Family information brief

Sun 26 Oct 14

Operation GRITROCK

‘UK Defences’ support to Sierra Leone’
RFA ARGUS JOINS THE FIGHT AGAINST EBOLA

RFA Argus has been deployed to Sierra Leone where she will serve as an aviation support ship providing vital assistance to UK efforts to tackle Ebola.

**Flight Support**
The ship will take 3 Merlin helicopters and armed and engineer from 820 Naval Air Squadron.

**Medical Teams**
The ship will be able to facilitate the rapid transport of Army medical teams as well as medical supplies and equipment needed to tackle the Ebola virus.

Weight: 28,081 T
Speed: 15 kts
Length: 175.1m
Breadth: 30.4m

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The Daily Telegraph

Op GRITROCK
• General situation overview (Where, What, Why …)
• What welfare facilities are in place (deployed and home)?
• Returning to the UK
• What is Ebola and how will we protect ourselves?

Where to get more information and support

Q & A session
Where is Sierra Leone, what's its climate and geography like?

**Climate:** tropical, hot, humid, summer rainy season (May to December); winter dry season (December to April).

**Terrain:** Coastal belt of mangrove swamps, wooded hill country, upland plateau, mountains in east.
What is Sierra Leone like – the people?

Population of 6,190,280.

Population mostly young with estimated 41.7% under 15.

Life expectancy is around 56 years across the population.

English is the official language and is spoken in schools, in government administration and throughout the media.

Two thirds of the adult population are illiterate.

Over 60% of children do not go to school.
What is the health crisis in Sierra Leone?

The Ebola outbreak started in March 2014; it has had most effect in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and is now classed as a ‘Public Health Emergency of International Concern’.

The Sierra Leone Government assess they are becoming overwhelmed by the crisis and have therefore requested International Assistance in order to prevent the spread of the infection further.
Why Sierra Leone? and why is Defence involved?

International call for assistance to combat Ebola from the Governments of Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom.

The existing medical facilities in Sierra Leone are struggling to cope with the crisis.

Military personnel have the necessary skills and can deploy quickly.

The RN and RM regularly operate in and around Sierra Leone.
Who will Defence be supporting and who else is involved?

Defence working in support of the Department for International Development (DfID) who are leading the UK’s response to the crisis

United Nations have set up the UN Ebola Emergency Response Mission in Ghana.

Other nations including the US and France are supporting the efforts in Liberia and Guinea.

‘Save The Children’ plan to take on the running of some treatment facilities after military assistance.
What will Defence be doing?

Helping co-ordinate the UK’s response (military and non-military) in Sierra Leone.

Design and build of treatment facilities and advising local builders.

Training international health care workers.

Treating international healthcare workers who become ill.

Self protection of deployed persons.
What will we be doing?

Assist in the movement of personnel, stores and equipment (DfID, Aid Agencies and Military only).

Support the SL Armed Forces and Police in providing local security to RFA ARGUS whilst in port and territorial waters.

Live and operate from RFA ARGUS throughout.
Deployed Welfare Package

Keeping in touch with home:

- Free phone calls to the UK each week.
- Access to the internet (intermittent initially).
- Regular mail delivery plans are being put in place.

Individuals will receive separated service allowance’s for their deployment.
What support is available to families?

JCCC - Available 24/7 for when you need to get in touch with your relative/friend in an emergency.

RNRM Welfare (Inc HIVE) - unit procedures/opening times/out of hours service.

Unit organised events (DWP Families Welfare Grant)

Regular updates - RN Community Website.

Future events (as required)
Returning to the UK following deployment

There will be a requirement for personnel to monitor themselves and each other for signs and symptoms 3 weeks from return to UK.

At this time there is no intent to move deployed ranks through a ‘holding’ location prior to return; however ranks will be required to undertake Unit led Decompression activity.

Once known, entitlement to post deployment leave will be promulgated.

We will keep you and your families informed about the development of the return procedures - these will be in line with Home Office advice for anyone returning from West Africa.
What is Ebola/EVD and how will we protect ourselves?
What is Ebola and how does it spread?

Ebola is a rare infection spread through direct contact with blood and bodily fluids.

It is not spread through normal social contact.

Usually starts with a flu-like illness and then develops into stomach cramps, diarrhoea and vomiting.

Work ongoing to improve treatment and develop vaccinations.
How will we protect our personnel?

All personnel will undergo appropriate mandatory training prior to initial deployment and physical arrival in the Theatre of Operation.

Effective personal protective equipment will be provided.

The Surgeon General and Governments Senior Medical Advisors are developing plans for ensuring that those deploying are routinely checked and return home safe.
How will suspected cases return to the UK?

Aeromedical evacuation will be considered on a case by case basis – JCCC do not anticipate any significant changes to current evacuation policy.

Based on clinical assessment.

Individuals who are unwell and requiring evacuation may be transported in an Air Transportable Isolation Unit and move direct to an appropriate UK medical facility.

Families will be permitted to visit loved ones.
Other useful contact information

Public Health/Governmental information leaflets:


General advice:


http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ebola-virus/Pages/Ebola-virus.aspx
Questions