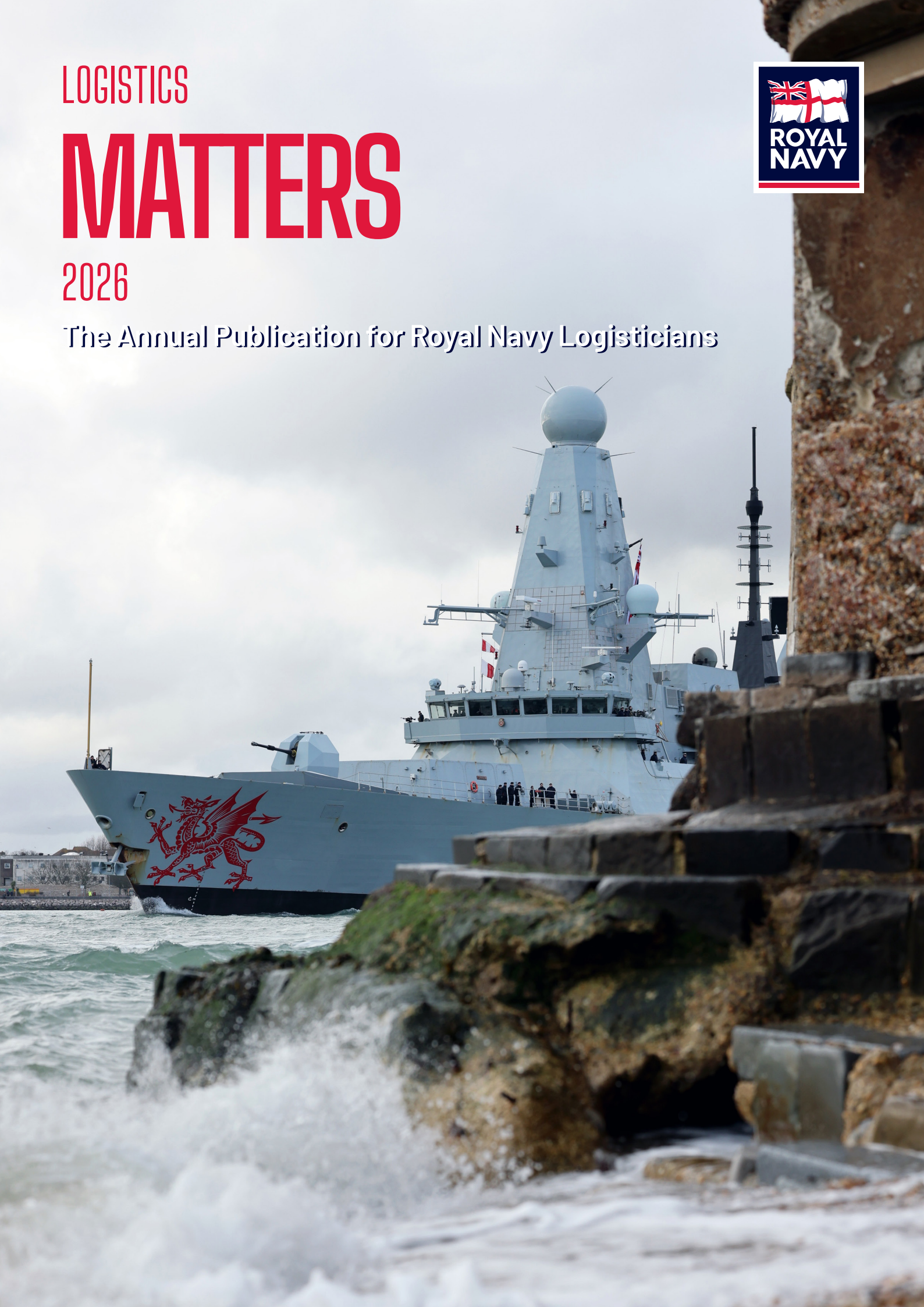
LOGISTICS MATTERS

2026

The Annual Publication for Royal Navy Logisticians



LOGISTICS MATTERS

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FOREWORD

Rear Admiral Paul Murphy
Chief Naval Logistics Officer



As I sit down to write what will be my final foreword for Logistics Matters as your Chief Naval Logistics Officer, I find myself reflecting on just how much has changed since I assumed the role.

