prevent Britons from flying home.

A further 19,000 Britons on board cruise ships when the Foreign Office announced that it was advising against all non-essential travel were provided with consular assistance and all have now disembarked.

Britons who are still waiting to return to the UK are able to access help with financial issues, healthcare concerns and visa extensions, and take advantage of loans if they cannot afford flights to the UK and have exhausted all other options.

The British High Commission in Pakistan (@UKinPakistan):
"Over the last six weeks, the UK in Pakistan team has worked tirelessly to ensure that all the British nationals in Pakistan have had the chance to return home to their loved ones. It's been the best of collaboration and the best of teamwork."

British Ambassador to Mexico Corin Robertson (@CorinRobertson):
"A huge number of UK Government departments and agencies pulled together alongside our Mexican friends and @TUIGroup, working tirelessly to enable British nationals to get home safely. This was an extremely complex operation, not least since some of the passengers were experiencing symptoms."



Road to recovery
Military personnel have been busy transporting PPE across the country

Kinloss Barracks in Moray, RAF Odiham, RNAS Yeovilton and RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall. Crews have been involved in training key workers in various locations such as the hard-to-reach Western Hebrides and have supported NHS staff

Ambulance support
Servicemen and women from have been driving emergency response vehicles and working in response centres across England, Wales and Scotland. Because they are all trained in first aid and trauma, they can support paramedics when required.

Oxygen tanker drivers
Supplying hospitals with oxygen is a key task in dealing with coronavirus patients and Services personnel have been trained to supply back-up to oxygen tanker drivers. Training for such drivers usually takes a month but Armed Forces personnel were given just a week to be able to fill the tankers, drive them safely and deliver the life-saving cargo to NHS facilities.

'We joined the Army to help others'

Major Chantelle Miller, 33, of the Royal Military Police, and her wife, Staff Sergeant Tara Miller, 34, have both signed up to and been deployed by the Armed Forces Covid Support Force.

Chantelle says: "When we both joined the military we did it to serve and help others, so when we knew Covid-19 was going to become the Army's biggest effort in years, we both volunteered."

"I'm a military liaison officer, working with Cardiff and the Vale Health Board on contingency plans in response to Covid-19. An example would be the Dragon Heart Hospital, a 1,500-bed hospital created in a stadium in the centre of Cardiff that is now fully operational."



The war against the virus

The UK is a world leader in scientific and medical research and, through its Department for International Development aid budget, is the largest single contributor to the global effort to find a vaccine.

Thanks in part to that DFID funding, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) is already backing nine potential vaccines. One of those, being undertaken by a team at the

University of Oxford, is now progressing to clinical trials with funding from the UK Government's Vaccine Task Force, which is also funding a vaccine trial starting soon at Imperial College.

Once a vaccine is found, delivering it globally will be the next big challenge. To help that, DFID has invested the equivalent of £330 million a year for the next five years in Gavi, the global vaccine alliance that delivers vaccines in 68 of the poorest countries around the world.

DFID AND VACCINE:
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75 million children in the world's poorest countries will be provided with help by UK aid support.

0.7% of gross national income is spent yearly by the UK on UK aid.

'It's a great opportunity to support the local community in a time of crisis'

Major Chantelle Miller

