

HMS WESTMINSTER

Family & Friends Newsletter



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NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM THE CAPTAIN

As we begin 2018, I wanted to be able to wish you all a Happy New Year and let you know how immensely proud I am of the achievements of the team over the past year. In the busy period following Summer Leave, WESTMINSTER completed a Maintenance Period before conducting her second phase of Operational Sea Training. This included a week off North West Scotland to test fire a Sea Ceptor missile successfully; a credit to the entire Ship's Company who worked hard to support this amazing new capability over the last year. Following a successful Final Inspection by the Flag Officer Sea Training Staff, we returned to Portsmouth in time to witness the naming ceremony of HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH.

As you may be aware from recent media coverage, WESTMINSTER was activated soon after returning from Christmas Leave to escort a Russian Federation Task Group through the English Channel on their transit home at the end of their deployment.

Spring 2018 will be a demanding time for the Ship's Company as we retain the role as the Royal Navy's Towed Array Patrol Ship and Fleet Ready Escort, but I know that the spirit and determination of WESTMINSTER, along with the tireless support from you all, will ensure that we are ready to respond to any emergent tasking and put all the hard training into practice.

I wish all the Ship's Company, their families and friends all the very best for 2018.



Cdr Simon Kelly
Commanding Officer

Cdr Simon Kelly RN

WESTMINSTER'S CLAIM TO FAME

HMS WESTMINSTER found herself in headlines recently whilst escorting a task group of Russian Warships close to home waters. As part of the Fleet Ready Escort role, it is HMS Westminster's duty to pounce on the opportunity to meet with any foreign Ships and safely escort them through the English Channel.



HMS WESTMINSTER escorting Russian task group through the English Channel. Credit AB George

Two Russian Warships and 2 Russian support vessels were transiting towards UK waters when HMS Westminister was activated on Thursday 5th January. Activation led to being at sea within 24 hours to make the transit to rendezvous with the task group. The coming days saw poor weather, with high sea states and a number of green faces, but the achievement in successfully carrying out the operation made the rough weather worth it.

HMS ST ALBANS LEADS THE WAY

On Christmas day, HMS ST ALBANS were tasked to carry out a duty of escorting the first set of Russian vessels, prior to HMS WESTMINSTER's escorting duties. They paved the way for a first set of Russian vessels, and escorted them through home waters, keeping the nation safe.



HMS ST ALBANS escorting the first group of Russian vessels on Christmas Day 2017.

What Is Duty TAPS FRE?

The Duty Towed Array Patrol Ship forms an essential part of protecting the nuclear deterrent, and is always assigned to a T23 Frigate fitted with towed array sonar.

Fleet Ready Escort means that one frigate or destroyer is held at short notice in home waters and is ready to react when required in support of government and defence priorities.

How TAPS/FRE affects us

When activated, our tasking is of the highest priority and keeping the details of our activities secure will be essential to our success. During our tasking we will be unable to send emails or make phonecalls for the duration of our tasking. However, Ship's Company will still be able to receive emails

How TAPS affects our families

The support our families provide is vital, so it is important you are aware of how this period may affect you.

There is a **covert nature** involved in being duty TAPS and FRE, and **security will be paramount** throughout our duty. This means that all family and friends of the Ship's Company should avoid putting anything relating to the duty on social media. This may be frustrating at times but could make the difference in us being successful in our mission or not.

During TAPS and FRE there is no set time limit that dictates how long the Ship will be away for once activated. Please remember how limited we will be in communicating with our loved ones.

You can still contact the Ship in case of a family emergency. If that is the case here are the best ways to do so:

JCCC (The Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre) on +44(0)1452 51 99 51;

OR

Royal Navy and Royal Marines Welfare on +44(0)2392 72 87 77.

A NEW ADDITION TO THE ROYAL FAMILY *HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH IS COMMISSIONED INTO THE NAVAL SERVICE*



2017 was the Year of the Royal Navy and nothing could have marked the year better than the commissioning of the Britain's largest ever warship. At 12 minutes after noon on the seventh of December, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II herself attended the commissioning of her namesake, Her Majesty's Ship Queen Elizabeth, the UK's latest aircraft carrier which will go on to she announced is to "represent the country's resolve on the global stage" for many years to come.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at HMS Queen Elizabeth commissioning ceremony.

The commissioning ceremony took place at the Princess Royal Jetty, HM Naval Base Portsmouth. The Queen went on to say, "As the daughter, wife and mother of naval officers, I recognise the unique demands our nation asks of you and I will always value my special link with HMS Queen Elizabeth, her ship's company and their families."



Prior to Christmas, HMS Westminster and her crew set off to the coast of the Outer Hebrides to test out her new air defence missile system, Sea Ceptor. Being the second ship of the Royal Navy to have Sea Ceptor installed and the trials in the cold, rough North Atlantic seas were successful. The supersonic Sea Ceptor missile, developed by MBDA to replace Sea Wolf, is 3.2m-long and weighs 99kg. The missile covers a range of more than 25km and provides 360° coverage, reaching speeds up to Mach 3.

HMS WESTMINSTER CONDUCTS SEA CEPTOR FIRING



HMS WESTMINSTER becomes the second of her class to fire the Sea Ceptor missile