The world today is a markedly different place from the one we faced only a few years ago. Events across the globe have reinforced the importance of credible deterrence, collective security, and warfighting readiness. They have also reminded strategic decision makers that logistics is far more than a support function, but a non-discretionary enabler of every element of warfighting power. Often unseen and rarely in the spotlight, its value becomes most apparent when it is absent. The ability to sustain our forces, overcome unexpected challenges and deliver effect at reach remains fundamental to operational success, whether on, under, or above the seas.

Throughout my time as CNLO, I have been continually impressed by the professionalism, adaptability and determination of our people. Whether deployed at sea, supporting operations from the home base, embedded across Defence, or working alongside allies and industry partners, you have consistently delivered. Importantly, you have done so during a period of significant change for the Royal Navy and Defence more broadly.

Much of that change has centred on our collective shift towards warfighting readiness. Whilst efficiency and affordability will always remain important, recent years have placed renewed emphasis on resilience, persistence and our ability to operate at reach and for prolonged periods. As logisticians, we sit at the heart of that challenge. The ability to move, store, maintain and sustain capability wherever the mission demands has never been more relevant, nor more strategically important.

I am particularly proud of the progress we have made as a branch in preparing for that future. We have continued to modernise, embraced new ways of working, and strengthened our focus on the skills, expertise and leadership required for the years ahead. We have challenged long-held assumptions, forged stronger connections across Defence and with our international partners, and continued to demonstrate the value of professional logistics as a battle winner.

Of course, none of this would have be possible without you. Looking through the pages of this edition, you will see yet more examples of the remarkable work taking place across the branch. As ever, these articles represent only a fraction of the activity undertaken every day by our colleagues across the globe. Behind each story is a team solving complex problems, often in challenging circumstances, and enabling operational success. You should all be enormously proud of what you have achieved.

One of the greatest privileges of serving as CNLO has been the opportunity to meet so many of you and witness first-hand the talent, commitment and sense of purpose that exists across our profession. I have never ceased to be impressed by the calibre of our people. On a personal note, I really enjoyed mingling with many of you in the margins of this year's Conference as well as recognising the service of those leaving at our annual dinner. But my personal favourite remains recognising the achievements of our people at the recent annual awards ceremony. All such events are a powerful reminder of the strength of our branch and all that we achieve.

As I prepare to hand over the CNLO mantle to Rear Admiral Fi Shepherd in January next year, I do so with tremendous confidence in the future. The challenges facing Defence are significant and the strategic environment remains unpredictable. Yet throughout my time as CNLO, I have seen first-hand the ingenuity, resilience and unwavering commitment that characterise Royal Navy logisticians. Our ability to solve complex problems, adapt to changing circumstances and sustain operations wherever they are required will remain fundamental to the Royal Navy's success in the years ahead.

It only remains for me to thank you for your support and for all that you do in service of our Royal Navy. It has been an immense privilege to serve as your Chief Naval Logistics Officer. I leave the role with great confidence in the branch, its people and its future, and I look forward to watching it continue to evolve and thrive in the years ahead.

DCNLO'S VIEW FROM NAVY COMMAND

Commodore Rich New RN
Deputy Chief Naval Logistics Officer

2026 started with a bang in the form of an unexpected war in the Middle East, which saw our logisticians engaged across Defence, not least in the business of getting HMS DRAGON deployed at short-notice, months ahead of plan and for an entirely different mission than envisaged, alongside RFA LYME BAY and FAA assets. Since then, there has been no letup in tempo with our Continuous at Sea Deterrence (CASD) being maintained against significant challenges, both aircraft carriers at sea simultaneously, an SSN in Australia and ongoing global commitments all providing daily examples of our people delivering excellence.

The shifting geopolitical situation has driven a sharpened focus on our main effort: to urgently enhance our warfighting readiness across the Royal Navy. The First Sea Lord has given us clear orders through the Warfighting Ready Plan, which is essential reading for all, wherever you are serving.

The five key pillars of the plan are all areas where the Logistics Branch has an essential contribution to make:

Nuclear – Where we continue to play a key role in sustaining CASD as the cornerstone of national security, and in ensuring that logistics support requirements for the DREADNOUGHT class are correctly met to allow a seamless transition.

Hybrid Forces – Which combine crewed, remotely-operated and autonomous capabilities. Alongside the task of generating and sustaining our current ships, submarines and aircraft, we must look and how we support and employ new platforms and technologies as part of the hybrid navy.

People – By building a warfighting culture through leadership at all levels and demonstrating the right behaviours individually and collectively we will ensure we are ready to meet the challenges ahead. We are also advancing our understanding of how the branch will adapt from its current form to support the requirements of the future Navy.

