

HMS Queen Elizabeth sails to US for fighter jet trials

For the first time, UK fighter jets will join this state-of-the-art ship in a significant milestone for the programme.

The deployment, known as 'WESTLANT 19,' will see the carrier conduct 'Operational Testing', with British F-35B Lightning jets embarking for the first time as she moves closer to her first operational deployment in 2021. The carrier will also spend time in Canada during her four-month travels.

Operational Testing is designed to put the jets, ship and supporting units through their paces. The tests allow the equipment and crew to operate under realistic warfighting scenarios to ready them for their first operational deployment.

From planning campaigns, briefing, preparing and arming the jets and pilots, to flying and sustaining them on their 'mission,' the trials ensure that the units can fight as one.

Defence Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

HMS Queen Elizabeth is symbolic of the UK's global reach and power. As she enters this stage of the programme, she will demonstrate her immense engineering, capability and battle readiness.

As she makes her second voyage across the Atlantic, HMS Queen Elizabeth will also strengthen our special relationship with the US and Canada. Our naval forces will visit Canada then spend the coming months working and training side by side with the US to ensure the UK's carrier strike is ready for operations in 2021.

HMS Queen Elizabeth set sail from Portsmouth today. Crown copyright.

The deployment represents the continued positive relationship between the UK and US. Units from the United States Navy, US Air Force and US Marine Corps will all take part in the 'WESTLANT 19' deployment, further demonstrating the close partnership between the two NATO allies.

While at sea, HMS Queen Elizabeth is accompanied by other units of the Commander UK Carrier Strike Group (COMUKCSG) including a Type-45 destroyer, a Type-23 frigate and air assets from the Carrier Air Wing. This provides vital warfighting skills and training for each element to the Royal Navy's potent carrier strike capabilities.

RFA Tideforce is providing tanker support to the Strike Group, which will be

joined by ships and air assets from other nations throughout the deployment. Lima Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines based in Plymouth and a Role 2 Medical Team Afloat are also embarked on the carrier.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's Commanding Officer, Capt Steve Moorhouse said:

To command any warship is a privilege but to be able to command HMS Queen Elizabeth during this pivotal phase of her capability development is a real honour. In addition to my core ship's company, the fixed and rotary wing air assets, enhanced medical capability, Royal Marines and other force elements from across Defence will enhance HMS Queen Elizabeth and the UK's Carrier Strike capability on this deployment.

WESTLANT 19 is a hugely exciting deployment and as we increase the scale and complexity of our training and testing, so the potency of this extraordinary ship continues to grow.

Commander of UKCSG, Cdre Mike Utley said:

The success of last years' deployment during which we embarked and operated the F-35B for the very first time put us ahead of the curve in terms of developmental testing between the jets and ship. We have a significant switch in focus this year, towards operationalising this national defence capability; turning this ship, the jets for which it has been built and all supporting units into a cohesive, agile, efficient force.

Whether that's warfighting at one end of the scale, peacekeeping at the other end or delivering humanitarian support across the globe. Our first operational deployment in 2021 is not far away and we will be ready for any eventuality.

HMS Queen Elizabeth will also host the second Atlantic Future Forum during her time in the US, following on from the inaugural forum held last year in New York. The forum provides a platform for innovators, business leaders and tech entrepreneurs across government and industry to explore emerging cyber, artificial intelligence and space trends, technologies and threats.

The 'WESTLANT 19' Strike Group will return to the UK at the end of the year. HMS Queen Elizabeth's sister ship HMS Prince of Wales is in her final stages of build at Rosyth Dockyard. She is expected to commence her sea trials in the coming weeks.

Push to better understand sources affecting Bridlington water quality

An extensive programme of testing is being carried out around Bridlington in a bid to find out sources impacting on bathing water quality.

The Environment Agency has started weekly spot sampling at a number of points in Bridlington Bay, including at permitted effluent discharges, the harbour and the Gypsy Race to try and get a better understanding of the water quality.

It also plans to do a day of intensive sampling across a full tidal cycle at numerous set points along Bridlington North and South Bays to provide a better understanding of bathing water quality.

The monitoring is in addition to the weekly compliance sampling already taken from each bay as part of the Environment Agency's national bathing water quality sampling.

Bathing water quality at North Bay is classified as 'Good' but South Bay dropped from 'Good' to 'Sufficient' in the 2018 season.

