

News story: UK standing by for Storm Isaac in the Caribbean

As the storm makes its way towards the Caribbean Windward islands, an Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team has been deployed to work with the Governors and supporting agencies on the islands. A further 87 engineers, medics, maritime experts and other specialists have joined the regular crew of RFA Mounts Bay, which is the mobile hub of the British relief effort. Approximately 1,000 personnel are deployed or being held at high-readiness for if further storms head towards the region.

Homes were destroyed and infrastructure was decimated when Hurricane Irma and Maria, two of the most powerful hurricanes for decades, hit the region back-to-back in September 2017.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I want to assure everyone in our Overseas Territories that our Armed Forces have been pre-positioned in the region and are absolutely prepared to help. We will be there to support during this hurricane season while still helping those whose lives were devastated by Irma and Maria to rebuild their lives and homes.

As well as being able to carry vital aid and equipment, RFA Mounts Bay will use the Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter on board to provide aerial support. There is also a medical facility on board, with 10 patient beds.

The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) troop, consisting of Royal Engineers from the British Army and Royal Marines, have been training with their French counterparts in Martinique to ensure they are fully prepared. This training is part of a six-month deployment to the region for hurricane season, while RFA Mounts Bay also carried out a significant HADR exercise in July.

Commanding Officer of RFA Mounts Bay, Captain Peter Selby RFA said:

As proved during our Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief exercise in July, RFA Mounts Bay is prepared and ready to assist the Government and people of Montserrat. We are currently on route and undertaking the final stages of preparation for our response.

As well as preparing for this year, RFA Mounts Bay was in the region when Irma struck last year and will remain there until 2020 to provide support to the islands.

Captain Jonathan Cooke of 24 Commando Royal Engineers (24 Cdo RE) OC HADR

Troop said:

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Troop onboard RFA Mounts Bay is ready to assist residents on Montserrat. We have previously deployed to the island both in July and on Operation RUMAN last year and have gained a good understanding of the current status of the island and infrastructure in order to best support the island if required.

Montserrat Governor Andrew Pearce OBE said:

We are delighted to welcome this small team from the Armed Forces as we make our final preparations for the approaching storm. I am also particularly reassured that if we need her, RFA Mounts Bay is ready to respond.