DUNCAN RETURNS AS NATO FLAGSHIP

HMS DUNCAN sailed from Portsmouth on 8th January 2018 to start her 7 month deployment as NATO Flagship. In the first week, the Ship was put through it’s paces with FOST Staff embarked to make sure the Ship was ready to deploy on operations. This saw the Ship’s Company conduct battle damage exercises, defeating simulated air attacks and a proving their resistance to chemical attack.

Whilst this was going on the Ship proceeded South to make the rough crossing over the Bay of Biscay and enter the Mediterranean. It was heartening to see British territory of Gibraltar a stone’s throw away as the Ship transited the Straits of Gibraltar.

DUNCAN continued to Malaga, Spain and spent the next few days proving that a Warship is also a capable platform for diplomatic engagement. DUNCAN held a NATO Force Reception and hosted visitors from the general public as well as local dignitaries and members of the British Consulate. It also provided the opportunity for members of the Ship’s Company to enjoy their first down time and spend some time ashore. The more adventurous headed to Sierra Nevada skiing whilst explored a new foreign port.

DUNCAN sailed from Malaga and was met by the USNS LEROY GRUMMAN and FGS MECKLENBURG who acted as our sparring partners for a surface warfare exercise. From there, DUNCAN went straight into one of the most challenging tasks a ship can perform – taking on fuel underway from another ship.

The next stop alongside Catania, Sicily allowed essential engineering and logistical support before continuing with NATO tasking.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

As HMS DUNCAN sailed on deployment I took immense pride in flying the Surface Fleet Destroyer Effectiveness Pennant that was awarded to my Ship’s Company in December 2017. This award, alongside the Naval Capability Trophy for 2017, was a true reflection of the hard work, determination, and enthusiasm that my Ship’s Company put into everything the Royal Navy asked of them last year.

HMS DUNCAN has been asked to fulfil two missions this year; firstly, to resume the role of Flagship for the Commander of the Standing NATO Maritime Group Two, operating in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and secondly to undertake Operation KIPION tasking in the Arabian Gulf. This is a highly unusual deployment but will provide a range of tasking for my Ship’s Company who will, as ever, rise to the challenge to prove our reputation as the “Last and the Best” Type 45!

I am always conscious that the success of HMS DUNCAN is dependent upon the support that you, our families and friends, give us. I was delighted to host so many of you on board in October for Families Day. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for the hard work that continues at home whilst we are away and hope that some of you may have the chance to visit your loved ones whilst we are on deployment.
HMS DUNCAN is embarked with a seven-man Royal Marine Boarding Team and two-man Maritime Sniper Team. Their broad spectrum of tasks includes counter-piracy operations, helping to protect global shipping lanes and Defence Engagement with foreign nations. This enables them to maximise their own personal training and, more importantly, share tactics with NATO allies.

The sniper team provide are capable of long-range, precise targeting and can embark in our WILDCAT helicopter. During boarding, they provide over-watch from above and monitor initial boarding of a suspect vessel, a particularly important stage of any boarding operation.

Since sailing from Portsmouth, the Marines have undertaken a number of training serials to keep their skills current. This has included live sniper and assault rifle firing exercises at sea, boarding tactics and battle casualty drills. With half of the team transferring from HMS DIAMOND, settling into life on board HMS DUNCAN has been a smooth transition.

MESSAGE FROM COMMADORE UTLEY - COMMANDER SNMG2

It is a pleasure to be embarked in HMS Duncan where our mission from last year remains, that is to achieve three core tasks: firstly, to be on-call to answer any crisis, be it humanitarian or security; secondly, to contribute to NATO’s efforts to protect life at sea and reduce the flow of uncontrolled migration and lastly, to visit allies and partner nations to reinforce NATO’s friendships and provide reassurance.

Since joining the Flagship in Portsmouth I have been hugely impressed by the enthusiasm displayed by all of the Ship’s Company. The way in which they’ve returned from Christmas leave straight into a week of FOST training and then the start of a busy deployment away from families, partners and friends, has been very impressive. To top this off, the effort made by all in Malaga resulted in it being a highly successful NATO visit, well done to all.

I greatly look forward to the remainder of my time in DUNCAN and thank all those at home for the continued support you offer your loved ones. Last and Best!

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