

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.

News story: RFA Mounts Bay delivers vital aid to Caribbean islands

The ship has been deployed in the Caribbean since July in preparation for the hurricane season, ready to provide support at a moment's notice. Tasked by the Royal Navy, she was the UK's first military response to the Caribbean.

The ship carries a specialist disaster relief team – drawn from the Royal Engineers and Royal Logistics Corps – as well as heavy plant for lifting and shifting and emergency kit and shelters provided by the Department for International Development. Also on board are the Royal Navy's Mobile Aviation Support Force – aviation specialists, meteorological advisors and flight deck crews.

Engineers were on hand to stop a potentially-dangerous fuel leak at Anguilla's main petrol dump, restore power to the island's sole hospital and hand out shelters providing temporary homes for people left homeless by the storm. They also cleared the runway which was declared safe for relief flights.

RFA Mounts Bay's Wildcat helicopter – from 815 Naval Air Squadron based at Yeovilton – also flew Governor Tim Foy on a flight over the island – which is about the size of Plymouth – to survey the damage from the air during seven hours of continuous flying. The reconnaissance flight found widespread damage to infrastructure, schools, government buildings and power supplies.

As a result of the sortie, the island's leaders and ship's team decided to focus efforts on supporting the police headquarters as the hub of the relief effort, get the hospital on its feet again, and reinforce two shelter stations – particularly important with Hurricane José now barrelling towards the region.

Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer Capt Stephen Norris RFA said:

My people worked tirelessly throughout the day with determination and flexibility to support the Governor and the people of Anguilla.

Although Anguilla suffered extensive damage, normal signs of life were returning – some roads open and the local population beginning a recovery and clear-up operation.

RFA Mounts Bay is now making for the British Virgin Islands – 90 miles to the west – to concentrate today's disaster relief efforts.

As part of a wider military effort, Britain's flagship HMS Ocean has been diverted from her NATO mission in the Mediterranean to the Caribbean to help with the reconstruction effort – as HMS Illustrious did in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines four years ago.

Meanwhile, three flights will shortly be departing RAF Brize Norton carrying Royal Marines, Engineers, medical supplies and aid including emergency shelter kits, rations and clean water. Tomorrow a further C17 will leave from Brize Norton carrying two Puma helicopters.

Speech: First Sea Lord speech for HMS Prince of Wales naming

Your Royal Highnesses, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, 3 years ago, the naming of HMS Queen Elizabeth was a strategic awakening for the United Kingdom.

The moment when we proved to the world, and to ourselves, that we still have what it takes to be a great maritime industrial nation.

Today, we return to Rosyth, to the cradle of modern British sea power, to dedicate HMS Prince of Wales.

We are honoured by the presence of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall; of course, as we are in Scotland, more appropriately the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay.

We are also joined by representatives from across government, the armed forces, together with veterans and some of our vital international partners.

This ceremony, and all that it represents, demonstrates the United Kingdom's determination to see through our strategic intent and to fulfil the promise of our maritime renaissance.

For though she is the second of her class, HMS Prince of Wales has a strategic significance all of her own.

If building one carrier is a statement of national ambition; then building 2 is an unmistakable sign of commitment, to our own defence and that of our allies.

Atlantic Charter

Today, HMS Prince of Wales is the newest and most advanced vessel of her kind.

In the half century of service that lies before her, she will assimilate astonishing developments in technology, from unmanned vehicles on the seas and in the skies, to the all encompassing, all pervading, tide of data that is shaping modern warfare.

And yet the name Prince of Wales is a historic one. It is emblematic of many

centuries of loyal service to crown and country.

Of the many ships that have borne this princely title, none better demonstrates the importance of our continuing strategic responsibility than the seventh and last.

In the darkest period of the Second World War, the battleship HMS Prince of Wales was the venue for Winston Churchill's first meeting with President Roosevelt.

During a church service off the coast of Newfoundland, the 2 leaders sat beneath her great guns, amid a congregation of sailors and marines from both nations.

Until that point Britain had stood alone. But on that Sunday morning, onboard that ship, the New World joined the Old in common cause.

Of all the many legacies borne out of that extraordinary partnership, few have been more significant than the Atlantic Charter.

It pledged economic and social progress for the benefit of all. At its heart was a commitment to self determination, freedom of the seas and the rule of law in the world.

This settlement was the inspiration for the United Nations and has been the basis of security and progress in the world since 1945.

It is a settlement under which our own nation has enjoyed 7 decades of comparative peace and rising prosperity.

