



Rear Admiral Mike Utley OBE Royal Navy

Rear Admiral Mike Utley was appointed Commander United Kingdom Strike Force (COMUKSTRKFOR) and Rear Admiral Surface Ships (RASS) in December 2019. As COMUKSTRKFOR he is the Royal Navy's deployable 2* operational commander, and as RASS is the head of the Surface Flotilla Fighting Arm. He leads the Maritime Battle Staff at five days' notice to deploy and command operations, the 1* Commanders of the UK Carrier Strike Group and Littoral Strike Group, as well as the Mine Warfare Battle Staff, the RN Forward Logistics Site and the Maritime Deployed Hospital Group.

Educated at Cowbridge School in Wales, Mike Utley joined the Royal Navy in 1988 as a Seaman Officer. After Fleet training, his early years were spent at sea as a Bridge watchkeeper, Navigator and a Principal Warfare Officer in various ships from patrol vessels to aircraft carriers with operational deployments to the Mediterranean, East and West Africa, the Gulf, Atlantic, Caribbean and Far East.

Commands at various ranks have included a Patrol Boat (HMS EXPLOIT), two Offshore Patrol Vessels (HMS LEEDS CASTLE and HMS TYNE), the Type 23 frigate HMS PORTLAND and the amphibious aircraft carrier HMS ILLUSTRIOUS, during which he was awarded an Operational OBE for his service in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. He also served as Commander Sea Training where he was responsible for preparing warships, both UK and Allied, for operational deployments across the world. He commanded NATO's at sea high readiness Task Group in the Mediterranean, conducting maritime operations in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea. He assumed command of the UK's Carrier Strike Group in 2018, driving the operational training programme and integration between HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH and the F35-B throughout WESTLANT 18 and 19.

Shore appointments have primarily focused on the Ministry of Defence in London, including as the Military Assistant and Deputy Principal Staff Officer to the Chief of Defence Staff, the maritime staff officer within Defence Operational Capability and as the Deputy Head of the NATO and European Policy Team. He has also defined and managed project requirements within Defence Procurement and been responsible for the appointing and career progression of hundreds of officers as a Career Manager.

Mike Utley, a Freeman of the Worshipful Companies of Shipwrights and Lightmongers, is a graduate of both Advanced and Higher Command and Staff Courses and is a member of the Royal College of Defence Studies. He lives in South Wales with his wife and five daughters. He enjoys walking, fishing and his lifelong passion for rugby.