

Today, 22nd May 2026, is the fifteenth anniversary of the official end of Operation Telic, the formal name for UK operations in Iraq that began with the 2003 invasion and subsequent removal of the dictator.

UK combat forces, primarily based in the southern city of Basra, had withdrawn from Iraq in July 2009, but, since then, at the request of the Iraqi Government, the Royal Navy had continued to train the Iraqi Navy to defend its territorial waters and offshore oil infrastructure. That mission ended in 2011 but UK defence engagement with Iraq continues to this day.

We remember the 179 British personnel who lost their lives. We honour all who served on Operation Telic and their families. And we think of those who returned injured in body or mind, in some cases catastrophically so.

Some veterans have very mixed memories combining justified pride with pain and anger.

Every BAFF member is either a serving or a former member of the UK Armed Forces.

When the British Armed Forces Federation (BAFF) was formed in 2006, several of the its founding members were veterans of the early stages of Op Telic. Some were Regulars and some were members of the Territorial Army, the predecessor of today's Army reserve.

As time went on, some BAFF members returned to Iraq on further Op Telic rotations. Others returned as civilian contractors or in some other capacity.

Fifteen years later, consequences of the war continue, not just in Iraq but in our own country.

Anniversaries like this are a reminder not just to look back to the courage, resilience and sacrifice of our forces personnel and their families, but to look to the future and how better to give support where and when needed.