

# Coast Guard Repatriates 46 Migrants from 4 Interdictions to Cuba



Coast Guard Cutter Resolute small boat crew rescues eight people from the water approximately 16 miles south of Key West, Florida, May 27, 2021. The survivors currently remain aboard a Coast Guard cutter where they will receive food, water and basic medical attention. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore crew repatriated 46 Cuban migrants to Cuba, Monday, from four interdictions, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a May 31 release.

In the first interdiction, the Cutter Kathleen Moore's crew located a migrant vessel and notified Sector Key West watchstanders, May 21, approximately 45 miles north of Bahia Honda, Cuba.

In the second interdiction, the Coast Guard Cutter Resolute's crew spotted and rescued migrants from the water, May 21, approximately 16 miles south of Key West. Cutter Resolute's crew transferred the migrants to Cutter Kathleen Moore.

In the third interdiction, a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircrew spotted a rustic vessel and notified Sector Key West watchstanders, May 21, approximately 23 miles south of Key West. The Cutter Resolute arrived on scene and embarked the migrants with no medical concerns reported. Cutter Resolute's crew transferred the migrants to Cutter Kathleen Moore.

In the fourth interdiction, Coast Guard District Seven watchstanders received a report from a good Samaritan of a rustic vessel, May 21, approximately 69 miles south of the

Marquesas. Cutter Kathleen Moore arrived on scene and safely embarked the migrants.

“The Florida Straits can be very dangerous,” said Capt. Adam Chamie, commander of Sector Key West. “The weather can change quickly. Even if the water is warm, the sea can be unforgiving, particularly in unseaworthy rafts. Please don’t take to the sea.”

Since Oct. 1, 2020, Coast Guard crews have interdicted 323 Cubans, compared to:

5,396 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2016

1,468 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2017

259 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2018

313 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2019

49 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2020.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction, Coast Guard crew members were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19.

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## **Navy Tests New Hypersonic Rocket Motor**



A 2020 photo of a successfully tested hypersonic glide body in a flight experiment executed by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army from the Pacific Missile Range Facility, Kauai, Hawaii. U.S.

## ARMY

WASHINGTON – Navy Strategic Systems Programs (SSP) successfully conducted a test of the First Stage Solid Rocket Motor (SRM) on May 27 in Promontory, Utah, as part of the development of the Navy's Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) offensive hypersonic strike capability and the Army's Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW), the Navy said in a release.

This was the initial live fire test of the first stage SRM and is a vital step in the development of a Navy-designed common hypersonic missile that will be fielded by both the Navy and Army.

The first stage SRM will be part of a new missile booster for the services, and will be combined with a Common Hypersonic Glide Body (CHGB) to create the common hypersonic missile. Each service will use the common hypersonic missile, while developing individual weapon systems and launchers tailored for launch from sea or land. This successful SRM test represents a critical milestone leading up to the next Navy and Army joint flight test, which will take place in the first quarter of fiscal year 2022, and ultimately the fielding of the CPS and LRHW weapon systems.

The Department of Defense successfully tested the CHGB on March 20, 2020. The services are working closely with government national laboratories and industry to continue development and production of the CHGB. The Navy is the lead designer, and the Army leads production.

Information gathered from this and future tests will further inform the services offensive hypersonic technology development. The Department of Defense is working in collaboration with industry, government national laboratories and academia to field hypersonic warfighting capability in the early-to mid-2020s.

Hypersonic weapons, capable of flying at speeds greater than five times the speed of sound (Mach 5), are highly maneuverable and operate at varying altitudes. In a matter of minutes, Navy and Army warfighters can defeat high-value targets hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Delivering hypersonic weapons is one of the DoD's highest priorities.

The common hypersonic missile design for sea and land-based applications provides economies of scale for future production and relies upon a growing U.S. hypersonics industrial base.

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## **Cutter Active Returns From Counter-Drug Patrol, \$106M in Cocaine Seized**



Members with the Coast Guard Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team board a suspected drug smuggling vessel in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, May 5, 2021. The drugs, worth an estimated \$220 million, were seized in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean during April and May. U.S. COAST GUARD

PORT ANGELES, Wash. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Active (WMEC 618) returned to their homeport May 27 in Port Angeles after a 58-day counter-drug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a May 28 release.

