

THE FIGHTING 45



Newsletter of HMS DEFENDER

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DEFENDER BACK ON TASK

DEFENDER is now back at sea after completing her four week Mid-deployment Stand-down and Support Period. Being alongside Bahrain has provided an opportunity for the rest and recuperation of the Ship's Company. Furthermore, it has facilitated essential maintenance, which will ensure HMS DEFENDER remains in the best possible material state for the remaining four months of the deployment.

The Ship has been supported by the Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard (ASRY) as well as BAE Systems staff, who have travelled to Bahrain to complete the bespoke and demanding maintenance period. The package has involved the re-preservation of the upper deck, refurbishment of the power and propulsion plant and general deep internal cleaning.

DEFENDER will now be returning to her duties in the Arabian Gulf, supporting the American Carrier Group in their campaign against Dae'sh in Iraq and Syria, and acting as the Royal Navy's contribution to several high-profile, multinational training exercises in the region.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN – Cdr Stephen Higham

MID-DEPLOYMENT leave has provided us all with an invaluable opportunity to see families and friends, during such a long time away from home.

Returning to sea with the news of fresh terrorist atrocities committed in Brussels shows us how vital our role is to maintaining security for our loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families.

This dreadful news reinforces that the world is a dangerous place. Following on from the attacks in Paris last year, it shows us that the UK must be ready to defend itself, and take the fight to those who would do us harm. The Royal Navy and HMS DEFENDER are playing a vital role in this.

The commitment of all the sailors and Royal Marines of HMS DEFENDER, and their families, allows the UK to project power to an unstable part of the world, which is the training ground for those who have committed these inhuman acts. By supporting the multinational Carrier Task Group in the Gulf, we are directly assisting in the destruction of Dae'sh and contributing to the continued security of our country.

We take great pride in this vital work and the continued support of our families is vital in maintaining our efforts.



DEFENDER REPRESENTS ROYAL NAVY AT INDIAN FLEET REVIEW



Since 1953, the Indian Navy has hosted a review once during the term of office of the country's president. The 11th incarnation of the review proved to be the biggest yet. More than 50 nations and nearly 100 warships accepted the invite.

For Defender, this meant a 2,500-mile passage from the Gulf, where she'd been supporting air strikes from the decks of FS Charles de Gaulle and USS Harry S Truman, across the Indian Ocean, a quick pit stop in Colombo, then up the east coast of the Sub-Continent to Vishakhapatnam, also known as 'Vizag', where a 21-gun salute was waiting for the destroyer from the Indian flagship INS Vikramaditya.

Defender anchored amid lines of warships off Visakhapatnam, flanked by American destroyers, Chinese and Japanese frigates, Sri Lankan patrol boats, Indian support ships and the grand old lady of the review, the 57-year-old carrier INS VIRAAT (the former HMS HERMES). The formal review took place on the third day of the event, with President Pranab Mukherjee moving up and down the lines of warship in his official yacht while sailors on the warships manned and cheered ship.

In addition, to pomp and ceremony, the Indians laid on an impressive dusk combat demonstration along the Visakhapatnam sea front featuring Harriers and MiG29 Fulcrums launched from the decks of the Indian Navy's two carriers, underwater explosions, a rocket and cannon attack by a Fulcrum and a fly past and hover by a Sea Harrier – all set against the backdrop of the ships in the review outlined by thousands of white lights.

Proceedings ended with a steam past as 27 ships – 15 of them Indian, led by the veteran Viraat – sailed in columns, at times only 400 yards apart, a challenging manoeuvre for any sailor, complicated by language difficulties given Bangladeshi, Malaysian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Burmese, Indonesian, Indian and British and American vessels were involved.



FOND FAREWELL TO HERMES

AS part of her visit to India, representing Britain and the Royal Navy at the Indian Fleet Review, HMS DEFENDER will be saying goodbye to the former HMS HERMES, best known as the Royal Navy's Flag Ship during the Falklands War.

The event was particularly poignant for one member of DEFENDER's ships company; Chief Petty Officer Conrad 'Whiskey' Walker served on HMS Hermes from 1978 to 1981 as his first ship, fresh from his training as a Mechanical Engineer (ME).

"The work was really interesting – I was learning my trade as a baby mechanical engineer," said Conrad. "The Hermes wasn't as automated as modern ships so it was a more hands-on role for an engineer."

"It was a huge privilege to see the ship again" said CPO Walker. "It's brought back lots of happy memories. I hope the current crew have enjoyed their time onboard as much as I did. I'm sure everyone will be sad to see her go."

The Aircrew from HMS DEFENDER were the last Fleet Air Arm personnel to land on this iconic ship when they flew their Lynx Mk 8 helicopter to INS VIRAAT for a special commemoration to mark the end of the International Fleet Review held in Visakhapatnam in India.