The samples collected from the harbour and Gypsy Race will aim to identify their connectivity with the bathing water quality in the bay.

Claire Campbell, of the Environment Agency, said: "We are carrying out a monitoring programme in Bridlington to look at bathing beaches and the things that affect water quality.

Where bacteria levels are high in a sample we will undertake further analysis to try and identify the source of the bacteria.

Over time we will build a data set to better understand what impacts on bathing water quality, from people, birds and dogs to combined sewers, drains, tides, as well as the weather and industrial processes.

We will also continue to work with landowners, partners including local authorities and Yorkshire Water to make improvements where we can.

Ms Campbell added that the public also has a part to play in keeping bathing waters clean, including by not feeding seagulls, cleaning up after dogs and disposing of litter correctly. She said:

Everyone has a part to play in protecting and improving our great bathing waters. If we continue to work together to reduce

pollution, we can improve water quality and ensure our bathing waters and coastal communities continue to thrive.

Re-appointment of Victim's Commissioner

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP has reappointed Judith Thompson as Northern Ireland Commissioner for Victims & Survivors for 12 months until August 2020.

Julian Smith, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

I have decided to renew the Commissioner's term for 12 months, in order to provide immediate continuity of this essential role and allow Stormont's political leaders – once they are back up and running – to determine the long term future of this role.

Notes to Editors

In August 2015 Judith was first appointed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister as Commissioner for victims and survivors of the conflict in Northern Ireland. This role was established by legislation in 2006 and its principle aim is to promote the interests of victims and survivors.

The Commissioner has six statutory duties:

1. The Commissioner shall promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and survivors and of the need to safeguard those interests.
2. The Commissioner shall keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors.
3. The Commissioner shall keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by bodies or persons.
4. The Commissioner shall advise the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and any body or person providing services for victims and survivors on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors.
5. As soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a request for advice; and on such other occasions as the Commissioner thinks appropriate; The Commissioner shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the views of victims and survivors are sought concerning the interests of victims and survivors.
6. The Commissioner shall make arrangements for a forum for consultation

and discussion with victims and survivors.

Ms Thompson's biography can be found on the [Commissioner for Victims and Survivors website](#)

CPANI Code of Practice

This reappointment was made in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland requires the political activity of the appointees to be published. Judith Thompson has not declared any political activity in the last five years.

Statutory Requirements

This appointment has been made by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018, as amended by the Northern Ireland (Ministerial Appointment Functions) Regulations 2019.

A Joint Effort Phase 1 Showcase

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) invites all those with an interest in 'A Joint Effort' advanced materials to a showcase event for the 'A Joint Effort' competition on 8 October 2019. The UK suppliers will be showcasing the progress of their innovation projects, which are in development through the Phase 1 competition.

Phase 1 of 'A Joint Effort' launched in November 2018 as a parallel call between the UK (Materials for Strategic Advantage programme within the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory) and Australia (Defence Science and Technology Group, Next Generation Technology Fund and Small Business Innovation Research for Defence) and was managed by DASA. We awarded funding for suppliers under each of the four challenges:

- Challenge 1: Integration of composites
- Challenge 2: Adhesives for structural joining
- Challenge 3: Joining high temperature structures
- Challenge 4: Improving armour systems

This event will give you the opportunity to see presentations from and interact with the UK Phase 1 suppliers: BAE, BMT, Foresight Innovations,

Imperial College of London, TWI Limited, University of Surrey and Zentraxa.

We are particularly interested in your attendance at this event if you have an interest in procuring the technologies or have complementary programmes of work.

This event will also give you the opportunity to hear further details of Phase 2. For any suppliers interested in forming a collaboration to enter Phase 2, please [see here](#) for further information about the online collaboration space.

Representatives of the [Dstl Materials for Strategic Advantage programme](#) will be present at the event and welcome discussion on the wider work of the programme. Members of the DASA team will also be available for further discussion.

To attend the event

To participate in this demonstration event, please register on the [Eventbrite page](#). Please note that places for this event are limited.

Find out more about the [A Joint Effort competition](#).

Maintaining standards in reformed Functional Skills qualifications

On 30 August 2019 we wrote to Responsible Officers at awarding organisations recognised to offer reformed Functional Skills qualifications.

Our letter outlines our expectation that standards will be maintained from legacy versions of Functional Skills, how we expect standards to be aligned across awarding organisations and how we intend to collect standards data.