

THE ROYAL NAVY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



How your Royal Navy contributes to cross-government efforts to protect our nation's interests in the Middle East



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Over the past decade, thousands of naval personnel have supported operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The UK's involvement in Iraq has now ended and personnel will steadily withdraw from Afghanistan over the next few years. However, the conclusion of these campaigns does not mean the end of the Royal Navy's involvement in the wider Middle East. Frontline naval operations in the region continue unabated, just as they have done for more than thirty years. This is not a surge or a standalone campaign, but an enduring commitment. Day in, day out, the Royal Navy protects our nation's interests, enhances maritime security and supports international diplomacy.



WHY ARE WE THERE?

We live in an increasingly interconnected world, where business, trade, travel, energy, communication and crime are global forces, free from the constraints of national borders. Consequently, events overseas can have a direct effect on our own security and prosperity at home.

The UK is an island nation, 95% of our trade comes via the sea. After spending the last 30 years as a net exporter of energy, we became a net importer in 2004. The Strategic Defence and Security Review recognises that we will face a range of risks in the future related to our ability to access secure, diverse and affordable supplies of energy, which are essential to economic security and growth.

In 2010, **35%** of the UK's total gas imports arrived by sea as Liquefied Natural Gas, of which **79%** came from Qatar. By 2020, around **70%** of the UK's gas will have to be imported in this way. (Source DECC / National Grid)

The UK is connected to the Middle East through politics, history, economics and security. The Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Northern Arabian Sea and Arabian Gulf contain some of the world's most important shipping lanes, linking the markets of China and the Far East with those of Europe and North America. The region also includes three narrow channels known as 'choke' points' (the Suez Canal, the Bab-el-Mendib and the Strait of Hormuz) where ships have restricted manoeuvrability.

WHAT IS THE UKMCC?

The UK Maritime Component Command (UKMCC) is responsible for Royal Navy warships, aircraft and personnel deployed in the Middle East maritime theatre. Based in Bahrain, the UKMCC consists of a Royal Navy Commodore, supported by a staff of around 60. They fulfil a range of roles spanning operations, logistics and intelligence, together with providing specialist advice in legal, media, medical and diplomatic affairs. The continual presence of a senior naval officer in the region demonstrates the UK's long-term commitment to regional nations and enables us to work more closely with our allies.



\$952 billion of trade passed through the Gulf of Aden and Suez Canal in 2009, including **\$840 billion** of containerised cargo and **\$62 billion** of oil, gas and petro chemicals. (Source: IHS Fairplay)

The breakdown of government in Somalia during the early 1990s has given rise to piracy, and if left unchecked, instability in Yemen and elsewhere also poses a risk to shipping. The security of these waters, and the countries that border them, is therefore critical to our own interests, as well as that of the wider international economy.

Piracy costs the international economy between **£4.4 billion** and **£7 billion** a year. As of 2011, more than **1000** suspected pirates have been convicted or are awaiting prosecution. (Source: *Oceans Beyond Piracy* / UNODC).

The Gulf States are key partners in efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and in the fight against international terrorism. The Royal Navy supports the UK Foreign Office's Gulf Initiative, co-operating with allies toward our common aim of regional security.

160,000 British nationals live and work in the Arabian Gulf and the UK exports **£15 billion** worth of goods and services to the Gulf each year. (Source: FCO)

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Royal Navy's presence in the Middle East reassures our allies and deters those who may threaten the security and stability of the region. Beyond the symbolism, warships are flexible and powerful tools, as capable of diplomatic and security missions as they are military tasks.

Preparing for contingencies

The year-round presence of high-readiness Royal Navy warships, submarines and helicopters provides the UK government with a choice of options in the event of a humanitarian crisis or a deterioration in regional security.

Disrupting piracy

Piracy threatens international shipping in the Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Horn of Africa and has a knock-on effect on the world economy. It also has a human cost for merchant seafarers and their families. Navies cannot stop piracy alone, as it has its roots in political instability ashore, but they can deter and disrupt attacks, making it harder for pirates to operate. The Royal Navy deploys frigates and Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ships, together with maritime patrol helicopters and Royal Marine boarding teams with medical backup. In addition, Royal Navy personnel often lead or augment command teams directing multi-national operations.