Training – We will continue to deliver world-class training that correctly prepares our people for their warfighting roles. We must keep abreast of the requirements that a transition to war might demand and consider what changes this might necessitate, ensuring that the skills we develop are relevant to the tasks we will be expected to perform in this scenario.



Organisation – As the new Defence Operating Model begins to stand up, we are working across the Navy to understand how our relationships with the National Armaments Directorate Group, the Defence Nuclear Enterprise and the Military Strategic HQ will change so that we can deliver what is required of us. As the Navy Command Operating Model transforms in response, we are working to refine Logistics within a broader support function to ensure that we can sustain capabilities from their development through to their disposal.

As ever, these efforts are not an NCHQ-exclusive sport, and we need all of you to apply your expertise, professionalism and determination to the task. There are resource challenges that we all recognise but the application of innovation and initiative will help us to close the gaps. This is where you excel, I see the qualities we need throughout our Branch every day and I know we will continue to succeed thanks to your efforts.

Whatever your role and wherever you serve, everyone has a role to play in delivering a Navy that is ready to fight and win.

FLEET LOGISTICS OFFICER'S FOREWORD

Cdr Alex Savage RN

Welcome to the 2026 edition of Logs Matters.

This year's edition reflects the changing environment in which the Royal Navy operates and the increasing focus on warfighting readiness, resilience and Transition to War. Across the Logistics Branch we are adapting our people, processes and support structures to ensure we remain ready to sustain and enable the Whole Force whenever and wherever required.

The articles that follow showcase the breadth of our profession, from those serving at sea and in support units, to those developing capability, training our people and strengthening the wider Support Enterprise. They also highlight an important truth: readiness is not generated solely on the front line. It is created and sustained across the entire Support Enterprise by dedicated logisticians, personnel specialists and support staff.

I encourage you to take time to read the experiences and lessons shared by your colleagues. Whether serving, retired or supporting the Naval Service in another capacity, I hope this edition demonstrates the professionalism, adaptability and commitment that continue to define the Royal Navy Logistics Branch.

My sincere thanks go to everyone who has contributed to this year's publication, and to The Royal NAAFI for their continued support. Most importantly, thank you to the men and women of the Logistics Branch whose efforts every day ensure the Royal Navy remains ready to operate, fight and win.

ROYAL NAVY LOGISTICS STRATEGY UPDATE 2026

In April 2024, the Royal Navy launched its Logistics Strategy, providing a clear direction through to 2040 and setting the headmark for the Logistics Branch: to deliver highly skilled, motivated and professional maritime logisticians ready to meet tomorrow's challenges. Over the last two years, significant progress has been made across all four specialisations, refining career structures, modernising processes and improving the lived experience of our people. Last year's update focused on setting that direction and explaining how the branch would adapt to a changing Defence environment.

The strategic context has continued to evolve. Today, our focus is increasingly shaped by the First Sea Lord's Warfighting Ready Plan and the requirement for the Royal Navy to be ready to transition rapidly from routine operations to warfighting should the nation require it. The destination outlined in the Logistics Strategy remains unchanged, but the emphasis has shifted. Our priority is no longer simply modernisation for the future. It is building resilience now, ensuring our people, processes and support structures are ready to enable a warfighting Navy.

For the Logistics Branch, warfighting readiness is not solely a front-line issue. A ship, submarine, headquarters or support unit can only operate effectively if the wider Support Value Chain is resilient. Whether serving at sea, in a Naval Base, within Defence Support, in the training pipeline or across the wider support enterprise, every logistician contributes to the ability of the Royal Navy to fight and sustain operations. Both workforce and support resilience along with operational adaptability and support resilience have therefore become the organising principles that sit behind every element of the Branch Strategy.

The test for every line of effort is now simple:

Does it help the unit or our people warfight with what we have, build resilience in the near term, and prioritise what we need for the future?

From Peacetime Assurance to Wartime Readiness.

One of the most significant developments over the last year has been the creation of the **Logs Warbook**, a Fleet Logistics Organisation product currently underdevelopment with feedback from across the Enterprise. The purpose of the Warbook is straightforward: to provide practical guidance to Tier 1 units on what must be done differently to prepare for war and what readiness means in practice for logistics and personnel specialists.

