



Ministry  
of Defence

Joint message from



The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP  
Secretary of State for Defence



General Sir Nick Carter KCB CBE DSO ADC GEN  
Chief of Defence Staff

**H**is late Majesty Sultan Qaboos was a leader respected across the world and will be remembered by the United Kingdom and within Defence and the UK Armed Forces as a true and greatly valued friend. We will sorely miss his sage advice and experience of charting the waters of a region that has experienced more than its fair share of challenges and crises.

Over the past 50 years, His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos's vision transformed Oman. His commitment to reconciling differences and building bridges helped bring peace to the region and beyond. He was a key ally for the United Kingdom and under his leadership, the friendship between our two nations, already centuries old, flourished and strengthened year on year.

The Sultanate of Oman is the United Kingdom's longest-standing ally in the Middle East, with the first treaty between the East India Company and the Port of Sohar dating back to 1646. Since then, Oman has been a key ally for Great Britain in the Gulf and Indian Ocean regions and we have worked together tirelessly to promote peace and prosperity and enable the flow of free trade.

Today our two countries have a unique military relationship based on shared values, history and interests. Our relationship has been forged in battle with our forces fighting shoulder-to-shoulder for shared values.

Our Armed Forces also work side-by-side on a daily basis. Since the

1920s, our cooperation has included loan Service personnel who support the Sultan's Armed Forces. The UK currently has a Loan Service team of around 90, the largest British Loan Service Team anywhere in the world. Recognising the benefits of this system, His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos proposed that Omani personnel should also serve on loan service in the UK alongside British forces. This came to fruition in 2018.

There have also been many generations of sailors, soldiers and airmen and women from both nations who have collaborated on exercises and courses. As so often, His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos set a shining example, with his commission from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1962 followed by his service with the Cameronian regiment in Germany. Many Omani servicemen have followed in the footsteps of His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos by attending initial officer training at Sandhurst, Cranwell and Dartmouth. And many have excelled; in December 2019 Officer Cadet Omar Al Alawi was awarded the International Sword for the best International Cadet at Sandhurst and Officer Cadet Mohammed Al Alawi was awarded the Overseas Students prize for the best overall performance by an international cadet at RAF Cranwell.


Over the years, the Saif Sareea exercises in 1986, 2001 and 2018 have been the beating heart of our defence relationship. These large-scale exercises, established under His late Majesty Sultan

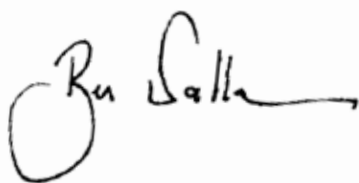
**“The friendship of the two States may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and the moon have finished their revolving career”**

Qaboos, are designed to develop Omani and UK capabilities. Saif Sareea 3 in 2018 was the largest UK exercise since Saif Sareea 2 and saw 5,500 British troops live, work and train alongside 70,000 Omani personnel across land, sea and air. The series will continue with Saif Sareea 4 in 2028.

Building on the success of Saif Sareea 3, the UK and Oman signed a Joint Defence Agreement in early 2019 to further develop capabilities and promote regional stability. This has been complemented by a Comprehensive Agreement on Enduring Friendship, promising cooperation across a number of sectors including health, science and technology. These agreements are a clear demonstration of the

commitment from both the UK and Oman not to rest on our laurels but continue to build our centuries-old relationship.

We take pride in the partnership developed between the UK’s Armed Forces and their Omani counterparts during the reign of His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos. We will mourn the loss of His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos but, as we look to the future and to a new partnership with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, we will continue to be inspired by a sentence in a treaty between Oman and Britain from 1800: *“the friendship of the two States may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and the moon have finished their revolving career.”* 



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