The 55-year-old cutter and crew patrolled international waters off the coasts of Central America and Mexico in support of the Coast Guard and partner agencies' maritime illicit drug interdiction missions.

The Active intercepted two vessels suspected of smuggling illicit narcotics. Active's crew seized approximately 5,650 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated \$106.8 million from the combined interdictions. One of the two smuggling vessels, which are designed to evade detection, was a low-profile vessel. Low-profile vessels ride low in the water and are often painted blue to camouflage with the ocean, which make them more difficult to track. The contraband and suspects were transferred to the custody of federal law enforcement agencies for prosecution.

Active's crew [offloaded approximately 11,500 pounds of seized cocaine](#) in San Diego on May 19, representing four suspected drug smuggling vessel interdictions made by crews aboard the Active, the Coast Guard Cutters Steadfast (WMEC 623) and Tahoma (WMEC 908).

The cutter also conducted two search-and-rescue missions during their deployment. Active's crew rescued four fishermen from a stranded fishing vessel and towed the disabled vessel until another Coast Guard cutter completed the search-and-rescue case. The second case Active responded to was a distress call for a jet skier injured in the water. Active's health services technician provided first aid to the person and stabilized the injured jet skier for further transfer by Coast Guard Station San Diego to waiting emergency medical services personnel.

Active was accompanied by an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station San Francisco and personnel from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) from Jacksonville, Florida. The helicopter and HITRON aircrews are capable of utilizing airborne use of force including disabling fire on the engines of non-compliant vessels suspected of carrying contraband. Additionally, Active's crew was supplemented by four Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team

(PAC-TACLET) members from San Diego. PAC-TACLET's specialization in law enforcement and knowledge of the Law of the Sea enhanced Active's ability to identify, interdict, and process suspected drug smugglers.

"This patrol was another superb example of teamwork across the interagency," said Cmdr. James M. O'Mara IV, Active's commanding officer. "Beyond our lifelines, interagency and partner nations shared information to develop cases, while U.S. Navy, Customs and Coast Guard aircraft detected targets of interest. Active's crew leaned forward, operated aggressively and executed their missions with distinction."

This patrol marked O'Mara's last patrol as commanding officer of the Active. Assuming command in January of 2019, O'Mara sailed over 55,000 miles throughout his nearly two and a half year tenure as Active's commanding officer. O'Mara was relieved by Cmdr. Brian J. Tesson on May 24 during a change of command ceremony aboard the cutter in the San Francisco Bay while transiting home. O'Mara will be reporting to Pacific Area Cutter Forces in June. Tesson reports to the Active from the Coast Guard Civil Engineering Unit Oakland where he served as the executive office.

Commissioned in 1966, Active is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium-endurance cutter homeported in Port Angeles and routinely deploys in support of counter-drug, migrant interdiction, fisheries, and search-and-rescue and homeland security missions.

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# Future LCS Savannah Completes Successful Acceptance Trials



USS Independence, a sister ship of the future USS Savannah (LCS 28), which successfully concluded acceptance trials in the Gulf of Mexico on May 14. *U.S. NAVY / Naval Air Crewman 2nd Class Nicholas Kontodiakos*

MOBILE, Ala. – The future USS Savannah (LCS 28) successfully concluded acceptance trials in the Gulf of Mexico May 14 after a series of in-port and underway demonstrations, the Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants Public Affairs said in a May 26 release.

“I continue to be impressed with the outstanding results achieved by the Navy and industry team during acceptance trials for LCS ships. The future USS Savannah set the bar even higher and exceeded expectations. Our warfighting capabilities continue to evolve, and each LCS that meets this milestone further demonstrates progressive improvements in tactical performance and mission readiness,” said LCS program manager Capt. Mike Taylor.

The Navy conducted comprehensive tests of the Independence-variant littoral combat ship’s systems during the trials, spanning multiple functional areas including main propulsion, auxiliaries and electrical systems. LCS 28 also performed a full-power demonstration, steering and quick reversal, anchor drop test and combat system detect-to-engage sequence. Acceptance trials are the last significant milestone before delivery of the ship to the Navy, which is planned for late June.

