

NATO Carrier Strike Groups Train Together in the Mediterranean



French carrier Charles de Gaulle and British carrier Queen Elizabeth have conducted joint training 1-4 June 2021. The naval training carried out between the two forces, dubbed Gallic Strike, involved 15 ships and 57 aircraft. *NATO*

NORTHWOOD, U.K. – French carrier Charles de Gaulle and British carrier Queen Elizabeth conducted joint training June 1-4, the Allied Maritime Command said in a June 4 release. The naval training carried out between the two forces, dubbed Gallic Strike, involved 15 ships and 57 aircraft.

Organized by France in its maritime approaches, the naval interaction was an opportunity for the French Carrier Strike Group, which is completing its thirteenth operational deployment, to work for the first time with the British carrier strike group and its aircraft, strengthening cooperation between the two navies.

Gallic Strike exercise consisted mainly of training for a dual carrier operation, that is, training between aircraft carriers to coordinate and fight together in an integrated command structure. This sequence, which included a sea-to-land strike simulation and joint tactical maneuvers between Rafale marine and F-35B aircraft, gave them the opportunity to work together in a variety of fields, such as anti-aircraft, anti-surface warfare and power projection capabilities.

“Allied cooperation and interoperability have reached new heights with this first meeting of the French and U.K. carrier strike groups at sea. These initiatives ensure crews, aircraft and ships are interoperable and able to seamlessly support one another when the need arises. More broadly, this activity is a

tremendous demonstration of the burden-sharing at the core of the NATO Alliance and is essential to our ability to generate peace in perpetuity,” said Maj. Gen. Phillip A. Stewart, deputy chief of staff, Strategic Employment, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).

Gallic Strike brought together also the Allies integrated into the two naval air groups – American, Greek, Italian and Dutch. The exercise included the participation of the USS Thomas Hudner, integrated into the French CSG, while the destroyer USS The Sullivans and 10 American F-35Bs reinforced the British CSG.

Since Feb. 21, 2021, and until this summer, the French carrier strike group, formed around the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, has been deployed as part of the Clemenceau 21 mission. It took part in the fight against terrorism by integrating Operation Inherent Resolve/Chammal and deployed in strategic areas of interest in the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf. Task Force 473 has also contributed to guaranteeing freedom of navigation and securing and defending these strategic areas. Accompanied by foreign frigates from time to time, it demonstrates the interoperability and level of trust between the French navy and its allies. The group is now on the way home.

HMS Queen Elizabeth is the flagship for U.K. Carrier Strike Group 21, a deployment that will see the ship and her escorts sail to the Asia-Pacific and back. It leads 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. Its 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.

The training comes after HMS Queen Elizabeth’s participation in the NATO exercise Steadfast Defender, where it interacted

with two of NATO's Standing Naval Groups. Both Standing NATO Maritime Group One, and Standing Maritime Group Two took part in the training, along with assets from 20 Allied and partner nations.

Several Allied aircraft carriers, under national command, are deploying into SACEUR area of responsibility during these months, demonstrating allied unity and commitment to effectively deliver multi-domain effects. The carrier strike activity demonstrates power projection over large distances with its unparalleled combat capability and are a critical element of NATO deterrence.