But today the principles upon which it is founded are being tested.

From the Baltic to the Black Sea, hybrid warfare seeks to undermine democratic governments and sovereign borders.

In the Mediterranean, a sorry tide of human suffering has exposed once again the inequality borne out of conflict and repression.

And in the South China Sea, growing regional competition highlights the continuing importance of freedom of navigation to global stability and prosperity.

The United Kingdom holds positions of international responsibility: other countries look to us for leadership, partnership and example.

So the biggest test of all comes from within.

Do we still have the necessary belief to stand by the principles under which we have prospered?

Are we still prepared to do what it takes to defend them and to lead others in doing the same?

And, most importantly, are we prepared to match our words with the tools to

do the job?

Modernised Royal Navy

Today we are gathered in this great dockyard to answer those questions.

Standing in the shadow of a new Prince of Wales, and in the company of our most important allies, we rededicate ourselves to this historic cause, and to the obligations it brings.

With 2 Queen Elizabeth class carriers in Royal Navy service, one will be available for operations at all times.

In the United States, aviators from the Fleet Air Arm are working hand-in-glove with their Royal Air Force counterparts to bring the F35B Joint Strike Fighter into UK service, and the first operational squadron moves to Marham next year.

This combination of ships and jets will provide our nation with a continuous carrier strike capability, a powerful conventional deterrent in a dangerous and uncertain world.

Alongside this new undertaking, the Royal Navy will deliver the UK's nuclear deterrent, as we have done every hour of every day for nearly half a century.

These 2 strategic responsibilities will sit at the heart of a modernised and emboldened Royal Navy.

On the River Clyde, steel has been cut for the first city-class frigate, HMS Glasgow. She and her sister ships will carry names from all parts of our United Kingdom, renewing the bond between the nation and its navy.

Meanwhile, after the long years in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Royal Marines have returned to sea, and to the environment in which they have demonstrated such unswerving professionalism and adaptability across 3 and a half centuries.

And finally, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary will continue to be found where they've always been in times of peace and war: right by our side.

But this is not a journey our sailors and marines make by themselves.

Working with the Army and the Royal Air Force, the UK Carrier Strike Group will project British power and influence at sea, in the air, over the land and in cyberspace.

And working with our international partners, it represents a new and substantial commitment to NATO and to all the UK's alliances throughout the world.

We could not have reached this point without the substantial and ongoing support of the United States Navy, the US Marine Corps and the Marine Nationale, and I pay grateful tribute to them today.

We will repay the military and political capital they have invested in us by delivering a comprehensive, credible capability that opens the way for closer carrier cooperation between us.

So the advent of the Queen Elizabeth class carriers truly represents the start of a new era of strategic responsibility for the Royal Navy and the nation.

Conclusion

In drawing to a close, I would like to pay tribute to all those who have dedicated their efforts to this great national endeavour.

In the few short months since she put to sea, HMS Queen Elizabeth has become an icon of British engineering and British innovation, and it was a joyous occasion to welcome her into her home port of Portsmouth just over 3 weeks ago.

The same will be true for HMS Prince of Wales. Wherever she travels, at home or overseas, she will draw crowds to the water's edge where they will marvel at your achievement.

Alone, either one of these vessels would be a formidable expression of military might. But together, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales send a powerful message to friend and foe alike.

We may live in uncertain times, but the United Kingdom has lost none of its famous resolve. We will protect our interests, we will support our allies, and we will shoulder our responsibilities, wherever in the world they are at stake.

As I consider all that has been accomplished, and that which is yet to come, I am drawn to the words of the poet Longfellow, sent by Roosevelt to Churchill after their historic meeting onboard the last Prince of Wales 76 years ago, words that find new meaning in the vessel before us, and the responsibilities that await the young men and women who will take her to sea:

Sail on, O Ship of State!

Sail on, O Union strong and great!

Humanity with all its fears,

With all the hopes of future years,

Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

News story: Britain's second aircraft carrier named in Rosyth

The ship's new sponsor, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Rothesay, followed Royal Navy tradition by triggering a bottle of 10 year old whisky from the Laphroaig distillery in the Isle of Islay, smashing it against the ship's hull.

This significant milestone comes just three weeks after the first aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth made her first entry into her home port of Portsmouth as part of her maiden sea trials programme.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, said:

HMS Prince of Wales is a prestigious name for what I'm sure will be a most prestigious ship. Today is yet another landmark in an incredibly busy year for the Royal Navy and shipbuilding. HMS Queen Elizabeth has undergone her sea trials and arrived into Portsmouth, I have cut the steel on the new Type 26 frigates and we announced our ambitious new National Shipbuilding Strategy this week.