Following delivery and commissioning, Savannah will sail to California to be homeported in San Diego with sister ships USS Independence (LCS 2), USS Coronado (LCS 4), USS Jackson (LCS 6), USS Montgomery (LCS 8), USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10),

USS Omaha (LCS 12), USS Manchester (LCS 14), USS Tulsa (LCS 16), USS Charleston (LCS 18), USS Cincinnati (LCS 20), USS Kansas City (LCS 22), USS Oakland (LCS 24) and USS Mobile (LCS 26).

Four additional Independence-variant ships are under construction at Austal USA in Mobile. Final assembly is underway on Canberra (LCS 30) and Santa Barbara (LCS 32). Austal is fabricating modules for Augusta (LCS 34), and initial fabrication for Kingsville (LCS 36) has begun. The future USS Pierre (LCS 38) will begin fabrication later this year.

LCS is a highly maneuverable, lethal and adaptable warship designed to support focused mine countermeasures, anti-submarine and surface warfare missions. The Independence-variant LCS integrates new technology and capability to affordably support current and future mission, ranging from deep water to the littorals.

LCS is now the Navy's second-largest surface ship class in production, behind the DDG 51 Arleigh Burke-class destroyer program. In 2019, three LCSs were delivered to the fleet, four were delivered in 2020, and four will again deliver in 2021 – a shipbuilding delivery pace not seen since the 1990s.

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## **Coast Guard Repatriates 21 Migrants to Cuba**



Coast Guard Cutter William Trump crew repatriated 21 Cubans to Cuba after they were interdicted off Key West's coast, Florida, May 24, 2021. A good Samaritan alerted Coast Guard

Sector Key West watchstanders to a 16-foot raft with 11 people aboard Tuesday off Marathon. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

MIAMI – The Coast Guard Cutter William Trump crew repatriated 21 Cubans to Cuba May 24 at approximately 10 a.m. after they were interdicted off Key West's coast, the Coast Guard 7<sup>th</sup> District said in a May 25 release.

A good Samaritan alerted Coast Guard Sector Key West watchstanders to a raft with 11 people aboard at approximately 8 a.m., May 22, off Alligator Reef Light.

Station Islamorada law enforcement officers reported one of the Cubans deceased. The deceased's son reported the raft had capsized at the start of their voyage resulting in loss of their food, water, medication and his father passed away during the voyage.

In the second interdiction, a good Samaritan alerted Coast Guard Sector Key West watchstanders, May 25, to a 16-foot raft with 11 people aboard off Marathon.

The good Samaritan provided life jackets, food, and water to the Cubans and due to 10-12 foot seas and stayed with them until Coast Guard Cutter William Trump arrived on scene.

"The dangers of traveling through the Florida Straits cannot be overstated," said Chief Warrant Officer Matt James, commanding officer, Station Islamorada. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of the man who died as a result of losing critical medicine for a reported pre-existing condition during the capsizing."

Since Oct. 1, 2020, Coast Guard crews have interdicted 250 Cubans compared to:

- 5,396 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2016
- 1,468 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2017
- 259 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2018
- 313 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2019

- 49 Cuban migrants in Fiscal Year 2020

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction, Coast Guard crew members were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19.

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## **5th Fleet Bolstered by Arrival of Two Coast Guard Fast Response Cutters**



Patrol boat USCGC Maui (WPB 1304) and fast response cutter USCGC Robert Goldman (WPC 1142) transit the Arabian Gulf en route to Bahrain, May 24. Robert Goldman and USCGC Charles Moulthrope (WPC 1141) are the newest additions to Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA), which is comprised of six 110-foot cutters, the Maritime Engagement Team, shore side support personnel, and is the Coast Guard's largest unit outside of the U.S. playing a key role in supporting Navy security cooperation, maritime security, and maritime infrastructure protection operations in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Seaman Logan Kaczmarek* MANAMA, Bahrain – U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class fast response cutters USCGC Charles Moulthrope (WPC 1141) and Robert Goldman (WPC 1142) arrived at their new homeport onboard Naval Support Activity Bahrain, May 25, the U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

The FRCs are two of six planned to be attached to Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA), forward deployed to Bahrain with commander, Task Force 55. They will replace the existing

Coast Guard Island-class patrol boats USCGC Aquidneck (WPB 1309) and USCGC Adak (WPB 1333).

