

New Royal Navy Surveillance Ship to protect the UK's critical underwater infrastructure

The ship, which will come into service by 2024, will be a surface vessel, with a crew of around 15 people who will conduct research to help the Royal Navy and Ministry of Defence protect our undersea critical national infrastructure and keep our lives and livelihoods secure from threat.

Undersea cables are vital to the global economy and communications between governments. Submarine warfare presents a particular risk of sabotage to undersea cable infrastructure – an existential threat to the UK.

The ship will be fitted with advanced sensors and will carry a number of remotely operated and autonomous undersea drones which will collect data to help protect our people and way of life with operations in UK and international waters.

The vessels will also be able to support with other defence tasks, including exercises and operations in the Arctic which will become an increasingly contested area. The cables are crucial to government-to-government communications and the new capability will protect the interests of the UK and its partners and allies.

The new ship is being developed as part of a wholesale modernisation of the Armed Forces which will be unveiled in the Defence Command Paper tomorrow. As part of the government's Integrated Review, the Prime Minister has committed to invest in technologies and capabilities to protect British people from new and evolving threats.

New projects like the MROSS are part of a drive to reduce our vulnerability to threats, including terrorism, hostile nations and serious and organised crime.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

As the threat changes, we must change. Our adversaries look to our critical national infrastructure as a key vulnerability and have developed capabilities that put these under threat. Some of our new investments will therefore go into ensuring that we have the right equipment to close down these newer vulnerabilities.

Whether on land, sea or air, we must make sure that we maintain the UK resilience to those that attempt to weaken us.

The vessels will help protect critical national infrastructure such as undersea cables which carry trillions of dollars of financial transfers each day and transmit 97% of the world's global communications.

The MROSS will also conduct research to deepen our understanding of UK and international water, enabling the UK to do more to detect threats and protect our infrastructure from those who wish to do us harm.

Across the world, nations are already investing in their own deep-sea capabilities and as a global nation it's vital that we remain innovative, developing our own new technologies to ensure we respond to the threats of today and tomorrow to maintain our advantage.