Preventing terrorism

The attacks on the MV Limburg by Al-Qaeda in 2002 and the MV M Star in 2010 demonstrate the continuing terrorist threat to international shipping. Many of our allies in the region face a growing threat from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Royal Navy warships and Merlin helicopters continue to work alongside other nations to deter or disrupt terrorist attacks and prevent related illegal activities such as human trafficking and drug smuggling.

Surveying key waterways

A Royal Navy multi-role survey ship is normally deployed in the region to update badly needed charts,



which are of use to merchant seafarers and also eliminate 'no-go' areas for allied warships.

Developing mine hunting expertise

Mines are cheap, easy to use and have the potential to close important waterways. It is therefore essential that the UK has the capability to undertake mine hunting operations wherever there are large concentrations of shipping or international trade routes. However, factors such as water temperature and salinity can make mine hunting abroad different to the familiar cold and deep waters around the UK. Consequently, the Royal Navy permanently bases four mine hunters in Bahrain (rotating personnel every to 6-8 months) to develop and retain expertise and experience in warm water operations. A Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ship is also based in Bahrain to serve as a floating headquarters for Commander UK Mine Countermeasures Force (COMUKMCMFOR) during large scale expeditionary mine hunting exercises.



Supporting merchant shipping

The UK Maritime Trade Operation (UKMTO) is a small cell of Royal Navy personnel based in Dubai, which tracks shipping movements and runs a 24-hour reporting service to enable swift communication between merchant shipping and naval forces in the event of an attack or suspicious activity. They also visit ships in the nearby ports of Jebel Ali and Fujairah to provide advice on maritime security.

Promoting UK interests

As well as offering 'hard power' warfighting capabilities, the Royal Navy provides 'soft power' by supporting diplomacy and strengthening the UK's long-term relationships. This can take many forms, such as exercises with regional navies, hosting foreign VIPs and undertaking port visits and exchange programmes. Warships and naval personnel also work alongside regional nations to help them develop their own ability to contribute toward regional security needs.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Middle East includes 2.5 million square miles of international waters, which is a similar size to the land area of Europe. When it comes to combating piracy, terrorism or illegal activities, no single nation or navy could possibly have enough ships or aircraft to cover the entire area. Furthermore, many of these problems are international in their nature as merchant vessels may carry cargo bound for multiple destinations and are often owned, insured, and crewed by different countries. Consequently, navies can achieve far more by working together and pooling resources than they could by operating alone.

The Royal Navy contributes ships, naval aircraft and personnel to the following international missions:

Combined Maritime Forces

Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) is an international naval partnership consisting of 25 navies, drawn from as far afield as Australia and Pakistan, South Korea and Thailand. Based in Bahrain, it is headed by the US Naval Vice Admiral with the UK Maritime Component Commander as his deputy. CMF operates around three Combined Task Forces (CTFs):

- CTF-150 - Maritime security and anti-terrorism.
- CTF-151 - Counter-piracy.
- CTF-152 - Arabian Gulf security and cooperation.

EU Naval Force Somalia

Based out of Northwood in Middlesex, and commanded by a Royal Navy Rear Admiral or a Royal Marine Major General, the EU's first naval operation (also known as Operation Atalanta) conducts counter-piracy operations and has the specific remit of protecting shipping



delivering humanitarian aid to Somalia under the UN World Food Programme.

NATO

NATO's contribution to international efforts to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa - Operation Ocean Shield - is directed from NATO's Maritime Command Headquarters, also based in Northwood. In addition to patrols at sea, NATO is assisting regional countries to develop their own ability to ensure security at sea.

All three counter-piracy operations are coordinated through a monthly planning conference called Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE), which also includes representatives from navies that operate independently such as China, India and Russia. In addition to seeking to disrupt piracy at sea, all parties continue to encourage the merchant shipping industry and civilian seafarers to follow Best Management Practice guidance and precautions which can reduce the likelihood of falling victim to piracy.

Multi-role frigate HMS Monmouth undertakes a maritime security exercise in the Arabian Gulf with warships from Bahrain, France and the US.