A Tier 1 unit held at NATO readiness is, by definition, expected to be ready for conflict. That reality requires a shift in mindset. The Warbook seeks to help logisticians understand how they contribute to operational readiness, how they prepare their departments and people for Transition to War, and how assurance activity must evolve to support warfighting outcomes.

This thinking is also informing the continued development of the Compliance Management Tool (CMT). CMT remains a critical assurance tool, but the focus is increasingly moving towards **wartime readiness assurance**. The objective is not simply to demonstrate compliance with process, but to ensure that units understand risk, identify vulnerabilities and are prepared to sustain operations under more demanding conditions. The ongoing review of CMT, reduction of duplication, targeted assurance activity and better use of data tools are all intended to support this shift in emphasis.

CATERING SERVICES

The Catering Services cadre remains under pressure and the branch must be honest about the challenges that continue to exist, particularly within key operational ranks. However, the focus over the last year has been on building resilience rather than pursuing short-term fixes.

A major area of effort has been the continued development of the **Catering Support Units (CSUs)**. Their priorities have been rebalanced to focus on supporting units alongside and helping to reduce operational strain where it is most acutely felt. Alongside this, work continues to examine how demand can be reduced without degrading operational endurance or the quality of the food offer available to our people. Previous strategy work identified the need to reduce operational demand at sea and alongside, while improving support mechanisms and workforce balance.

The most visible example of this is the **Generational Change to Feeding** initiative. The way the Royal Navy feeds its people has remained largely unchanged for decades and there is a growing recognition that improvements in menu design, routines, equipment and support arrangements can improve both the output and the resilience of the catering operation. This work remains focused on supporting the chefs we already have, improving endurance and ensuring that operational capability can be sustained in increasingly demanding circumstances.

The goal is simple: a more resilient catering model capable of supporting both today's operational commitments and tomorrow's warfighting requirements.

WRITERS

The Writer specialisation continues to evolve in response to both the changing demands of the Fleet and the uncertainty surrounding the future Defence HR System. While the long-term implications of Defence HRS remain unclear, progress has continued in defining and strengthening the contribution Writers make to operational effectiveness. Previous strategy work identified Defence HRS uncertainty alongside the ambition to align Writers more closely with executive functions.

The principal focus is increasingly on developing Writers as **Command Divisional Advisers**. This recognises their unique position at the intersection of people, administration, discipline, welfare and command support. As operational tempo increases and Transition to War planning becomes more prominent, the need for skilled personnel specialists who can support commanding officers and executive teams becomes ever more important.

Significant progress has also been made in Information Management training and policy development. Combined with the increasing importance of Operational Location administration and personnel support, this reinforces the Writer's role as a key enabler of operational effectiveness rather than solely an administrator of routine process.

SUPPLY CHAIN

The Supply Chain strategy continues to focus on moving beyond traditional storekeeping and towards a broader understanding of the end-to-end support chain. Last year's strategy update described this transition towards a more proactive, digitally enabled and integrated supply chain profession.

The short-term focus remains on reducing the administrative burden at the front line. Too much effort is still spent on manual data manipulation and duplication of activity. Through ongoing digitalisation initiatives, improvements to MJDI processes and greater use of data tools, the aim is to allow front-line logisticians to spend more time managing support and less time administering systems.

Work also continues to improve data purity and strengthen the relationship between logisticians and engineering counterparts. Successful warfighting support depends upon understanding the whole support chain, from inventory management and procurement through to operational demand and delivery. The branch must therefore become increasingly integrated across Defence and industry partners.

A further area of development is expeditionary movement support. As the Royal Navy thinks more deeply about Transition to War and support resilience, the requirement for organic movement expertise and expeditionary support capability continues to grow. Building those skills across the Supply Chain profession will remain an important priority over the coming years.

LOGISTIC OFFICERS

For Logistic Officers, the focus has become one of reinforcing professional identity and operational credibility.

Over many years the branch has benefited from officers serving successfully across a broad range of appointments. That breadth remains important. However, as the Royal Navy sharpens its focus on warfighting readiness, there is an increased emphasis on the role of the **Maritime Logistician** and the unique skills required to support, sustain and enable operations at sea.

Mentorship has become a key area of activity. Feedback from junior has consistently highlighted the need for greater support, clearer career guidance and stronger professional networks. Previous strategy work identified formal mentorship, improved career transparency and enhanced professional development opportunities as priorities.

