Dear Team KENT

In my first letter of 2015 I would like to say happy New Year and hope that you had a Merry Christmas. Separation at this time of year is always difficult for my sailors and I know it is perhaps more difficult for those left at home. Thank you for your wonderful support.

Although KENT was nearly 3,000 miles from the United Kingdom on Christmas day we were fortunate enough to be in harbour during the festive period. We were even more fortunate that some of you were able to fly out and see us. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting those of you who came to our sports and barbeque evening at the Bahrain rugby club. No matter how busy we are or how far away from home, family is important to all of us. If you were not able to visit your loved one in Bahrain I know that they were thinking of you.

Many of you will have enjoyed seeing members of our Ship’s Company in the Royal Navy’s ‘Yule the Waves’ media campaign. If you have not had a chance to view the messages or video clips yet I recommend you head to http://yulethewaves.tumblr.com/.

If you have been following our deployment so far it will not surprise you when I say that KENT has been quite busy since we sailed. So far on this deployment we have steamed 17,994 miles (about 4000 miles in 2015 already) in our mission to provide security on the high seas. On New Year's Eve we said goodbye to the Arabian Gulf (for now) and entered the Indian Ocean to intercept drugs smugglers along the infamous ‘Hash Highway’. This is the main smuggling route for hashish and heroin coming out of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This drug trade is a major earner for terrorist organisations, so interrupting it is an important contribution to UK security.

Patrolling this route is not a simple task. The distances involved are staggering. This small part of the Indian Ocean accounts for 20% of the Earth’s surface and borders 45 countries. To make things easier we were given a region just the size of Scotland as a hunting ground. So we attacked the challenge with the usual KENT zeal, pulling together lots of information, some clever tools and a bit of guesswork. After a few days of searching and tracking, these efforts led us to some dhows known to be involved in the drugs trade. They were unfortunately empty, but our boarding teams were able to gather useful information about how the smugglers operate and we were able to pass this on to our Coalition partners.
KENT is now preparing to change tasking again. There has been an increase in pirate attacks in the Southern Red Sea during the last few months. As I write we are entering the Red Sea between Yemen and Djibouti, through the Bab El Mandeb strait (known locally as the Gates of Grief). We’ll be spending some time deterring pirates, educating local fishermen about what to watch out for, and re-assuring commercial shipping passing through the economically vital sea lanes here.

Later this month, we will change roles again, as we join our partners in the French Navy as part of a task group. We will exercise together for a few weeks before heading back into the Arabian Gulf for another round of strike operations against IS in Syria and Iraq. It promises to be busy (is there any other way?) but rewarding.

We are also starting our plans for our homecoming to Portsmouth. There are some stock plans for this sort of thing, but if you have any good ideas you’d like to contribute, they are very welcome. I hope to see many of you there.

As ever, if at any time you wish to contact me, please email

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