

MARITIME NEWS – 29 NOVEMBER 2016



Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force - **Kaga** (DDH 184) on sea trials

Go on, pull the other one - a destroyer without turrets! But then lots of space for deck hockey. Imagine how big their 'aircraft carriers' would be if they ever built any again.

Royal Navy leads US Task Force 50 for the first time

The Royal Navy has taken command of US Task Force 50 in the Gulf – the first time it has led a US task force in the Middle East. Commodore Andrew Burns, the Royal Navy's Commander Amphibious Task Group, has taken charge of the US task force while currently embarked on **HMS Ocean**. It represents a significant development in combined maritime operations between the UK and US. Commodore Burns and his staff will now direct the operations of the multi-national task force from on board Ocean, maintaining the free flow of trade, freedom of navigation for shipping and regional security in an area covering around 2.5m square miles.

A change-of-command ceremony took place on board the **USS Dwight D. Eisenhower** during which **Commodore** Burns assumed the role of Commander Task Force 50 from US Navy Rear Admiral James Malloy. "Together we have had an enduring Royal Navy and US Navy presence in this region that has contributed to stability, order on the high seas and freedom of navigation, and ensured the free flow of commerce, so vital to the prosperity of our nations," said Commodore Burns. "Today marks the start of another chapter in this partnership as the Royal Navy takes on the privilege of leading a US task force in the Middle East for the first time." Rear Admiral Malloy said the handover of the task force to the

Royal Navy "represents a wise investment in this region's future." "I cannot think of a more capable officer and friend to continue this mission out here than Commodore Burns," he added. "Security and stability cannot be maintained by one nation alone. Working together with our UK and other coalition counterparts, I am confident in the success of our shared interest for security, stability and prosperity in this region." **HMS Ocean**, a helicopter carrier and amphibious assault ship, will provide maritime security through continued presence in the Gulf region and a series of exercises with partner nations. Along with Type 45 destroyer **HMS Daring**, she will provide a continued presence following the **USS Dwight D Eisenhower's** departure from the Gulf. **Source : Royal Navy**

UK naval shipbuilding needs to be quicker, independent report finds

An independent report into UK's naval shipbuilding has concluded that the small Royal Navy fleet is a result of too long procurement cycles, late orders for new ships and the policy of retaining old ships in the fleet beyond their sell date. Sir John Parker's Independent Report into naval shipbuilding also set out recommendations to transform the UK shipbuilding industry. One of the recommendations would see the bulk of Royal Navy ships being allocated to more shipbuilders. Parker proposed that the construction of new Type 26 and Type 31 frigates take place at more than one shipyard indicating that Babcock or Cammell Laird could bid for the construction of Type 31 frigates.

Parker, who is currently chairman of mining company Anglo American, added that the Type 31 frigates should be built quickly to boost navy fleet numbers but also to have a competitive export product that could be designated as Type 31e. "The new Type 31e should not set out to be a complex and sophisticated warship based on traditional design approaches. It should be a modern and innovative design on a standard platform which should provide a menu of

choice to support exports and beat the competition. It should be termed Type 31e. The 'e' means that export flexibility is inbuilt, not a variant," Parker said.



Photo : Royal Navy

One of the opportunities that Parker identified was the way Scotland's technology allowed for modular construction, in which ship components are produced across the UK before being assembled at a central Hub. The build of the Royal Navy's largest ever warships, the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers, has already demonstrated the success of such an approach, with multiple shipyards and hundreds of companies across the UK working together and benefiting from the aircraft carrier build.

"This report will inform our National Shipbuilding Strategy to match the needs of the Royal Navy with the ability to design and build efficiently, maintain skills, and maximise export opportunities," UK Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said welcoming the report. The UK government said it would publish a full response along with an implementation plan in spring 2017.

"Should government, industry and the trade unions rise to the challenges I have set, I believe we can establish a new era of collaboration and success across the 'total enterprise'," Parker concluded. "It will create savings over the coming years for MOD, renew the Royal Navy fleet, position the UK for new export opportunities and create regional prosperity and highly skilled jobs across the UK in the shipyards and supply chain." **Source : Navy Today**

'Ten times' more effective than nukes: Iran weighs creation of naval bases in Syria, Yemen



Iran is considering having naval bases on the coasts of Yemen and Syria, the Iranian chief of the general staff told a gathering of senior navy commanders, adding that the measure would have a great deterrent effect. "One day, we may need bases on the coasts of Yemen and Syria, and we need the necessary infrastructures for it under the international maritime law," Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said, as cited by the Iranian Tasnim news agency.

