Figures showing that the UK Armed Forces are currently at 99.5 per cent of their full time Trained Strength requirement have been released today by the MOD. This is up from 97.2 per cent a year ago and shows a continued upward trend in retention.

21,800 new recruits have joined the UK Regular Forces in the 12 months to 31 March 2010.

The statistics also show that the number of people leaving the Trained Strength of the UK Regular Forces in the 12 months to 31 March 2010 has fallen by 15.1 per cent (3,310 people) compared with the same period a year ago. Overall, the number of people leaving is at its lowest in five years.

As at 1 April 2010, the full time Trained Strength of the UK Armed Forces was 177,840 against a target of 178,750. This comprises 173,260 UK Regular Forces, 960 Full Time Reserve Service personnel and 3,630 Gurkhas.

Under Secretary of State for Defence, Andrew Robathan said:

"These 21,800 new recruits will receive world class military training which will equip them to deal with any security challenges in the years to come. On a personal level, they will benefit from new initiatives to help the Armed Forces and their families, including our commitment to double the operational allowance. As a former soldier, I understand the many challenges and opportunities that a career in the Armed Forces can offer and I would recommend it to anyone. I wish our recruits every success in their new roles."

Since 1 April 2009, the proportion of females in the UK Regular Forces has risen from 12.1 per cent to 12.2 per cent for officers and from 8.9 per cent to 9.0 per cent for other ranks.

The percentage of UK Regular Forces from ethnic minority backgrounds continues to rise. At 1 April 2010 ethnic minorities accounted for 6.65 per cent of UK Regular Forces at 1 April 2009 compared to 6.56 per cent at the same point last year.