The mentorship programme, combined with continued focus on training, career management and professional development, is intended to strengthen the confidence and competence of future logistics leaders. In an increasingly complex operational environment, Logistic Officers must remain adaptable, operationally credible and capable of leading across the full breadth of logistics and personnel functions.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Logistics Strategy remains focused on the future, but the demands of today require us to build resilience now. Warfighting readiness is no longer a theoretical concept or a distant ambition. It is the lens through which we must assess our workforce, our processes, our assurance activity and our priorities.

Every logistician has a role to play.

I would encourage readers to think about their own contribution to Transition to War, challenge processes and habits that do not contribute to readiness or resilience and understand how their appointment supports the wider Support Enterprise. The challenges ahead are considerable, but so too are the opportunities. The Logistics Branch has always adapted to meet the needs of the Fleet, and it will continue to do so.

Ready to support. Ready to sustain. Ready to fight.

FEEDING THE FLEET, FIXING THE SYSTEM

By Cdr James Thompson, SO1 Logistics and Personnel Profession Manager, and lead for Catering Services People Recovery

FLO's foreword to the Logistics Branch Strategy landed a clear message: we must reduce the operational demand on our Catering Services people. For me, that means addressing two things: how many people we need to deliver the task, and how we employ them during the working day.

That matters. For too many junior CS, the lived experience has meant long hours in the galley, too little recovery time, and the pressure of keeping output going while training, secondary duties and whole-ship commitments continue around them. CS recovery is about changing that experience.

This is not about blaming people; excellent people are already working incredibly hard to support operations. It is about improving the system around them. My role is to coordinate the Catering Services people elements of recovery on behalf of Navy People, directly supported by Lt Cdr Nick O'Rourke and Lt Bertie Mee, and working alongside Fleet Logistics, SURFLOT, Career Management, training teams and senior leaders across Navy Command. The aim is simple: recover the capability, improve the lived experience, and build something that will last.

TAKING PRESSURE OFF THE GALLEY

One practical step is already visible in the Queen Elizabeth Class. NAAFI Leading Catering Services-level Galley Watch Supervisors are being used to add capacity where the demand is greatest. These roles are not a replacement for LCS; they are intended to reduce pressure on regular LCS personnel and give us another way to support some of the busiest and most complex galleys in the Fleet.

The Type 23 workforce trial in HMS Portland is just as important. The team size stays the same, but the shape changes: three LCS and nine CS personnel. That gives Leading Hands more room to lead, supervise and manage, rather than being pulled straight back into production. It also gives the junior team a clearer structure and a better chance of meaningful breaks.

The trial is well underway. Early lessons are positive, and we are learning how to refine the model and make it sustainable. The prize is worth chasing; fewer hours continuously worked in the galley, better use of supervisory experience, and less risk of overworking individuals. It is not perfect yet, but if we get it right, HMS Portland could help show what a better model looks like across the surface fleet, particularly as Type 26 and Type 31 enter service.

TRAINING FASTER, TRAINING BETTER

Recovery is not only about today's workforce position. It is also about how quickly we can grow the next generation. A dedicated CPOCS, CPO Frank Tingle, is now providing focused course preparation support, helping people arrive better prepared before they step into a key training moment in their professional development.

Under the leadership of CO CTW and his team, we are also trialling a dual-course approach for LCS Qualifying Course. Eighteen students are on the current dual course, compared with the typical seven seen in recent singular courses. They will then be loaded onto LRLC as a priority before returning to the Fleet as fully substantive LCS, getting us back towards a 'select-train-promote' model that better invests in people and increases SQEP at the front line. If it works as expected, the difference will be significant: 28 trained or in training so far this year, with 40 places still to come, against a typical annual outturn of around 32.

At the same time, we are looking again at the journey from new entry CS to CS1. Recruitment has been healthy in recent years. That gives us an opportunity, but only if the training pipeline is realistic, supportive and credible. The aim is not simply to push more people through. It is to train them properly, prepare them well, and address some of the pressure being felt by already stretched ships' teams.

MAKING SHORE ROLES COUNT

FLO also highlighted the work to reinvigorate Catering Support Units (CSU). That work could become a major part of recovery. A stronger CSU model could provide much-needed shore roles for junior CS ratings, while also giving practical and effective support back to the Fleet.

That is important. Recovery cannot sit only at sea. If we want a sustainable career model, we need shore employment that helps people develop, recover and contribute. Done well, CSUs could support training, provide vital work alongside, and reduce the need to keep drawing from the same sea-going workforce. There is still much to do, but making the case for this over the coming weeks is a priority.