“These crews have shown that they are more than ready for the mission at hand in this region through numerous successful engagements with partner maritime forces during port visits and bilateral exercises,” said Capt. Willie Carmichael, commander of PATFORSWA. “I am extremely proud of the high performance they have displayed during their transit to Bahrain.”

Aquidneck and Adak are set to decommission in Bahrain later this year and are being replaced as part of the Integrated Deepwater System Program, the Coast Guard’s 25-year program to replace most of the branch’s equipment. The IDSP plans to have 64 fast response cutters, with Charles Moulthrope and Robert Goodman being the 41st and 42nd, commissioned into service on Jan. 21 and Mar. 12, respectively.

The FRCs are designed to patrol coastal regions and perform expeditionary operations.

They feature advanced command, control, and communications systems and improved surveillance and reconnaissance equipment. They are also capable of launching and recovering small boats from the stern.

“The addition of the FRCs to our task force has been highly anticipated, and the team here is excited to work with these outstanding crews,” said Capt. Christopher Gilbertson, commander of Destroyer Squadron 50 and CTF 55. “The advanced capabilities of these cutters greatly enhance our ability to provide high-end support to regional and coalition partners throughout the area of operations.”

PATFORSWA, attached to CTF 55, comprises six patrol vessels, shoreside mission support personnel, and the Maritime Engagement Team. They play a crucial role in maritime security, maritime infrastructure protection, and theater

security cooperation in the region. The unit also supports other U.S. Coast Guard deployable specialized forces operating throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

CTF 55 operates in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, supporting naval operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the Central Region, connecting the Mediterranean and Pacific through the western Indian Ocean and three critical chokepoints to the free flow of global commerce.

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## Cutter Steadfast Returns to Homeport After Interdicting \$33 Million in Cocaine



Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC 623) steaming in the Eastern Pacific Ocean on April 23, 2021. The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast seized more than 2,400 pounds of cocaine while patrolling in international waters. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Ens. Grace Hodges*

ASTORIA, Ore. – The Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast (WMEC 623) returned to its Astoria, Oregon, homeport May 21 after completing a 10,000-mile, 49-day counter-narcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a May 26 release.

The cutter served as an on-scene law enforcement asset in support of U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force South and Coast Guard District 11, with primary missions of drug and migrant interdiction, search and rescue, and international relations.

While the cutter patrolling international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Steadfast intercepted a vessel suspected of smuggling illicit narcotics. The interdiction resulted in the seizure of over 2,400 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated \$33 million, and the detainment of three suspected traffickers.

Coast Guard cutters operating in the Eastern Pacific push U.S. borders over 1,500 miles offshore which is critical to confronting drug cartels and enhancing national security.

Additionally, Steadfast completed biennial Aviation Standardization Training near the coast of Southern California with a Coast Guard MH-65 helicopter. This training is designed to increase the operational proficiency of the ship and helicopter crews.

“This patrol reinforced the maxim that people, not platforms, are the most important key to operational success,” said Cmdr. Craig Allen, commanding officer of the Steadfast. “Despite encountering some significant equipment and logistics challenges, the Steadfast crew rose to the occasion time and again and achieved remarkable results. We were fortunate to sail with several members filling key positions from other Coast Guard units, including USCGC Waesche, Maritime Safety and Security Teams LA/LB and San Francisco, Sector Field Office Southwest Maine, and Coast Guard Headquarters. All were superb additions to the Steadfast team. Additionally, we had the opportunity to work with a fellow Pacific Northwest 210-foot cutter, CGC Active, who helped us out on multiple occasions with time-sensitive logistics support.”

To ensure the safety of Steadfast’s crew during the COVID-19 global pandemic, the crew conducted pre-deployment COVID-19 testing, followed by a seven-day monitoring period. Throughout their patrol, Steadfast’s crew maintained strict health precautions during all interactions with the public,

including wearing N95 masks at all times and undergoing intensive health screenings prior to each boarding.

Steadfast is a 53-year-old Reliance-class 210-foot medium endurance cutter that has been homeported in Astoria since 1994. Steadfast's primary missions include search and rescue, counter-drug, migration interdiction and homeland security operations.

