

News story: HMS Sutherland escorts two Russian warships past UK coastline

The Type 23 frigate located the two Russian ships in the early hours of Friday morning [14 Apr 17] as they sailed through the North Sea towards the Dover Straits.

The Steregushchiy-class corvettes, Soobrazitelny and Boiky, were joined later in the afternoon by a Russian support tanker and an ocean-going tug.

HMS Sutherland will continue to monitor the movements of the ships as they pass close to UK territorial waters today.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

HMS Sutherland is carefully marking these Russian ships as they pass close to UK waters. The Royal Navy maintains a vigilant watch and is always ready to keep Britain safe.

Royal Navy sailors on the Plymouth-based frigate keep watch on every movement of the ships, using state-of-the-art radars to track the course and speed of the ships as they pass close to the UK.

HMS Sutherland is escorting the Russian ships. Crown Copyright.

Commander Andrew Canale, the Commanding Officer of HMS Sutherland, said:

As one of the Royal Navy's high readiness units, HMS Sutherland is required to escort warships that approach the UK and this task is considered routine business for us.

It is vitally important the Royal Navy demonstrates its presence and commitment to the integrity of UK territorial waters as we work around the clock to secure the seas of our island nation.

As a high-readiness unit, HMS Sutherland may be called upon at any time to help prevent arms trafficking, people smuggling, conduct counter-terrorism operations, maritime search and rescue, or escort duties like those it is undertaking today.

News story: £22.7 Million awarded to support older veterans

The money will help organisations across the country to continue the invaluable work they do to support older veterans, which includes providing access to health care and carers, support with using the internet, and offering general advice.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Our veterans have given so much for their country, and the Aged Veterans Fund is a way of us thanking our older veterans and ensuring they are cared for in later life.

One of the awards, totalling almost £4 million, went to Poppyscotland who manage 14 projects under its Unforgotten Forces programme, which provides wellbeing improvements to homes, helps to prevent veterans from feeling isolated, and support to those who suffer hearing problems.

Mark Bibbey Chief Executive at Poppyscotland said:

We want people to understand that key organisations in the area of support provision have joined forces to provide a more holistic provision for aged veterans. If a veteran is engaged with one organisation, for example, they can immediately be referred to another – or multiple consortium members if required. The essence is strength in numbers and we want the identity of our consortium to reflect this.

Age UK received £4.4 million for its Joining Forces scheme, which gives up to 12 weeks of tailored support for older veterans across the country, providing information and advice, practical support at home, access to social events and digital technology, and opportunities to become more active.

Steve Hampson, Head of Innovation & Programmes at Age UK said:

Joining Forces allows us to build on the work we already do across the country with older veterans and to reach out to those who may need more support. The grant means we can develop and test our services, and learn more about how best to support older veterans to get more out of later life. Our work has at its core what older people want to achieve for themselves.

£4.8 million was awarded to the Legion Healthy Living Portfolio, led by The

Royal British Legion, to promote healthy living through a number of ways including local activities, research to improve services, and the training of specialist staff.

Steve Baynes, Head of Grants and Social Policy at The Royal British Legion said:

This grant will help the Legion continue its work with a network of charities, supporting the Armed Forces community through thick and thin. In particular, the grant will enable us and our partners to focus on achieving lasting social change for aged veterans. The veterans to benefit will be from a range of communities, including those who are at risk of becoming socially isolated, struggling with their physical or mental health, with hearing loss or in residential care. Many of the projects will also benefit carers and family members of those who Served, and some are research-oriented so that we, as a society, are better informed of current and emerging needs.

The ten charities to receive the awards are Age UK, Poppyscotland, The Royal British Legion, the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, Cornwall Rural Community Charity, Rural Action Yorkshire, St Johns and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service, Age Cymru, Seafarers UK, and Hospice UK.

The Aged Veterans Fund which was set up in 2015, had a total of £30 million of LIBOR funds available to support older veterans.

It is designed to support non-core health, wellbeing, and social care needs for older veterans (born before 1 January 1950), including surviving Second World War veterans, those who undertook National Service, and other voluntary enlisted veterans who may need some focused support in relation to their health and social care needs.

