A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

Welcome to the first edition of DIAMOND’s newsletter. For many of us onboard this deployment is the very exciting result of hard work going back over a year, and we think back to the challenges of moving back onboard last April, returning to sea in October, and of course BOST. For you our families, the deployment means two months with your loved one away, with uncertainty, and disruption to your home life.

I recognise this and reassure you that, notwithstanding the very inaccurate media reporting about DIAMOND’s departure, our mission, which is focussed not on migrant rescue but the prevention of the flow of weapons into and from Libya, will make a real contribution to keeping our country and close neighbours safe.

Continue on the next page.

Diamond deploys to the Med.

On the 31st August 2016, HMS Diamond sailed from Portsmouth to the Southern Mediterranean to replace the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Mounts Bay on Operation Sophia for around two months.

Operation Sophia is focused on tackling the human and arms traffickers who endanger the lives of innocent people. Her focus will be on tackling the movement of arms. She will provide a picture-building capability to help enforce the UN Security Council Resolution prohibiting the trafficking of arms to Libya.

Images.

Top: HMS Diamond enters Gibraltar.

Immediate right: Damage control exercise.

Far right: Ship’s Company.
Marines on board

Royal Marines have joined HMS Diamond to assist with boarding operations, adding their particular expertise to that of the Royal Navy boarding teams. This is needed because the level of boarding and the potential threat posed in the area of operation that the ship will be dealing with. The team consist of Diamond’s boarding team and the royal marines’ team working together for the same cause.

Training has been on-going with the FOST staff happy with what they’ve witnessed. The second boarding officer, SLt. James Dudley told Dandy that “training has gone very well; the boarding teams are ready to conduct successful boarding operations when required by Command. And I have every confidence in the teams, their training, their vast experience and discipline.”

CBRNDC preparations

DIAMOND has worked hard on the journey south with a FOST team consisting of experienced senior weapons engineer, medical assistants and damage control instructors embarked with HMS Diamond. The training package consisted of a number of fire, flood, and casualty practice scenarios, and time spent at action stations to help refresh the ships company and to assist with the integration of those joining Diamonds family for the operation. The ships company responded well to the training, despite an already busy ships programme and the short notice nature of the operational tasking.

Wildcat joins Diamond

209 Flight, a Wildcat flight from 825 Naval Air Squadron has joined DIAMOND and will be with us throughout our time in the Mediterranean and return to the UK. Our first priority is to integrate this fantastic capability into HMS DIAMOND to ensure we can operate safely and effectively. The Wildcat helicopter’s sensor suite will greatly enhance DIAMOND’s own sensors in building up the picture around us and identifying suspect vessels that may require boarding, as well as providing protection to our boarding team.
Run ashore

HMS Diamond enjoyed the first stop of the deployment in Gibraltar, a welcome sight for the old hands and a good safe introduction to a run ashore for those on their first deployment. It was predominantly a working stop, all were busy with the addition of a Wildcat helicopter, stores exchanges with RFA Mounts Bay and essential training for the ships boarding team. The engineers carried out essential maintenance on various pieces of equipment with support from the dockyard services in Gibraltar. It wasn’t all work and no play though as the ships company sampled the many delights that Gibraltar has to offer, with its various restaurants and beautiful beaches, along with the wonderful sunny climate. (right: ‘top gun crew’).

Rock race

A rock race was organised by the outgoing PTI (LPT Steele) and the ship’s new PTI (LPT Ochiltree) the picture above shows that it was well attended even with a very early start (to avoid the heat of the day). The ships football team also enjoyed a run out against one of the local teams. All in all, a good stop enjoyed by all, with good memories and setting everyone up well for the rest of the deployment.
Two members of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Committee joined DIAMOND for her transit to Gibraltar. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP for Berwick upon Tweed, and Craig Mackinlay, MP for South Thanet, were given hands on experience in every department for the four days that they were embarked. They were well received by the Ship’s Company who were encouraged to discuss their concerns and thoughts for the future of the Royal Navy. During the time onboard they held Bridge and SCC watches, and received a number of briefs on Ship’s capability. They were even employed in the Galley, where Mr Mackinlay’s skill with the frying pan was particularly appreciated.

Both have been long supporters of the UK Armed Forces but this was the first time they had set foot on a Type 45. It was a highly informative visit for them, and they left with an enhanced insight into the Royal Navy and the challenges of being a part of a modern warship. They will continue to support the Royal Navy well into the future.

DIAMOND sailed from Portsmouth with an enhanced medical team onboard. In addition to the ship’s Medical Officer, Petty Officer Medical Assistant and Medical Assistant we have 4 Surgeon Commanders (2 anaesthetists, 1 general surgeon and 1 trauma and orthopaedic surgeon), an Emergency Nurse and two Operating Department Practitioners embarked.

This provides DIAMOND with the additional capability required for boarding vessels and the ship is augmented for whatever we may come across in the Mediterranean.

This enhanced medical capability is a first for a Type 45 destroyer and is a very exciting opportunity for HMS DIAMOND and those involved.

As you would expect given the terrible events off Libya, we are indeed trained and ready to conduct a rescue mission should it prove necessary, although it is not expected – as always, ready for anything! In terms of our core mission preventing weapons smuggling, whilst I do not anticipate headline-grabbing glory, I do know that what we will be doing will make a real difference.

We are training very hard to ensure we are ready for whatever challenges the mission presents. Within the limits of security I will do all I can to keep you fully informed; thank you for your continued discretion regarding DIAMOND’s programme.

Enjoy the newsletter!

M J C Hember
Cdr RN
CO

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN......cont’d.

Medics ready to go

MPs visit HMS Diamond