

UKMCC NEWS

News from Bahrain and the Joint Operations Area

Issue 02 | February 2016



A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMODORE

Firstly let me say Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you all enjoyed the Christmas season. I know that most of the staff here were able to have a short amount of down time during what remained a busy period. From my point of view it was strangely reassuring that the weather here in Bahrain was very similar to a typical British Christmas Day. It rained all day.

I am conscious as I write that it does not feel that long since I wrote my last link letter to you all, which is probably more a reflection of the frenetic pace of life for the Headquarters here in Bahrain.



During this period we have had the usual high turnover of personnel typical of an Operational Headquarters and I must thank those that have left for their support and hard work, and welcome those that join us.

The future programme for both UKMCC and Combined Maritime Forces remains as busy as ever. We have had and will continue to have a string of high profile visitors. Those who have visited recently continue to comment on the contribution we are making to the maintenance of maritime security in the region. I am all too aware that this work is achieved only with the continued support that those posted to Bahrain receive from their families, partners and friends. I remain personally very grateful for this support as it enables those out here to continue to perform to the highest standard and to help maintain our well deserved, excellent reputation.

You will no doubt have noticed in the news recently that Iran had completed much work in adhering to the objectives set by the international community in regard to their Nuclear Programme. This will hopefully be the start of a process towards more normal diplomatic relationship and a positive first step towards greater peace and stability in the region. You can all be justifiably proud of the part played by those here who continue to contribute to this important process.

Thank you again for all the support you give to your loved ones posted to Bahrain and I wish you all the very best until the next link letter,



SURFACE NEWS

It has been a busy month for UKMCC and for the RN ships deployed within the Joint Operating Area. HMS Chiddingfold and HMS Bangor recently demonstrated their mine hunting abilities when they joined USS Gladiator to take part in a joint Mine Countermeasures Vessel (MCMV) training exercise in the Gulf. The units at sea were led by Commander Jools Howe, Commanding Officer of the UK Mine Counter Measures Force (COMUKMCMFOR), from RFA Cardigan Bay.

Sharing his thoughts on the exercise, Commander Howe said: "It is great to be in command of such a diverse force. This reinforces our relationship with the US Navy, ensuring our interoperability and demonstrating the use of new technologies to find and dispose of mines in a quicker and safer way. This type of exercise displays just how effective the UK and US partnership is in the operational theatre."

Elsewhere in the Gulf, HMS Defender showed her skill and professionalism in a highly complex Replenishment at Sea (RAS) with the US Carrier Strike Group. HMS Defender is currently on a nine month deployment, and will continue working with the American and French carrier strike groups in the Gulf, supporting their air campaigns against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Defender's highly professional ship's company ensured that the RAS was a complete success. The ship took on 500,000L of fuel, whilst the aircraft carrier took enough fuel to power their entire embarked air wing of F18 fast jets. In total approximately 2500 tonnes of stores were transferred by helicopter on to the deck of the Harry S Truman during the RAS.

AIR NEWS

The Royal Navy's oldest airframe has continued to support front-line operations alongside the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, as they launch airstrikes against Daesh targets. Sea King Airborne Surveillance and Control (SKASaC) Mk7 helicopters of Okinawa Flight, 849 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), have been flying sorties to support the French Carrier Battle Group in the Gulf. Currently embarked in RFA Fort Victoria, and using the powerful radar housed in a distinctive inflatable radome, the aircraft and the crew search the sea and skies around coalition ships and aircraft to provide early warning of any potential threats.

Lieutenant Commander Simon Wood, 849 NAS Senior Pilot, said: "This has been a fantastic opportunity for Okinawa Flight to put their training into practice. With the exceptional support of RFA Fort Victoria, flying in support of the Charles De Gaulle Carrier Battle Group has provided a unique opportunity to work with our French counterparts."

Elsewhere, HMS St Albans' flight was given the opportunity to support operations in the Middle East in a slightly different manner from their routine Maritime Security tasking, when they attended the Bahrain Air Show. At this international event they represented both the Royal Navy and wider UK Defence as they showed off the maritime air capabilities of their Merlin Mk2.



HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!

Thinking of you...



... across the miles!

Members of UKMCC send you their Valentine's greetings from a warm and balmy Bahrain!

FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Over the past few months members of UKMCC and the Forward Support Unit have been taking part in a 9 x 9 football tournament against other units deployed in Bahrain. The Spitfires, as the team is known, got off to a slow start, drawing three out of their first four games. However, they then got into their stride, winning the remainder of their matches against stiff opposition. Their best performance was against PATFORSWA, a game which finished with an impressive 12-1 victory for the British side. This enabled the Spitfires to finish top of the play-off league.

Going forward into a second straight knockout round, they were unfortunately knocked out when they suffered their first loss.

In spite of their final loss, the Spitfires' performance was impressive throughout the league stages of the competition, where they won 88% of their games. In total they scored 77 goals while conceding only 10. Ultimately, the tournament provided a good opportunity for British personnel to play against teams from other nations and to forge stronger international links.