This final round of awards comes after the Aged Veterans Fund initially granted £6.6 million to eight organisations in 2016.

[News story: Driving test changes: 4 December 2017](#)

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has confirmed that the driving test in England, Scotland and Wales will change from Monday 4 December 2017.

The changes are designed to make sure new drivers have the skills they'll need to help them through a lifetime of safe driving.

The changes will only apply to car driving tests to begin with.

The 4 driving test changes

1. Independent driving part of the test will increase to 20 minutes

The independent driving part of the test currently lasts around 10 minutes. During this part of the test, you have to drive without turn-by-turn directions from the driving examiner.

This part of the test will be made longer, so it'll last around 20 minutes – roughly half of the test.

2. Following directions from a sat nav

During the independent driving part of the test, most candidates will be asked to follow directions from a sat nav.

The examiner will provide the sat nav and set it up. You won't need to set the route – the examiner will do this for you. So, it doesn't matter what make or model of sat nav you practise with.

You can't follow directions from your own sat nav during the test – you have to use the one supplied by the examiner.

You'll be able to ask the examiner for confirmation of where you're going if you're not sure. It won't matter if you go the wrong way unless you [make a fault](#) while doing it.

One in 5 driving tests won't use a sat nav. You'll need to follow traffic signs instead.

3. Reversing manoeuvres will be changed

The 'reverse around a corner' and 'turn-in-the-road' manoeuvres will no longer be tested, but you should still be taught them by your instructor.

You'll be asked to do one of 3 possible reversing manoeuvres:

- parallel park at the side of the road
- park in a bay – either driving in and reversing out, or reversing in and driving out (the examiner will tell you which you have to do)
- pull up on the right-hand side of the road, reverse for 2 car lengths and rejoin the traffic

4. Answering a vehicle safety question while you're driving

The examiner will ask you 2 vehicle safety questions during your driving test – these are known as the ['show me, tell me' questions](#).

You'll be asked the:

- ‘tell me’ question (where you explain how you’d carry out a safety task) at the start of your test, before you start driving
- ‘show me’ question (where you show how you’d carry out a safety task) while you’re driving – for example, showing how to wash the windscreen using the car controls and wipers

Watch how the new test will work

This video shows how the test will work from 4 December 2017.

[YouTube video](#)

Pass mark, length of test and cost not changing

The pass mark is staying the same. So, you’ll pass your test if you make no more than 15 driving faults and no serious or dangerous faults.

The examiner will still mark the test in the same way, and the same things will still count as faults.

The overall time of the driving test won’t change. You’ll still drive for around 40 minutes.

The [driving test cost](#) will also stay the same.

Why the changes are being made

Road collisions are the biggest killer of young people. They account for over a quarter of all deaths of those aged between 15 and 19.

DVSA wants to make sure that training and the driving test reduce the number of young people being killed in collisions.

These changes are being made because:

- most fatal collisions happen on high-speed roads (not including motorways) – changing the format of the test will allow more of these types of roads to be included in driving test routes
- 52% of car drivers now have a sat nav – DVSA wants new drivers to be trained to use them safely
- research has shown that new drivers find independent driving training valuable – they can relate it to driving once they’ve passed their test

Changes are supported by the public

The changes follow a:

- public consultation that over 3,900 people took part in
- trial of the changes involving over 4,300 learner drivers and over 860 driving instructors

The proposals were widely supported by the public. The [results of the](#)

[consultation](#) show that:

- 88.2% agreed with increasing the length of the independent driving part of the test
- 70.8% agreed with asking candidates to follow directions from a sat nav
- 78.6% agreed with the plans to change how the reversing manoeuvres are test
- 78.4% agreed with asking the 'show me' question while the candidate is driving

Helping you through a lifetime of safe driving

Transport Minister, Andrew Jones, said:

Our roads are among the safest in the world. However, road collisions are the biggest killer of young people.

These changes will help us to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads and equip new drivers with the skill they need to use our roads safely.

