

UK Expands Infantry Role for Ares Alongside Primary Boxer Fleet

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The Ministry of Defence is expanding the planned use of the Ares armoured personnel carrier (APC) in the British Army's infantry units, complementing the Boxer vehicle as part of the UK's broader land forces modernisation. This dual-platform approach reflects a shift in strategy aimed at delivering operational flexibility and improved combat effectiveness.

Ares, developed under the Ajax programme, is set to achieve Initial Operating Capability by December 2025. It will now be deployed more widely across mechanised infantry battalions. This tracked vehicle provides enhanced protection, mobility, and digital capability, serving as a heavy APC that will operate alongside the Challenger 3 main battle tank and Ajax reconnaissance vehicle within the UK's new all-tracked 3rd Division.

Despite Ares' expanding role, Boxer remains the centrepiece of the Army's mechanised infantry structure. The wheeled platform will form the backbone of four heavy mechanised infantry battalions across two armoured brigades. Designed for adaptability and high mobility, Boxer features modular mission pods and advanced digital systems, and it can carry up to ten fully equipped soldiers in its infantry carrier configuration.

Boxer and Ares will serve in different operational contexts. The 1st Division, based around Boxer-equipped units, is structured for rapid deployment and high-readiness missions, particularly in expeditionary scenarios. Meanwhile, the 3rd Division will focus on high-intensity combat operations, relying on tracked platforms like Ares to operate alongside heavy armour.

The dual-platform model reflects a significant departure from previous single-vehicle doctrines. By combining the strengths of both wheeled and tracked fleets, the Army is better positioned to respond to a wider range of military challenges, from peer-level conflict to hybrid threats.

The UK's investment in these platforms also has strong industrial implications. The first Boxer built entirely in the UK rolled off the production line in early 2025, supporting hundreds of skilled jobs and

strengthening sovereign defence manufacturing capability. The Boxer is being delivered in four core variants: Infantry Carrier, Specialist Carrier, Command, and Ambulance. All are expected to reach Initial Operating Capability later this year.

Incorporating both Boxer and Ares into infantry roles is a strategic decision that enhances the Army's flexibility and resilience. As Britain continues to face evolving global threats, these vehicles will form a crucial part of the nation's commitment to fielding a modern, adaptable, and capable fighting force.