Queen Elizabeth Closer to Operations With Transatlantic Training



A U.S. Marine Corps vertical-lift F-35 approaches the HMS Queen Elizabeth during flight trials last year. While stateside this year, the British carrier will again host Marine F-35s, according to the U.K. Ministry of Defence. U.S. Navy via Royal Navy

LONDON — HMS Queen Elizabeth, Britain's future flagship, will deploy in late summer for the eastern seaboard of the United States, including a port visit in the Washington, D.C., area, where she will host the Atlantic Future Forum, the U.K. Ministry of Defence announced.

The aircraft carrier, United Kingdom's largest and most advanced warship ever built, will make the transatlantic journey for the second consecutive year to train alongside the U.K.'s closest ally. She will also make several port calls while deployed before returning home before Christmas.

While in the Washington area she will host the Atlantic Future Forum, which aims at bringing the U.S. and U.K. defense industry and military together to address the changing nature of warfare and shared threats both allies face at home and abroad.

"HMS Queen Elizabeth represents the best of British innovation and is a true embodiment of our international ambition," said British Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt.

"The fact that this important ship will have visited

the U.S. twice within her short service thus far is testament to our enduring transatlantic defense relationship. In the week that we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings, it is only right that we continue to look at how we can deepen our global partnerships to promote peace and deter future conflict."

The deployment, known as WESTLANT 19, will see Queen Elizabeth and her crew conduct deck and warfare trials with U.K. F-35 jets from 17 Test and Evaluation Squadron based in the United States and 617 Squadron based at RAF Marham as well rotary wing training with Merlin and Wildcat helicopters.

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While stateside, she will also welcome U.S. Marine Corps vertical-lift F-35s on deck.

HMS Queen Elizabeth remains set to be deployed on global operations from 2021 and when Prince of Wales joins her in the fleet in the near future, the United Kingdom will have one carrier available at very high readiness at all times.

Britain's prime minister also announced June 4 that the Royal Navy will ready the HMS Queen Elizabeth to join allies in forming part of NATO's major "readiness initiative" when she becomes operational.

"I'm pleased to announce that NATO will soon be able to call on the U.K.'s Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers and F-35 fighter

jets to help tackle threats around the world," Prime Minister Theresa May said.



A U.S. Marine Corps F-35 aboard the HMS Queen Elizabeth lasts year. U.S. Navy via Lockheed Martin

NATO's "readiness initiative" aims to improve the readiness of the alliance's forces to deploy and move within Europe and across the Atlantic to safeguard international security. Britain will look to make its aircraft carrier a key part of those plans as the country continues to play a leading role in the alliance which has been the cornerstone of its defense for 70 years.

"Be it projecting influence for peace, standing ready to fight, or delivering vital aid around the world, HMS Queen Elizabeth and her sister ship HMS Prince of Wales will fly the flag of a Global Britain," Mordaunt said. "Nothing symbolizes the leading role that we play in NATO more than our nation's future flagship being ready to respond to any challenge that the Alliance may face."

At the Defence Ministers' meeting in June, allies committed, by 2020, to having 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval combat vessels ready to use within 30 days. This was reinforced by allied heads of state and government at the NATO summit in July.