The deterrent effect of having naval bases in foreign countries "could be ten times more efficient than nuclear power," the head of the general staff said, stressing that Iran's military strategy should focus on preventing potential enemies from accessing Iranian territories, and forcing potential enemy warships to stay away from the Iranian coast. He went on to say that Iran needs a fleet in the Indian Ocean that would be equal to the one stationed in the Gulf of Oman,

and urged the Navy to enhance its intelligence activities by working on satellite and cyber-space technologies, as well as by developing naval drones.

Iran should also develop its own naval infrastructure, as its coasts could provide space for several new ports, the major general said, stressing that the Islamic Republic should break Russia's monopoly on providing Central Asian countries with access to international waters. At the same time, Iranian Navy commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari told the gathering of senior navy commanders that Iran should boost its military presence in international waters to protect its economic interests and demonstrate its power.

The navy has already deployed 49 flotillas to various maritime zones, the admiral said, adding that Iran particularly "provided security of the northern Indian Ocean and showcased Iran's symbol of power," as reported by Tasnim. He went on to say that Iranian warships have escorted 3,844 merchant vessels and oil tankers through the Gulf of Aden, thus securing them from pirates and preventing a blow to the Iranian economy. Earlier this week, Sayyari also said that an Iranian flotilla was deployed to the Atlantic Ocean for the first time.

He then announced plans to station Iranian fleets in various countries, including Russia, China, Italy, and Kazakhstan at some point in the future. On November 22, Iran said that it is increasing its naval capabilities by building three new bases in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, citing security threats posed by Somali pirates. Currently, Iranian vessels cover an area of 2,100,000 m², as they operate in the Gulf of Oman, the Caspian Sea, and the Indian Ocean, Sayyari said.

The recent announcements follow an increase in the number of tense encounters involving Iranian and US vessels. In 2016, the number of such incidents grew to 31 from 23 in the previous year. Iranian forces are now aiding the Houthi rebels in Yemen who are battling forces loyal to the exiled former president, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, supported by a Saudi-led coalition. In Syria, Iran is supporting the forces of President Bashar Assad fighting extremists. **Source : Russia Today**

I sincerely hope that we tracked the Flotilla as it rounded the Cape

Equipment Installed on Philippine Navy's New Vessel



The Philippine Navy (PN)'s second strategic sealift vessel, the **BRP Davao Del Sur** (LD-602), is now 91 percent complete and well in line to meet her May 2017 delivery date. **Photo : defenseph**

Navigational, deck and engineering equipment are being installed on the Philippine Navy's second strategic sealift vessel (SSV) that is undergoing construction at the PT PAL shipyard in Surabaya in Indonesia, a navy spokesman said over the weekend. Navy spokesperson Capt. Lued Lincuna told journalists he has no idea on the vessel's percentage of completion but said it will arrive in the country by May next year. It will be named **BRP Davao Del Sur**.

"I don't know the exact percentage of completion but for sure she will be [home in the Philippines] by May 2017," Lincuna said. The **BRP Davao Del Sur** (LD-602), launched last September 29, 2016, is the largest Philippine warship that is currently in commission with the Navy. It is the sister ship of the **BRP Tarlac** (LD-601) that was commissioned in Pier 13, Manila South Harbor on June 1, 2016 after arriving in the country on May 14, 2016, following a five-day journey from PT PAL's shipyard in Surabaya.

Like her sister ship **BRP Tarlac**, **BRP Davao Del Sur** is a Makassar-class landing platform dock. Its delivery to the Philippines, tentatively scheduled middle of next year, will complete the two-unit SSV procurement project with an approved budget of P4 billion sourced from the military's Modernization Act Trust Fund. Just like its sister ship, **BRP Davao Del Sur** will serve as a floating command-and-control ship, especially in the conduct of humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR). It will also serve as a military sealift and transport vessel.

The ship has an overall length of 120 meters and a breadth of 21 meters, draft of five meters, and can carry a total payload of 2,800 tons. BRP Davao Del Sur will have a cruising speed of at least 13 knots, maximum speed of 16 knots and a minimum operating range of 7,500 nautical miles. It can carry 500 troops, two rigid-hull inflatable boats, two landing craft units and three helicopters. **Source : Asia Defence News**

IF the SA National Defence Force should ever approve (and have finances) a vessel with landing capability (plus RAS capability), this would make a lot more sense than a Mistral type which is designed for expeditionary warfare and has NO place in the SAN (in my humble opinion!).

