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The Fleet Air Arm is vital element for many of the wide and varied roles undertaken by the Royal Navy, these range from humanitarian operations, or search and rescue around the coast of the UK, through to securing the seas, fighting terrorism and landing troops onto hostile shores.

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The Royal Navy is made up of five fighting arms; the Surface Fleet; the Royal Marines; the Submarine Service; the Fleet Air Arm and RFA, supported, at all times, by the Maritime Reserve.

What Is the Fleet Air Arm?

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Integrated

- Helicopters and ships work in unison to achieve greater results, on operations aircraft are embarked everyday giving a vessel an ability to have a greater effect over a larger area.
- Experts in operating aircraft from ships, Fleet Air Arm specialists are able to overcome the specific challenges that the sea can create, whether this be fixing aircraft in a storm, landing on a pitching deck, or simply operating alone, miles from their land base.

Efficient

- Aircraft embark with a dedicated team of specialist sailors, these men and women enable the Fleet Air Arm to maintain very high levels of aviation availability despite being miles from the nearest support.
- Operating from ships, aircraft are forward deployed globally, this means that the UK can quickly respond to events anywhere in the world.
- The Fleet Air Arm is primarily a maritime aviation asset, however, the Royal Navy is a flexible force and Fleet Air Arm assets have played a significant role over all terrain, most notably in land-locked Afghanistan.

Assured

- The mobility of ships allows us to act at a time and place of our choosing without relying on the permission of foreign governments to do so.
- Flying an aircraft from a ship presents unique challenges in order that we prevail in some of the most inhospitable environments in the world. The Fleet Air Arm can act globally because we know these challenges and have the experience to overcome them.
- The UK is committed to the modern Fleet Air Arm capable to react to the challenges of the future; this is based on modern aircraft operated by experts in the maritime environment.
OUR PAST
For over a century the Fleet Air Arm has pioneered maritime aviation as an integrated component of Naval Warfare. Aircraft carriers, angled decks, catapult launches, small ship helicopter operations and the maritime Short Take Off Vertical Landing concept were all developed by the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy and have since been adopted by other navies throughout the world. Proud of its history, Fleet Air Arm Battle Honours include Taranto, Bismarck, Matapan, Korea and The Falklands, while four Victoria Crosses are included in the many awards bestowed upon Fleet Air Arm personnel. The symbiotic relationship between the Navy and its maritime aircraft was recognised in 1937 when it was decided that the Admiralty should retake control of Naval Aviation:

“The Fleet Air Arm not only co-operates with the Fleet; it is an integral part of the Fleet... the air unit in a carrier, or a capital ship, is a great deal more than a passenger in a convenient vehicle. It forms part of the organisation of the ship...”

Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, 1937

OUR PRESENT
Today’s Fleet Air Arm is a highly efficient, lean manned, well oiled fighting arm of the Royal Navy operating a variety of different aircraft and deployed worldwide supporting UK defence and security interests. The Fleet Air Arm is inherently flexible and Naval aircraft fulfil a wide range of roles from counter-piracy and counter-narcotics operations at sea, to land based operations in Afghanistan and Oman and UK Search and Rescue and contingent commitments. The Fleet Air Arm can-do culture and ethos has developed over years of experience of operating in the unique and challenging maritime environment and is underpinned by a highly efficient safety and assurance system.

OUR FUTURE
The Fleet Air Arm will remain a vital part of the ability of the UK’s armed forces to act globally at a time and a place of our Government’s choosing.

As part of the Future Force structure, the Fleet Air Arm will transition from an ageing fleet of Lynx and Sea King rotary wing aircraft, to operate a world leading fleet of Merlin Mk 2 and 4 to conduct Anti-Submarine Warfare and Littoral Manoeuvre respectively. Wildcat will be introduced to retain the ability to strike at sea, either for war-fighting or when engaged in maritime security.

The Fleet Air Arm will lead the introduction of the Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers into Service and, alongside the RAF, will be a key part of the Joint Combat Aircraft Force. Innovation remains a hallmark and the Fleet Air Arm will continue to develop Maritime Unmanned Air Vehicles to support future Operations.

OUR PEOPLE
Our people are what make the Fleet Air Arm the world class organisation it is today, as we look to the future we know that our men and women must be:

- Sailors first, with the core maritime skills such as damage control and fire-fighting, making them a full part of the ships company when they embark
- Able to operate away from support. With small flights working miles away from their home base for months on end.
- An example of the Royal Navy’s core values; courage, commitment, discipline, respect for others, integrity and loyalty
- Aware of the unique challenges of maritime aviation, at all levels, in order to maintain our excellent safety record.