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## New Flag Officer Assignments Announced



Rear Adm. William E. Chase III was among the flag assignments announced May 26. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va.—The acting secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations announced on May 26 today the following flag assignments:

Rear Adm. (lower half) William E. Chase III, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned deputy commander, Joint Force Headquarters-Department of Defense Information Network (JFHQ-DODIN), U.S. Cyber Command, Fort Meade, Maryland. Chase is currently serving as deputy principal cyber advisor to the secretary of defense, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Brian L. Davies will be assigned additional duties as deputy commander, Second Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia. Davies will retain all currently assigned duties as commander, Submarine Group Two, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Jeffrey S. Scheidt will be assigned as deputy principal cyber advisor to the secretary of defense, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Washington, D.C. Scheidt is currently serving as deputy chief, computer network operations, National Security Agency, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael J. Steffen will be assigned as commandant, Naval District Washington, Washington, D.C. Steffen is currently serving as deputy commander, Second Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia.

Capt. Anthony E. Rossi, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as director, Navy International Programs Office, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D.C. Rossi is currently serving as major program manager, Mission Integration and Special Programs Office, PMA 298, Patuxent River, Maryland.

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## **MARAD Designates Mid Atlantic Maritime Academy as Center of Excellence**

NORFOLK, Va. – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD) announced on May 23 the designation of Mid Atlantic Maritime Academy (“MAMA”) as one of 27 Centers of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education (CoE). The CoE designation recognizes community colleges and training institutions that prepare students for careers in our nation’s maritime industry. These academic institutions are in 16 states and one U.S.

territory.

“When the United States has as its foundation a strong Merchant Marine service, all components of the economy and national defense benefit greatly” said Capt. Ed Nanartowich, MAMA’s president who received the award on behalf of the company. “MAMA brings great credit to Virginia as a significant contributor toward enhanced maritime training and enabling Virginians to work in a dynamic and growing industry aboard ship and boats locally and upon oceans.”

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said, “Our collaboration with these institutions represents an important expansion of MARAD’s role in supporting maritime education and will help form pathways to good-paying American jobs in our nation’s maritime industry.”

MARAD will now embark on working with the Mid Atlantic Maritime Academy and the other designees to enter into cooperative agreements to help advance recruitment of students and faculty, enhance facilities, award student credit for military service, and potentially receive assistance in the form of surplus equipment or temporary use of MARAD vessels.

Authorized under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2018, the CoE program is designed to assist the maritime industry in gaining and sustaining a well-trained labor force while enhancing diversity and inclusion in the industry.

“The CoE designations recognize the high standard of maritime education and training provided by the designated community and technical colleges and maritime training centers. These institutions play vital roles in our nation’s maritime industry by providing the training and skills students need to begin and advance careers afloat and ashore,” said Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley.

Information regarding the training opportunities for mariners and prospective mariners can be found on the Mid Atlantic

# U.K. Carrier Strike Group Sets Sail on 7-Month First Deployment



Queen Elizabeth II visited Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth in Portsmouth on 22 May 2021, just hours before the U.K. Carrier Strike Group sailed for its first operational deployment. During the 45 minute visit, Her Majesty spoke to a selection of British and American Sailors, Aviators and Marines. *U.K. MINISTRY OF DEFENCE*

LONDON – Nine ships, 32 aircraft, and 3,700 personnel set sail May 22 on the U.K. Carrier Strike Group's first operational deployment, the U.K. Ministry of Defence said in a release.

The seven-month global deployment will extend through the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean and on to the Indo-Pacific, interacting with more than one-fifth of the world's nations.

Britain's new flagship aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, will lead six Royal Navy ships, a Royal Navy submarine, a U.S. Navy destroyer and a frigate from the Netherlands in the largest concentration of maritime and air power to leave the U.K. in a generation.

The Queen visited her namesake vessel – which she commissioned in 2017 – before the aircraft carrier set sail from Portsmouth, meeting crew members and wishing them luck in what will be an unforgettable life experience by being part of naval history. Among those to meet the Queen was U.S. Marine Corps Col. Simon Doran.