Iranian Navy Boat Threatens U.S. Helicopter

An Iranian Navy boat trained its gun at a passing U.S. military helicopter over the weekend, two senior U.S. military officials told NBC News. A **USS Eisenhower** MH-60 Seahawk helicopter was flying ahead of the carrier group as it was sailing out of the Persian Gulf on Saturday when an Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps boat below aimed its mounted gun at the approaching U.S. helicopter. Neither side fired their weapons during the incident — not even warning shots, officials told NBC News.

The U.S. Navy attempted to communicate with the Iranian Navy but they didn't respond. The Eisenhower has been in the Gulf flying missions for Operations Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria. A U.S. military official in the region called the action "unsafe and unprofessional." "The air crew didn't necessarily feel threatened but it was unsafe and unprofessional," the official said. U.S. military craft and Iranian vessels have had previous encounters.

In August a U.S. Navy ship, the **USS Squall**, fired several warning shots near an Iranian "fast boat" when the craft came dangerously close. That same week, four Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps vessels near the Strait of Hormuz drawing close to the **USS Nitze**, a guided missile destroyer, despite repeated radio warnings. President-elect Donald Trump vowed during a campaign rally in Florida in September that, once he is in the Oval Office, such actions would be met with swift retribution. "With Iran, when they circle our beautiful destroyers with their little boats and they make gestures at our people, that they shouldn't be allowed to make, they will be shot out of the water," Trump promised.

Source : NBC News

Louder Than Words: Actions Speak Volumes for New Zealand-US Relations



The **USS Buchanan** was refused by New Zealand in 1985. **Image : US Navy**

In June, New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully announced that when a U.S. Navy vessel visits Auckland this November, it will not be required to declare its armament. Indeed, that the vessel's presence at the New Zealand Royal Navy's 75th anniversary celebrations was requested by Wellington, rather than Washington, is particularly significant given the history between the two nations.

In 1984, the government of then-Prime Minister David Lange announced the Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act, banning nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed vessels from entering New Zealand's waters. The law

was enforced the following year, when the **USS Buchanan** was refused docking permission due to the United States' protocol of neither confirming nor denying the armament of its assets. The incident resulted in New Zealand's suspension from the ANZUS Treaty, and a diplomatic deep freeze between the two nations.

However, while some have suggested that U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's recent visit to New Zealand was a sign of an overdue warming in relations, there is ample evidence to suggest that it simply marks the latest port-of-call on a charted course toward a sort of diplomatic normalization that has steadily unfolded over the last decade.

When former Prime Minister Helen Clark visited Washington in 2007, President George W. Bush attempted to put the nuclear issue to bed. In 2012, during the first visit by a U.S. Defense Secretary to New Zealand in 30 years, Leon Panetta announced that New Zealand's Navy would regain access to appropriate U.S. mainland facilities. Further, both the Wellington Declaration in 2010 and the Washington Agreement in 2012 endeavored to restore official defense ties, ultimately realized in 2015. That same year, documents leaked by Edward Snowden revealed joint operations between New Zealand and American intelligence services to hack into the Chinese Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2013, highlighting New Zealand's role in the controversial Five Eyes intelligence gathering club. Taken together, the trends suggest that the scheduled November visit is simply another point along an existing course towards what could be called strategic normality.

Indeed, the potential upgrading of strategic relations with the United States would appear to enhance New Zealand's own defense agenda, both at home and abroad. Prime Minister John Key stated that New Zealand's "security and prosperity is inextricably linked to events occurring far from our shores," and that the nation's geographical isolation no longer affords it the strategic luxuries of old. At the same time, the country's defense force is currently incapable of operating independently in major global hotspots. Indeed, the NZ\$20 billion recently allocated to defense over the next 15 years is directed primarily at upgrading preexisting capabilities and expanding cyber security, naval and air assets in the interests of improving interoperability with larger United Nations coalitions.

While the 2016 Defense White Paper barely mentions the United States by name — let alone a pending alliance — it nevertheless reinforces New Zealand's core interests in supporting international institutions and upholding international law, objectives commonly associated with America's international agenda. Indeed, the symbolic November visit could have much broader ramifications for New Zealand's international relations. Kiwi governments over the years have successfully retained an independent diplomatic mantra, balancing between a strategic relationship with the United States and deepening economic links with Asia, especially China. Wellington's positive international image was also instrumental in its election to the United Nations Security Council in 2015 - 2016.

A reputation as a good global citizen and the utility afforded by this identity is something Kiwi governments would be well advised to maintain. However, given the recent findings on the South China Sea, for Wellington to claim neutrality in its support for international institutions may no longer be sufficient in its relations with Beijing. Indeed, growing strategic ties with America could potentially complicate the China relationship should New Zealand be seen to fall on the wrong side of the dispute. Perhaps the Chinese backlash against Australia's position on the issue may provide New Zealand with an example of how not to approach the situation.

