

THE ROYAL NAVY & LIBYA

How your Royal Navy contributed to the tri-service, multi-national campaign in 2011



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The Royal Navy, working with the Army, the RAF and our allies, played a major role in protecting Libyan civilians from the regime of Colonel Gaddafi.

A total of 16 warships, submarines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels have supported humanitarian, embargo and combat operations, either under NATO's **Operation Unified Protector** or the UK's **Operation Deference** and **Operation Ellamy**. These included elements of the Royal Navy's new Response Force Task Group - the UK's military quick reaction force.

DELIVERING MARITIME STRIKE

Nuclear-powered attack submarines **HMS Triumph** and **HMS Turbulent** launched Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles against regime targets ashore.

Helicopter carrier **HMS Ocean** operated Apache attack helicopters from 656 Squadron Army Air Corps which were able to target pro-Gaddafi forces with a high degree of precision. This was the first operational use of an Apache helicopter from the sea, in this instance a more flexible and lower risk alternative to basing them on land.

Operating close to the coast, **HMS Liverpool** faced repeated attack from Pro-Gaddafi forces, and in return demonstrated the potency of Naval Gunfire, using her 4.5 inch gun to bombard rocket batteries, military vehicle checkpoints and other targets and by using illumination rounds as a potent psychological weapon.

EVACUATING CIVILIANS

Whilst on her way home from six months protecting UK interests in the Gulf, **HMS Cumberland** was re-tasked to help evacuate civilians from Libya.

In total she rescued 454 people, including 129 British nationals, transferring them to the safety of Malta. **HMS York**, diverted enroute to her mission in the South Atlantic, extracted a further 43 entitled personnel, as well as delivering medical and food supplies to aid agencies in Benghazi.

ENFORCING A MARITIME BLOCKADE

Several Royal Navy frigates and destroyers patrolled the Libyan coast to enforce the embargo on arms sales in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. This included surveillance operations, repelling small boat activity, and boarding and inspecting merchant vessels.

"It was very humbling to see my Ship's Company working so calmly and quietly. There was no jingoism, no shouting, the atmosphere was cool as people went about their jobs."

Commander Colin Williams, Commanding Officer of HMS Liverpool, after they silenced a Libyan shore battery which had opened fire on the ship and its helicopter.

CLEARING LIBYAN WATERS OF MINES

HMS Brocklesby cleared mines from the port of Misrata after NATO forces spotted pro-Gaddafi forces laying the explosive devices, which threatened the flow of humanitarian aid into Libya and the evacuation of civilians. Later in the year, **HMS Bangor** discovered and destroyed a mine and a torpedo lying on the seabed off the port of Tobruk.

"We spend so long training for times like these that it is fantastic to get a chance to do our jobs in a real, high threat environment... Uncertainty is always just around the corner, but our job, clearing the way so that humanitarian aid can reach civilians caught up in the conflict, makes me feel that I am really making a difference."

Petty Officer (Mine Warfare) Steve Moss, HMS Bangor.





SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE

Flying from **HMS Ocean**, Fleet Air Arm Sea King Mk7 helicopters from **857 Naval Air Squadron** provided intelligence and surveillance to support the operation. Their mission was to clear a path for the Apaches - finding safe routes in and out of Libya without being spotted. They also fed back information about ground movements for analysis by headquarters.

DIRECTING UK AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT

Alongside the RAF, **HMS Liverpool** has controlled aircraft of the NATO-led coalition from the sea using her sophisticated air surveillance technology. The ship's Fighter Controllers directed 14 different

types of aircraft for more than 280 hours, ensuring continuous coverage of the no fly zone.

"It was a really long night. I'd only just been trained for the role and this was the first time I'd done it by myself – and I was doing it for real! Through my headset I could hear the pilots reporting as they engaged the targets".

Writer Lorissa Seville, 21, from Oldham in Greater Manchester, was on the bridge of HMS Albion during the first Apache helicopter strike mission.

