

# Royal Navy joins NATO allies on major maritime exercise in the Baltic Sea region

Over the next week, HMS Kent and minehunter HMS Ramsey will sail alongside 26 other vessels and 29 aircraft as 3,000 personnel from 17 NATO nations and two NATO partner nations strengthen their combined maritime capabilities and demonstrate their collective resolve to safeguard security in the Baltic Sea Region.

HMS Ramsey will join the exercise as part of her five-week deployment with the NATO Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 1. The NATO force is dedicated to eliminating the threat of historic mines in waters of northern Europe, practising dealing with present-day mines and promoting the alliance and freedom of the seas.

BALTOPS will see Allies train together on a variety of maritime exercises including air defence, anti-submarine warfare and mine-hunting.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:

HMS Kent represents a Navy that has continued to train and operate throughout the Coronavirus pandemic so that, alongside our allies, we're ready for whatever comes next.

The UK is committed to the independence of the Baltic Sea Region and this exercise along with a range of other UK military activity helps to deter threats and defends our interests in the region. With HMS Kent exercising on BALTOPS, the UK will contribute to the region's security in the sea, the sky and on land.

HMS Kent's Commanding Officer Commander Matt Sykes said:

My ship's company are eager to take part in the exercise and up for the challenge, focussing on our ability to operate seamlessly with our NATO and partner nations.

In these turbulent times, it is also vitally important that we demonstrate our commitment to the region and to upholding the principles of freedom of access to the Baltic Sea.

There are currently over 800 British Army personnel deployed in Estonia, where they lead a multinational battlegroup as part of NATO's enhanced

Forward Presence. Elsewhere, RAF Typhoons are in Lithuania this summer to contribute to the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission.

HMS Kent's participation in BALTOPS represents a return to the Baltic Sea Region for the ship and her crew after she took part in the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) deployment Baltic Protector last year. The JEF is a UK-led high-readiness force of nine north European nations that helps to uphold security in the region.