New Zealand shares enviably close relations with China. In 2008 it became the first Western nation to seal a Free Trade Agreement with the Asian economic giant, while securing a strategic cooperation agreement in 2015, the Five Year Engagement Plan. Even so, these relations did not prevent Beijing from making economic threats during Key's most recent visit to China, should New Zealand side with the United States on the South China Sea issue. At the same time, in utilizing its established advantages to reassure Beijing of its neutrality, Wellington will also need to be wary of its international reputation and the growing expectations that will inevitably accompany closer relations with the United States.

In sum, New Zealand is not only challenging its traditionally understated role in global politics, but at the same time is also challenged by such alterations. Indeed, the return of American hard power to New Zealand in November will most likely have significant consequences for Wellington's foreign policy more broadly. While "runs cannot be subtracted" from those already scored with Beijing, the absence of a formal U.S.-NZ alliance should not distort the significance of their hastening rapprochement. After all, actions commonly speak louder than words. **Source : The Diplomat**

Indonesian Pirates Sentenced to Caning

A Malaysian court has sentenced the eight Indonesian pirates who hijacked the tanker **Orkim Harmony** to 15-18 years in jail. Five of the pirates will also receive five strokes of the cane. Vietnamese authorities extradited the men to Malaysia early on November 26, and they were tried and sentenced by the end of the next day. Local media

reported that the men were not represented by counsel. All eight plead guilty. In a reflection of the case's high profile, an escort team of 40 armed personnel accompanied the pirates on their charter flight to Malaysia. Six prosecutors and the Indonesian ambassador attended the trial.

Noel Choong, head of the IMB ICC piracy reporting agency, told Channel News Asia that "we welcome the tough punishment. It will send a strong signal to potential pirates that crime does not pay." The pirates boarded and took control of the Malaysian-owned product tanker **Orkim Harmony** on June 11, 2015, off Tanjung Sedili, Malaysia. The vessel and her 22 crew were ferrying \$5 million worth of gasoline between Sungai Udang and Tanjung Gelang. The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency conducted a sweep of an 8,000 square mile area to locate the **Harmony**, and after days of searching they found her far to the north, in Vietnamese waters.

A Malaysian naval vessel shadowed the hijacked ship's movements and attempted to persuade the pirates to surrender. Instead, the attackers fled in the ship's rescue boat. They eventually washed up on a small island off Vietnam; on shore they claimed to be the survivors of an accident at sea, but local officials grew suspicious when they found large amounts of cash on the men. One crewmember of the **Harmony** was shot in the leg, but the rest were unharmed. The vessel and her cargo were recovered. **Source : The Maritime Executive**

A great concept that teaches a proper lesson but is banned in most countries because of misguided 'human rights issues etc. The pain and embarrassment is a great deterrent that stays in the mind of those who received it.

International junior officers have a go at commanding Royal Navy ship



HMS Tyne on the Firth of Clyde. **Photo: SLt Jenny Greenfield/Royal Navy**

The crew of the Royal Navy patrol ship **HMS Tyne** gave junior officers from around the globe the chance to command a warship for the first time. The ship, which acts as the eyes and ears of the Navy around the UK and ensures fishermen stick to legal quotas, gave students on the International Small Ships Command Course the full range of challenges the captain of an 1,800-tonne warship might face: from losing a sailor overboard and coping with fires, to dealing with breakdowns, salvage operations, SOS calls and navigating in congested waters.

Nine officers – from Nigeria, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Guyana, Kenya and Lebanon – are being assessed on the course which is run by **HMS Collingwood** in Fareham. The practical phase – in the South Coast Exercise Areas between Portland and the Isle of Wight – demands some sea time, providing them with the opportunity to command as well as learn how the RN operates offshore patrol vessels.

Ships of a similar size to **Tyne** – 1,700 tonnes, 260ft long – are the backbone of many of the students' navies, while the River class in general serve as a crucial breeding ground for captains of British frigates and destroyers. "Nothing beats practical training at sea and the trainee officers showed enthusiasm and resolve in completing tasks the staff gave them despite the challenging weather," said Lt Cdr Peter Barfoot, Tyne's commanding officer. "It has been a privilege to assist the international course with their training and to help prepare them for their future commands."

Source : Naval Today

Mmm – nice but not really news or 'command' but actually conning and practical seamanship. Command goes a lot further and much more intricate.

AGS