“It’s an incredibly profound moment, getting to meet Her Majesty The Queen this morning was a personal honor,” Doran said. “There’s a lot of professional pride being honored among myself and all of the Americans who met her majesty. The United Kingdom has always been the most stalwart ally for the United States and demonstrating our interoperability on this deployment reassures both nations.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was also among those to visit HMS Queen Elizabeth ahead of her departure, joined on May 21 by Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, First Sea Lord Adm. Tony Radakin and Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston on the flight deck.

### **Truly Global Britain**

“The U.K.’s Carrier Strike Group sets sail to write Britain’s name in the next chapter of history – a truly global Britain that steps forward to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, working hand-in-hand with our friends to defend our shared values and uphold the rules-based international order,” said Wallace. “This deployment shows that we are strong on our own, but even stronger with our allies. I want to join the nation in wishing the crews across the Carrier Strike Group every success as they depart on this truly historic endeavor.”

In a projection of the United Kingdom’s global reach and influence, the Carrier Strike Group will interact with over 40 nations during its 26,000-nautical-mile global tour, undertaking over 70 engagements, exercises and operations with allies and partners.

As outlined in the recently published Defence Command Paper, the Carrier Strike Group is a demonstration of the United Kingdom’s commitment to be ready to confront future threats alongside international partners and help seize new opportunities for Global Britain.

Underscoring the United Kingdom’s leading role in NATO, in the

coming days the Carrier Strike Group will take part in NATO's Exercise Steadfast Defender. The Strike Group will also provide support to the Alliance's Operation Sea Guardian and to maritime security operations in the Black Sea during the deployment.

Working alongside another key NATO ally, the Carrier Strike Group will be joined by French aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle for a period of dual carrier operations in the Mediterranean.

In the Indo-Pacific, the Carrier Strike Group will visit India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore to strengthen Britain's security relationships, reinforce political ties and support our UK exports and international trade agenda.

Elements of the Carrier Strike Group will also participate in Exercise Bersama Lima to mark the 50th anniversary of the Five Powers Defence Arrangements between Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

## **The Next Chapter**

The deployment is primarily centered on regenerating the United Kingdom's Carrier Strike capability, a decade-long journey which is now entering its next chapter.

It comes after the prime minister announced in November an increase in defense funding of over £24 billion across the next four years, enabling the U.K.'s armed forces to adapt to meet future threats.

The Strike Group's cutting-edge platforms are expertly operated by 3,700 personnel from the United Kingdom, United States and Netherlands armed forces, including a company of Royal Marines Commandos.

HMS Queen Elizabeth is the largest and most powerful surface

vessel in the Royal Navy's history. In a true success story for British industry she was built by a cast of more than 10,000, including more than 800 apprentices, in six dockyards from the banks of the Clyde to the River Torridge quaysides.

Joining her are a surface fleet of Type 45 destroyers, HMS Defender and HMS Diamond, Type 23 anti-submarine frigates HMS Kent and HMS Richmond, and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's RFA Fort Victoria and RFA Tidespring.

U.S. Navy destroyer USS The Sullivans and the Royal Netherlands Navy's frigate HNLMS Evertsen will be fully integrated for the duration of the deployment.

On the carrier's flight deck are 18 state-of-the-art F-35B fast jets, operated by joint RAF and Royal Navy 617 squadron, and the U.S. Marine Corps – the greatest quantity of fifth-generation Lightning jets ever put to sea.

Operating alongside the jets are four Wildcat maritime attack helicopters, seven Merlin Mk2 anti-submarine helicopters and three Merlin Mk4 commando helicopters, the largest number of helicopters assigned to a single U.K. Task Group in a decade.

“As the Carrier Strike Group heads to sea, a new phase opens in Britain's maritime renaissance. A year's worth of exercises, and more than a decade of preparation, is over. HMS Queen Elizabeth, her escorts and her aircraft, will now begin the most important peacetime deployment in a generation,” said Commodore Steve Moorhouse, Commander United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group.

“It is the privilege of my career to lead 3,700 Sailors, Aviators and Marines from the United Kingdom, United States and the Netherlands for the next seven-and-a-half-months. On their behalf, I would like to thank all those in government, the armed forces and industry who have worked so hard to get us to the start line and will continue to support us when we

are away. Most importantly, I would like to thank our families. I have every confidence that these young men and women will do you proud."