PROVIDING LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary is a civilian-manned Fleet of fuel and supply vessels which provides logistical support to increase the operational endurance and worldwide reach of the Royal Navy. Tankers **RFA Wave Knight** and **RFA Orangeleaf** were able to keep Royal Navy and coalition warships on station off Libya for as long as required, whilst replenishment ship **RFA Fort Rosalie** provided stores and ammunition and performed a vital shuttle service between the area of operation and NATO bases in the Mediterranean.

A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Libya exemplifies the Royal Navy's ability to contribute to operations which are 'Joint' (i.e. with the RAF and Army) and 'Combined' (with our foreign allies). A case in point is HMS Ocean's maritime strike role. The helicopter carrier acted as a huge floating launch pad for Apache helicopters belonging to the Army Air Corps, assorted Royal Navy helicopters from the Fleet Air Arm and visiting helicopters from other nations. These were operated in conjunction with other attack helicopters flying from the French Navy's assault ship Mistral, together with conventional strike missions by the RAF and allied air forces.

HMS ALBION	<i>Command Ship</i>
RFA ARGUS	<i>Casualty/Aviation Ship</i>
HMS BANGOR	<i>Sandown Class Minehunter</i>
HMS BROCKLESBY	<i>Hunt Class Minehunter</i>
HMS CUMBERLAND	<i>Type 22 Frigate</i>
RFA FORT ROSALIE	<i>Stores Replenishment Ship</i>
HMS IRON DUKE	<i>Type 23 Frigate</i>
HMS LIVERPOOL	<i>Type 42 Destroyer</i>
HMS OCEAN	<i>Helicopter Carrier</i>
RFA ORANGELEAF	<i>Replenishment Tanker</i>
HMS SUTHERLAND	<i>Type 23 Frigate</i>
HMS TRIUMPH	<i>Trafalgar Class Submarine</i>
HMS TURBULENT	<i>Trafalgar Class Submarine</i>
RFA WAVE KNIGHT	<i>Fast Fleet Tanker</i>
HMS WESTMINSTER	<i>Type 23 Frigate</i>
HMS YORK	<i>Type 42 Destroyer</i>
FLEET AIR ARM	<i>815, 845, 847, 857 Naval Air Sqns</i>
FLEET PROTECTION GROUP RM	<i>Elite boarding teams</i>

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE FORCE TASK GROUP?

The Response Force Task Group (RFTG) is the UK's military quick reaction force. It is led by Commander UK Task Group (COMUKTG).

Events overseas can have a direct impact on our own security and prosperity at home, but from Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 to the Arab Spring in 2011, almost all of the major conflicts and upheavals in modern times have taken the world by surprise. The RFTG represents the UK's ability to respond to this uncertain and increasingly interconnected world.

VERSATILE AND FLEXIBLE

Consisting of ships, aircraft and Royal Marines held at very high readiness. The RFTG is a scaleable force ideally suited to undertake a range of missions at short notice. Ships assigned to the RFTG can undertake separate tasks in different parts of the world, or operate together as a single Task Group, working alongside the RAF and Army or with our foreign partners. Missions could include:

- Humanitarian aid and disaster relief
- Evacuating civilians from trouble spots
- Maritime security patrols (such as counter-terrorism and energy security)
- Maritime blockade
- Land attack
- Amphibious operations

The RFTG can also poise off the coast in international waters from where it can:

- Deter threats
- Prevent conflict
- Provide options for military intervention.



INDEPENDENT MILITARY INTERVENTION

History teaches us not to take for granted access to overseas bases or proximity to our allies.

Consequently, the RFTG also enables the UK to undertake independent military intervention should the need arise.

This ability is currently centred on our amphibious ships, which can insert Royal Marine Commandos ashore by landing craft and helicopter and then direct their operations from the sea. Crucially, this can be done at a time and place of our choosing, more quickly and with fewer logistical considerations than would be required of a conventional land force.

From 2020, the RFTG will also incorporate carrier strike in the form of Britain's new Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers. These will form the cornerstone of Britain's ability to provide air support in conflict zones and project military power overseas.

The Royal Navy's amphibious ships are ideally suited to delivering Royal Marine Commandos and their equipment ashore by helicopter and landing craft.

