

Press release: UK AT HEART OF INTERNATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE EXERCISE

US-led Exercise Formidable Shield has today begun in waters off the West Coast of Scotland.

A Royal Navy Type 45 Destroyer and two Type 23 Frigates will, alongside ships and crews from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the United States, join one of the most sophisticated and complex air and missile exercises ever undertaken in the UK.

Lasting a month, allies will work together to detect, track and shoot down both anti-ship and ballistic missile targets. 13 ships will fire on 12 live missile targets over four days, improving how allies work together in an air and missile defence environment.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

North Korean tests have shown the danger of rogue states developing longer range missiles. By hosting this cutting-edge exercise in anti-missile defence with allied navies Britain is at the forefront of developing a more effective response to this growing threat.

Rear Admiral Paul Bennett, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Capability) said:

Formidable Shield is a terrific example of the leading role that the UK plays in development of maritime air and missile defence – protecting our people and working with our allies.

Ahead of the exercise, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and QinetiQ recently invested £60 million into the Hebrides Range to modernise the equipment and facilities. A further £16.8 million will be invested in two new BAE Systems tracking radars, to be installed on St Kilda, and upgrade two existing radars at MOD Hebrides.

The new radars are part of the £95m Air Range Modernisation programme agreed in December 2016 with the UK MOD.