

News story: Portsmouth hosts US carrier strike group ahead of multinational exercise

The USS George HW Bush and elements of her carrier strike group – the USS Philippine Sea, USS Donald Cook and Norwegian ship HNoMS Helge Ingsstad are on the final leg of their deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, the Global Coalition's fight against ISIS.

The Nimitz-class carrier has UK personnel on board as part of the UK-US Long Lead Specialist Skills Programme which qualifies them in US carrier operations in preparation for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth and the UK's own carrier strike capability.

Also embarked is Commander UK Carrier Strike Group (COMUKCSG) Commodore Andrew Betton and his team for Exercise Saxon Warrior 17 – a joint maritime exercise that will focus how the two nations work together during a number of challenging scenarios around the UK coastline.

Commodore Betton said:

Exercise Saxon Warrior is a large, multinational joint exercise which involves fifteen warships from five different nations, submarines, over 100 aircraft and about 9,000 personnel

The UK contribution will be two Type 23 frigates supporting the US aircraft carrier, a Royal Navy submarine, the Carrier Strike Group UK battle staff, fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft operating from ashore, and then the central training staff who will be based in Faslane in Scotland.

The exercise, which begins once the group leaves Portsmouth, will also be key to ensuring UK personnel are fully equipped ahead of the arrival of the Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Over the next fortnight U.S. Naval personnel will train side-by-side with UK pilots, engineers and deck handlers to build combined maritime and aviation capability and capacity.

Royal Marines Colonel Phil Kelly, the COMUKCSG Strike Commander, said:

This exercise is a great demonstration of the UK's relationship with the United States who are helping us in getting back our carrier strike capability and making a success of the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier programme.

The Type 23 frigates taking part in Ex Saxon Warrior will be Portsmouth-based HMS Iron Duke and HMS Westminster who will be joined by Royal Fleet Auxiliary fast fleet tanker Wave Ruler.