

News story: Hurricane Irma: UK military provides relief to the Caribbean

Named Operation Ruman, on Friday nearly 300 UK military personnel equipped with aid supplies left the UK to provide immediate relief to people who have seen their homes destroyed.

Departing from RAF Brize Norton, a C17, Voyager and A400M aircraft carried over 200 Royal Marines, as well as Engineers and specialist personnel from all three Services, medical supplies and aid including emergency shelter kits, rations and clean water. Amongst those deployed were the 40 Commando Royal Marines and 3 Commando Brigade.

The aircraft have now landed in Barbados, as part of the UK Joint Taskforce in Barbados. The taskforce will use Barbados as a hub to distribute aid. The C17 continued its journey onto the US Virgin Islands – the island with the only usable runway in the region – with 85 personnel on board.

On Saturday, another C17 left from Brize Norton carrying a Puma helicopter and the UK is planning to send another Puma to the Caribbean tomorrow.

In addition to the arrival of the aircraft, RFA Mounts Bay has also reached the British Virgin Islands, with a Wildcat Helicopter embarked conducting reconnaissance flights and a helicopter to help deliver supplies and aid. Her crew will help with structural repairs and restabilising communication.

The 16 Royal Engineer Commandos, deployed from Mounts Bay, are also providing key support to the British Virgin Islands including to the Governor who has made clear that his priority is to restore law and order and to put vital communications in place. They are also working hard to clear runway, making it serviceable and allowing for further aid to reach the islands.

In addition to the support offered by RFA Mounts Bay in the Caribbean, HMS Ocean was also diverted from her tasking in the Mediterranean to the Caribbean in order to bring the help the islanders get back up on their feet after the hurricanes have passed. HMS Ocean will embark equipment and aid at Gibraltar on passage to the Caribbean on Monday.

Aid has also been supplied from DFID's disaster response centre at Kemble Airfield in Gloucestershire, including 10,000 UK aid buckets and 5,000 UK solar lanterns. This aid will reach those in need in the next few days by the quickest and most effective route possible.