DVSA Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

DVSA's priority is to help you through a lifetime of safe driving.

Making sure the driving test better assesses a driver's ability to drive safely and independently is part of our strategy to help you stay safe on Britain's roads.

It's vital that the driving test keeps up to date with new vehicle technology and the areas where new drivers face the greatest risk once they've passed their test

[News story: Minister Wharton: UK will stand by people of Ethiopia affected by severe drought](#)

During his first visit to Ethiopia and at a time when a new drought is hitting 13 million people, Minister Wharton visited the Tigray region to see the lifesaving impact of UK aid and how ongoing support is building resilience and helping recovery from last year's El Nino induced drought.

Earlier this year, the UK increased much needed support to Ethiopia to provide around 800,000 people with lifesaving clean water, food and emergency nutrition to malnourished children.

Minister Wharton also visited Endabaguna refugee reception centre in Northern Ethiopia where he met vulnerable families and children benefiting from UK support. Ethiopia is one of the largest host nations of refugees – with over 800,000 people having crossed the border – with the majority fleeing humanitarian crises in neighbouring South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

International Development Minister James Wharton said:

“Millions of people are living in desperate conditions as extreme drought in Ethiopia and worsening humanitarian crises in neighbouring countries are forcing people from their homes, threatening lives and global security.

“I have seen first-hand how UK aid is providing lifesaving support to vulnerable communities in Ethiopia, as well as refugees, and making a real difference to those who need it most.

“At the same time, we are helping to boost economic development and private sector investment to create jobs and increase stability in the longer term which is firmly in Ethiopia and the UK’s interests.”

In the capital Addis Ababa, Minister Wharton met with workers at a British manufacturing firm Pittards who have benefited from UK aid supported skills training to increase productivity, and met with a local entrepreneur whose leather making business has benefited from UK help.

He emphasised how the UK is strengthening its focus on economic development as a long term solution to povert. This follows on from a visit by the International Development Secretary Priti Patel to Ethiopia earlier this year where she launched DFID’s first Economic Development Strategy at Hawassa industrial park, where UK aid is helping to transform the local economy by creating around 60,000 new jobs.

Over the last five years, UK aid in Ethiopia has:

- prevented 4.2 million people from going hungry
- put 2.5 million children through primary school
- provided 4.9 million people with access to water and sanitation and
- enabled 500,000 more women to use modern methods of family planning.

[**News story: UK personnel depart for**](#)

NATO Kosovo role

A team of nearly 30 UK troops has left the UK for Southern Europe to join NATO's Kosovo Force, helping to maintain safety, security and freedom of movement.

The year-long deployment will bolster the mission's capability, following a request from NATO for further support to KFOR by allies. Its particular role will be to support KFOR's ability to carry out intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. The UK team will be based in the KFOR headquarters in Pristina.

KFOR began as a peacekeeping force in the late 1990s. Now it has evolved into a smaller, more flexible body of around 4,200 troops, acting as one of the main security providers in Kosovo. Troops are contributed by some 30 countries, including Germany, Italy, Turkey, Poland and the US, as well as the UK.

At the NATO Summit in Warsaw last year, Allies reaffirmed that KFOR would continue to contribute to a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. It will also continue to adapt. As the Warsaw communiqué made clear, changes to the Alliance's troop presence reflect conditions in the country. The force's overall goal is to enable self-sufficient security in Kosovo.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

This deployment of troops demonstrates how we remain committed to supporting security and stability in the Western Balkans region. NATO remains a cornerstone of our defence and by defending the security of Europe we strengthen our security at home.

This deployment follows support the UK provided in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015 to the EU Force (EUFOR).

As the Prime Minister has announced the UK will be increasing its engagement in the Western Balkans, including through our hosting of the 2018 Western Balkans Summit.

The UK has more than 3,000 military personnel deployed on operations around the world, clearly demonstrating Britain's global Defence footprint. The UK continues to meet NATO's target of spending 2% of GDP on Defence, backed by a Defence budget that will rise every year for the rest of this decade.