Together these magnificent carriers will act as our statement to the world. By having two we will ensure the UK will be one of the few nations able to maintain a continuous carrier strike presence on the high seas to project our power across the world.

The ship will be the eighth in the Royal Navy to bear the name HMS Prince of Wales, honouring Britain's history as a seafaring nation from the Sixth Rate gun ship in 1693 to the 'King George V' Class Battleship that fought in World War II.

Admiral Sir Philip Jones, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, said:

The name HMS Prince of Wales represents many centuries of loyal service to Crown and Country, and its return to the Royal Navy today is a moment of great strategic significance for the United Kingdom. To build one carrier is a symbol of national ambition – but to build two is a sign of real commitment to our own security and to our international responsibilities.

With two Queen Elizabeth-class carriers in Royal Navy service, one will be available for operations at all times. When paired with the F35B Joint Strike Fighter, they will provide our nation with a continuous Carrier Strike capability – a powerful conventional deterrent in a dangerous and uncertain world. I congratulate all those who have worked so hard over many years to make the Royal Navy's carrier-led renaissance a reality.

Sir Simon Lister, Managing Director of the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, said:

Today's naming ceremony is a significant moment in the life of the programme and for each and every person involved in the design and construction of HMS PRINCE OF WALES, one of the largest engineering projects in the UK today. The Nation has come together to build this magnificent ship which will in turn protect our Nation's interests around the globe.

HMS Prince of Wales, along with her sister ship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, reflects the very best of British design and engineering capability and has created a once in a lifetime opportunity for highly skilled employees to be involved in an iconic programme.

I am immensely proud to welcome The Royal Highnesses and our many other distinguished guests to Rosyth today.

With a crew of 679, HMS Prince of Wales is expected to carry out sea trials in 2019 before entering Royal Navy service.

There are also currently 150 Royal Navy and RAF personnel continuing F-35 aircraft training in the United States. By the end of this year it is planned that the UK will have 14 of these fast jets, the World's most sophisticated fighter, with initial flight trials from the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth planned for 2018. With a crew of 679 HMS Prince of Wales is expected to carry out sea trials in 2019 before entering Royal Navy service.

Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

The HMS Prince of Wales will do more than keep us safe and project British power across the globe. With home grown talent providing 90% of the suppliers for her and her sister ship, this aircraft carrier will also promote the strength of our shipbuilding sector.

This achievement shows what a huge amount of exporting potential the sector has and, as an international economic department, we will continue to support businesses to export their goods and services, and attract the investment that creates and supports British jobs.

Speech: Prince of Wales Naming Ceremony

My Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Allies, and Friends,

It's been a great year for our first carrier Queen Elizabeth, following her sea trials and Portsmouth docking.

But tonight we shine spotlight on her soon-to-be named twin: HMS Prince of Wales.

A name with a rich heritage.

Through the eventful life of the Prince of Wales's seven predecessors you'll find our nation's naval life captured in miniature.

Between them those ships successfully defended St Lucia from superior forces in 1778, scuppered Napoleon's invasion plans in 1805 and supported the Allied landings in the Dardanelles in 1915.

The last Prince of Wales forced the Bismarck away from Allied convoy routes in 1941 and carried Winston Churchill to the historic Atlantic Charter meeting with President Roosevelt.

A ship of war and peace.

Her commanding officer was Captain John Leach. His granddaughter Henrietta Wood is here tonight.

Our newest carrier name also recalls his Royal Highness. A former Royal Navy Commander who once operated off the Carrier HMS Hermes.

Prince and carrier share the same motto: "Ich dein"... "I serve".

No vessel is better equipped to do so.

Like its sister ship HMS Prince of Wales will travel at speeds of more than 25 knots, range in excess of 7000 nautical miles and, despite dwarfing the earlier Invincible class, operate with a smaller crew.

What a testament to the magnificent skills of British industry.

So let me thank all those, many here tonight, for making it a reality.

From the banks of the Clyde to the shores of the River Torridge this has been a truly national enterprise: six UK shipyards, 700 companies, 11,000 experts, and a vast supply chain spending millions of hours manufacturing millions of parts.

All of you involved in the most complex UK engineering projects ever undertaken can take huge pride and will get your reward when this spectacular

showcase of British ingenuity, imagination and innovation sails the seven seas.

