

UK Artillery Regiment Fires Archer Guns for First Time on NATO Exercise in Finland

July 19, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



British troops from the 19th Regiment Royal Artillery (19 Regt RA) conducted their first tactical live fire of the Archer 155mm wheeled self-propelled gun during Exercise Dynamic Front in Finland. The deployment marks a major milestone in modernising the British Army's artillery and demonstrates interoperability with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies under extreme Arctic conditions.

In late 2024, soldiers from 19 Regt RA, nicknamed The Scottish Gunners, deployed to the Rovaniemi training area near the Arctic Circle. There, they fired the Archer artillery system for the first time on a live exercise, supported by teams from the 5th Regiment Royal Artillery (5 Regt RA), who deployed the new Taipan weapon-locating radar system alongside. More than 5,000 troops from 28 NATO countries participated in the drill, showcasing integration with allied systems including the French Caesar gun, Swedish Archer, Finnish K9 howitzer, and American Multi-Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS).

Major David Mortimer, second in command of 19 Regt RA, said the exercise offered “a fantastic opportunity to showcase our modernised artillery capability in front of all our NATO partners.” He highlighted the synergy between the Taipan radar and Archer system to shorten the kill chain, minimising the time from target detection to engagement, enhancing combat effectiveness in joint operations.

The Archer gun, developed by BAE Systems Bofors in Sweden, replaces the UK’s ageing AS90 tracked howitzers. The system offers a range of up to 50 kilometres, double that of the AS90, as well as faster deployment, greater mobility, and compatibility with precision-guided munitions. Archer can fire up to eight rounds per minute using an automated loading system, and its wheeled chassis allows road speeds of up to 70 kilometres per hour.

Troops operated in sub-zero conditions, with temperatures dropping to minus 15 degrees Celsius, while adapting to Arctic terrain. Training included cold-weather driver and operator courses, assisted by Arctic warfare instructors from both the UK and Finnish Jaeger units. Cold-weather survival equipment was issued to all crews.

The regiment's three Archer-equipped batteries support the UK's 12 Mechanised Brigade and form part of the 1st Deep Reconnaissance Strike Brigade Combat Team. Fire support teams are deployed in Warrior mechanised artillery observation vehicles, which are equipped with MSTAR (Man-portable Surveillance and Target Acquisition Radar) to provide forward observation.

From a centre-right perspective, this deployment underscores the need to maintain a highly mobile, modern artillery force. The Archer system fills critical capability gaps and signals the UK's broader strategy of strengthening defence readiness through advanced, interoperable systems that can deter adversaries and reassure allies.