A MESSAGE FROM COMUKMCMFOR

Since joining in the Gulf of Aden and returning to Bahrain, we have kept incredibly busy coordinating the day-to-day operations of our five ships in the Gulf. RFA Cardigan Bay is our (very comfortable) home; she has been undergoing maintenance in the Arabian Ship Repair Yard (ASRY), beside oil rigs and tankers, with swarms of trades working 24 hours to get them back out to sea. It’s been an amazing sight to watch supertankers being painted in a day.

During this period, the team has been managing the four British mine countermeasures vessels based here; they are broadly employed on everything from routine seabed surveys, through technical maintenance to official visits to other Gulf states. Our own official visits have included the opening of the Royal Navy’s new HQ in Bahrain, and that of the First Sea Lord, the head of the Naval Service.

Our immediate future will see us deploying once again with a force of mine countermeasures vessels, mine clearance divers, and various state-of-the-art unmanned systems, unequalled in their ability to survey the seabed. Your family member is playing a pivotal role in commanding and supporting a force of around 400 people as it hones its skills in finding and defeating sea mines in the world’s waterways.

Your continued support makes all the difference as we enter our second month of the deployment.

Cdr Paul Ottewell RN

Armed Forces Day 2015

While on RFA Cardigan Bay, conducting a maintenance period alongside in Bahrain, I saw the opportunity to organise a photo of all COMUKMCMFOR Staff currently deployed on OP KIPION. I thought it would be good to send back to our families at home so you don’t forget what we look like.

Commander Ottewell (COMUKMCMFOR) and I are holding the Armed Forces Flag at the foot of the Gangway. This was a great opportunity for me to take charge of this evolution and to write this article as I wanted to send a message back home to my wife and children, thanking them for their support. I know this support is not only on Armed Forces Day but for everyday I have served in the Royal Navy and continue to serve. It makes life at sea much easier knowing my family are proud of what I do.

We hope you all either get to attend one of the many Armed Forces Day events taking place back home, or can watch it on TV, while we prepare for our next Operation at Sea.

AB(EW) Daniel (Bobby) Ball

1SL VISIT

On Monday 15th June, the First Sea Lord visited COMUKMCMFOR on RFA Cardigan Bay. The purpose of his visit was to discuss the future of mine countermeasures in the Royal Navy, specifically the introduction of autonomous systems into our world-class fleet.

Cdr Paul Ottewell with the 1SL
The Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC). If there is a requirement for a sailor serving overseas to return to the UK for compassionate reasons, for example if a close relative becomes very seriously ill (normally life threatening) or dies, then it is the role of the JCCC to investigate the circumstances and make a recommendation as to whether compassionate travel should be granted. This telephone line is manned 24hrs a day. Communicating bad news directly to servicemen is not recommended. +44 (0) 1452 519951.

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Welfare. RNRMW provides a comprehensive social work service to all RN and RM personnel and their families. Its purpose is to support in peacetime and in times of crisis, to prevent or reduce the effects of personal difficulties especially those that arise as a result of Forces life. They offer counselling, practical and emotional support and advocacy services. Examples of the type of work undertaken include bereavement, relationship problems, debt, mental health, special needs and next of kin support for deployed personnel and their families. +44 (0)23 9272 8777 or @RNRMWelfare

Naval Service Welfare Website. This website provides accessible support services that strengthen and enhance the resilience of Naval Service personnel, their families and communities. Check out the family support forums. http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/welfare/find-help


The Naval Families Federation exists to give RN families an independent voice in government. I commend their website and services to you. http://www.nff.org.uk

Confidential Support Line. A confidential, impartial telephone listening/advice service offered by trained civilian advisers who will discuss any issue that may be causing concern or personal distress. They will endeavour to identify possible sources of support or resolution where necessary but no direct action will be taken by the Supportline. Callers may remain anonymous. The line operates 7 days a week from 1030 to 2230. Call 0800 731 4880. Oversea call UK +44 1980 630854.

If you are concerned because of something unexpected you have learned about RFA Cardigan Bay from the media, you may obtain further information by calling the Confidential Support Line.