

# UK Carrier Strike Group's return to Singapore off to flying start with Air Force and Navy interactions

Launching from the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, F-35B Lightning jets took to the skies with the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF) F-16 fighters yesterday (9 October).

Exercising together in the international waters of the southern reaches of the South China Sea, the jets conducted simulated air combat training and formation flying. Meanwhile, ships from the UK Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and the Republic of Singapore Navy conducted a manoeuvring exercise in the international waters in the South China Sea.

These activities kicked off the Strike Group's engagements with Singapore, which will be led by flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth visiting the city-state tomorrow (11 October), as a demonstration of the deep and longstanding UK-Singapore relationship.

UK's Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling and Royal Air Force (RAF) Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, are also in Singapore tomorrow, and will meet with senior military officials from Singapore onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Amongst her engagements in Singapore, Minister Milling will also lead the UK's contribution to a think-tank roundtable, covering themes of ASEAN, regional security and prosperity, and the UK's role in the Indo-Pacific.

Whilst onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, the Air Chief Marshal Wigston will receive an operational update from 617 Squadron detailing how the F-35 Lightning has been integrated and operated throughout the deployment.

(from top) RSS Vigour and RSS Formidable from the Republic of Singapore Navy and the UK Carrier Strike Group's HMS Queen Elizabeth exercising together on 9 October 2021. [Photo: Royal Navy]

The Carrier Strike Group, which set off on its maiden operational deployment in May (2021), has sailed the Atlantic Ocean, through the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific – participating in a range of activities with partners and allies enroute.

The deployment highlights the UK's commitment to defending democratic values, enhancing defence and security cooperation and promoting free trade around the world – key themes in the UK Government's Integrated Review, published earlier this year.

While in Singapore, the crew onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth will host Singapore

officials and industry leaders from a range of sectors – including defence and security, trade and business, and science and research – supporting the development of closer UK-Singapore cooperation and the UK's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.

To mark International Day of the Girl tomorrow (11 Oct), female engineers on HMS Queen Elizabeth have also participated in a 'virtual Q&A' with girls from Singapore, answering their questions about careers in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) sector.

All activities involving HMS Queen Elizabeth will be conducted in full compliance with the Singapore government's Covid-19 measures, including testing, mask use and safe distancing. All CSG personnel will remain on the ship throughout the duration of the visit.

Singapore is one of over 40 countries which the Carrier Strike Group will visit or exercise with during its global deployment.

In July (2021), the Strike Group navigated through the Singapore Strait, with a number of ships conducting an exercise with the Republic of Singapore Navy in international waters in the southern reaches of the South China Sea. At the same time, replenishment ship RFA Tidespring also made a contactless pit stop to Singapore to embark supplies for the Group's movement further east.

Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group, said:

The Carrier Strike Group's deployment has been designed to recognise the importance of the region globally. The Group's presence also demonstrates our support for the freedom of navigation passage through vital trading routes and our commitment to an international system of norms that benefits all countries.

So thank you Singapore for your support to the Carrier Strike Group's deployment, for contributing to air exercises alongside our jets and supporting HMS Queen Elizabeth's pit stop at Changi. We are proud to play our part in continuing to grow and deepen the Singapore-UK relationship.

Her Excellency Kara Owen, British High Commissioner to Singapore, said:

2021 is a pivotal year for our engagement with the region, with the UK becoming ASEAN's first Dialogue Partner since 1996, and launching negotiations to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Singapore has been a longstanding partner and supporter of the UK's engagement in this region, and HMS Queen Elizabeth's visit testifies to our close and enduring bilateral relationship. During her time here, she will support our ongoing efforts to further grow

the SG-UK Partnership for the Future, in areas from defence and security, to trade and prosperity, and science and research.

## **Notes to editors:**

Free-to-use photos of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG21), are available to download [here](#).

As part of its maiden operational deployment, the CSG21 will sail over 26,000 nautical miles, engaging with 40 countries from the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific and back again.

The fifth generation HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier, at 65,000 tonnes, is the largest surface vessel ever constructed in the UK. She leads six Royal Navy ships, a Royal Navy submarine, a US Navy destroyer and a frigate from the Netherlands in the largest concentration of maritime and air power to leave the UK in a generation. It is equipped with the fifth generation F-35B Lightning multi-role aircrafts. They are being jointly crewed by the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and the US Marine Corps.

From defending democratic values and tackling shared threats, to seizing new trade opportunities through engagements with Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, India and others, the deployment marks a step-change in UK engagement in the region.

The UK is already investing significantly in the region having been conferred ASEAN Dialogue Partner status, commencing negotiations to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and rapidly progressing trade talks with Australia, New Zealand and India.

The UK's commitment to these enduring defence and security responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific will be enhanced this Autumn by the deployment of two of the newest and greenest Royal Navy warships, as HMS Tamar and HMS Spey set sail from the UK for their permanent assignment in the Indo-Pacific.

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