

Exercise Atlantic Thunder 2026 Concludes in United Kingdom



ATLANTIC OCEAN – Ships, aircraft, and a submarine from the United States and the United Kingdom concluded Exercise Atlantic Thunder 2026, a multi-domain sinking exercise (SINKEX) led by U.S. 6th Fleet, in the North Atlantic, Sept. 25, 2026.

During the SINKEX, participating forces assigned to U.S. Commander, Task Force 65, U.S. Commander, Task Force 67, U.S. Commander, Task Force 68, U.S. Commander, Task Force 69 and U.S. Commander, Task Force 1060 alongside the U.K. Royal Navy and the U.S. Air Force sank the decommissioned guided-missile frigate ex-USS Klakring. The event developed combined proficiency in tactics, targeting, and live-firing against a surface target at sea.

“Atlantic Thunder demonstrates the unmatched lethality and interoperability of the United States and United Kingdom,” said U.S. Capt. Kelechi Ndukwe, Commander, U.S. Task Force 65. “This sinking exercise not only validated the power behind U.S.-UK offensive weapons but delivers a clear message to adversaries that the U.S. Navy and Royal Navy remain a ready allied force.”

The exercise strengthens the U.S.-UK alliance, warfighting credibility, and interoperability during long-range maritime sinking operations. During the SINKEX, the guided-missile destroyer USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117) successfully demonstrated maximum damage and range capability of an anti-surface variant of the Standard Missile 6 (SM 6). USS Massachusetts (SSN 798) successfully engaged the target with

the Mk 48 Advanced Capability Torpedo, resulting in the final hit and ultimately sinking ex-USS Klakring.

During the exercise, the Royal Navy confirmed its newest ship-busting missiles, the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) and Sea Venom.

“The successful firing of NSM marks a significant milestone for the Royal Navy, demonstrating our ability to deliver credible, modern maritime strike capability,” said Royal Navy Lt. Cmdr. Louise Kirkaldy, HMS Portland’s Principal Warfare. “This achievement reflects the professionalism, dedication and teamwork of all those involved, whose hard work has ensured we remain ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.”

Prior to the start of the exercise Naval Surface Warfare Center Carderock and Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Pacific used sensors placed on the target ship to perform battle damage assessments. The data gathered will be used in post-exercise damage assessments to provide critical information to rapidly identify system failures, determine repair needs, and strengthen the Navy’s future real-world response.

U.S. and UK units involved in the exercise included Paul Ignatius, USS Massachusetts, Royal Navy frigate HMS Portland (F 79), U.S. Navy and Royal Air Force P-8 maritime patrol aircraft, a Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter, U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagles, and personnel assigned to U.S. Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 8.

The ex-USS Klakring (FFG 42) was a decommissioned guided-missile frigate that entered U.S. Navy service Aug. 20, 1983, and was decommissioned March 22, 2013. The Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigate was named for Rear Adm. Thomas B. Klakring, who was awarded three Navy Crosses as the commander of the submarine USS Guardfish (SS 217) during World War II.

Former U.S. Navy vessels used in SINKEXs, referred to as

hulks, are prepared in strict compliance with regulations prescribed and enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency under a general permit the Navy holds pursuant to the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act.

Prior to being transported, each hulk undergoes a rigorous cleaning process for environmental safety. Aligned with UK Ministry of Defense environmental policy, robust monitoring was conducted above and below the sea's surface with trained personnel using specialized equipment to reduce the overall risk of inadvertent impact to the marine environment and marine mammals during the Atlantic Thunder 2026 SINKEX.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied, interagency and partner forces, to advance U.S. national interests and promote security and stability in Europe and Africa.

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