And let's remind ourselves why these formidable fortresses matter more than ever.

PROJECT POWER

First, in a darker world of intensifying global dangers our carriers, two of them, give the UK unique ability to project power.

Nine acres of floating sovereign territory allowing the UK to dictate the terms at a time and manner of our choosing at sea, in the air, over land, and in cyberspace.

We won't need permission or approval from others, we can simply sail our carriers to the hotspot, anywhere in the world.

And with one carrier always available at very high readiness, we can respond any time.

Meanwhile, from their decks, Lightning fighters will fly: a match for just about anything in the sky marking a new era of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force co-operation.

Helicopters too will disembark ground and Special Forces into the danger zone.

For proof of the difference a carrier makes ask Henrietta Wood again.

Her father, Admiral Sir Henry Leach, as First Sea Lord, famously persuaded the Iron Lady that a carrier force could recover the Falklands: and it did.

VERSATILITY TO COMBAT MODERN THREATS

Carriers don't just conduct high-end warfighting at scale.

Second, they provide unprecedented versatility to counter the unconventional threats of the modern world.

We couldn't have dealt with Daesh terror in Iraq and Syria without air strikes from the US and French carriers.

Even in land-locked Afghanistan, coalition air support came from US aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf.

Now the UK too will have the cutting edge to strike the fanatics wherever they lurk.

Critically, carriers combine hard power with smart and soft, giving us greater ability to provide mobile command and control, situational awareness and analysis, even while distributing vital humanitarian help.

CERTAINTY TO FACE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Third, our carriers give us more certainty to face an uncertain future.

Whatever lurks around the corner, they give the next generations, 40, 50 years ahead: unmatched political and military choice from the strategic to the tactical.

And they are built to last.

Since our nation embarked on this project we've had four prime ministers, five general elections, and nine Defence Secretaries.

So these flagships will still be sailing in the 2040s, 50s and 60s.

Any future adversary daring to square up to Britain will confront a nation with both a strategic nuclear and conventional deterrent.

WHAT'S TO COME

We have 11 F-35s already with 120 pilots and aircrew training alongside our partners in the US.

By the year's end we'll have 14 F35B with the first squadron due to arrive in RAF Marham next summer.

In autumn 2018 we'll welcome the first Lightning on board QE for flight trials.

By 2019 we'll conduct further trials on HMS Queen Elizabeth with more aircraft, and a comprehensive carrier strike group in tow.

By 2021, F35B Joint Strike Fighters from the US Marine Corps will fly side-by-side alongside ours.

And by 2023, the UK will have 24 F35B Joint Strike Fighters available to embark on our carriers.

SYMBOL OF GLOBAL AMBITION

So our nation's wooden walls are now wrought of steel.

And the case for carrier is iron clad.

Our carriers' significance goes beyond the ships.

They now symbolize our global ambition.

They are Britain's statement to the world.

An investment in strategic maritime power that shows us rising up to the challenge of the time.

Strengthening our ability to work with allies around the world or to alone

when we need.

Our ambition doesn't end there. These two carriers front up our growing navy.

We're regenerating our fleet.

Since I became Secretary of State three years ago, I have presided over the steel cut, naming or launching of 20 ships and submarines, from the aircraft carriers, to our frigates, offshore patrol vessels and submarines.

In the last 12 months alone, we have laid the keel of the first Dreadnought, floated out Audacious our fourth Astute submarine, named HMS Forth the first of our five new OPVs, welcomed the arrival of Tidespring – the first of our four new RFA tankers, and cut steel cut on Type 26, the first of our 8 new Anti-Submarine Warfare frigates.

Earlier today I launched a programme to build the first batch of five General Purpose Frigates as part of our National Shipbuilding Strategy, providing for more and better ships, a more modern, efficient and productive maritime sector that can boost our national prosperity across the UK.

And we've just launched a programme to build a new lighter, exportable General Purpose Frigate.

So 2017 is more than the Year of the Royal Navy.

It's a renaissance of British sea power.

CONCLUSION

So, like thousands who recently flocked to the water's edge in Portsmouth, let's take proper pride in our newest national nautical icons.

We're a maritime nation with the sea in our blood.

Throughout our history we've built great ships to great sailors like Anson, Hood, Jervis, Nelson, and Jellicoe; and they made Britain great.

Now Carriers Captains Steve Moorhouse and Jerry Kyd, at the helm of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth, will follow in their wake and once more steer Britain to greatness.