NOW WE NEED TO KEEP GOING

There is real senior-level energy behind this work across Navy Command, led at Commodore and Brigadier level across both capability and people areas. The direction is clear: keep the momentum, keep learning, and keep driving recovery as a priority.

For the most junior members of the Logistics Branch, this is not abstract policy. It is the working day. It is time in the galley. It is whether you get a proper break. It is whether you can complete training, see a route to promotion, and feel that the system is starting to listen.

Not every idea will be perfect first time. We will need feedback from the people living this every day. But the intent is serious, and the opportunity is real. Catering Services recovery is not a quick fix. It is a long-term commitment to our people, our profession and our operational output. If we are going to sustain the Fleet, we must sustain those who feed it.

GENERATIONAL CHANGE TO FEEDING

CPO(CS) Robbie Roberts

After decades without significant change, a modern approach to catering is delivering impressive results across the Fleet. The Royal Navy's Generational Change to Feeding project is reshaping the way food is prepared and served, delivering a modern, nutritious, and flexible dining experience designed to meet the demands of today's operational environment. Following a highly successful trial aboard HMS SUTHERLAND, the initiative has now been introduced on HMS DARING, HMS HURWORTH, and HMS PRINCE OF WALES.

Developed to enhance meal quality, nutrition, variety and reduced waste, the programme responds directly to changing dietary expectations and the increasingly diverse work patterns experienced across the Fleet. By introducing fresher ingredients, globally inspired menus and modern catering equipment, the initiative is helping to improve both wellbeing and operational effectiveness.

A FRESH APPROACH TO FEEDING THE FLEET

At the heart of the programme is new menus, which places greater emphasis on balanced nutrition, higher protein content, and contemporary dishes that reflect current food trends familiar to the younger generation.

The menus have been designed to move away from a heavy reliance on traditional high-carbohydrate meals, instead incorporating increased quantities of fruit, vegetables, white meat, oily fish, wholegrain products, herbs, and spices. More than 140 new products have been added to the Core Range Price List to support this transformation, including innovative ingredients and labour-saving products such as liquid egg, which improves efficiency within the galley.

The result is a menu offering that is both healthier and more aligned with modern lifestyles, while allowing Catering Services teams to maintain high standards and reduce workload during demanding operational programmes.

One of the most popular elements of the initiative has been the introduction of build-your-own meal stations, allowing sailors to create personalised meals such as ramen bowls, poke bowls, and subway style sandwiches.

These options not only reflect popular dining trends but also provide greater flexibility for personnel with varying tastes and nutritional requirements. To further support personnel operating outside traditional mealtimes, dedicated grazing points have been established throughout participating ships. Stocked with nutritious options such as fresh fruit, nuts, seeds, natural yoghurts, cereal bars, and smoothies, these stations ensure sailors can access healthy food whenever operational commitments prevent them from attending normal meal services.

As the first ship to adopt the Generational Change to Feeding project, HMS SUTHERLAND provided valuable insight into the programme's effectiveness. Feedback from the ship's company indicated significant improvements in the freshness and quality of ingredients, together with a greater variety and choice of meals.



Personnel also reported enhanced flavour and presentation standards, which contributed to increased overall satisfaction with the dining experience. Collectively, these improvements had a positive impact on morale and wellbeing, reinforcing the benefits of the new feeding model.

The success of the trial demonstrated that modernised feeding arrangements could be delivered effectively. Portable Galley equipment, including additional refrigerators, blenders and ramen bowls, were integrated successfully to improve efficiency of CS workforce. The data gathered aboard HMS SUTHERLAND has since been used to inform wider rollout decisions and will continue to support future development of the programme across different classes of warship.

SUPPORTING OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Beyond improving the dining experience, the initiative is delivering operational benefits. The revised feeding concept has been designed around contemporary working routines and the reality of 24-hour operations. Changes include reducing lunchtime options to a single high-quality main meal supported by nutritious salads and grazing alternatives, while evening services now offer two to three carefully prepared choices. Dessert offerings have also been refined, with healthier alternatives such as frozen yoghurt and fresh fruit replacing many traditional high-calorie options. Meanwhile, breakfast service has been modernised, with the traditional full fried breakfast reserved for Saturdays and healthier choices promoted throughout the week. These adjustments ensure food provision better supports the physical and cognitive demands placed on today's sailors.

SUCCESS ABOARD HMS PRINCE OF WALES

Following implementation aboard HMS PRINCE OF WALES, early feedback has reinforced the benefits already observed during the HMS SUTHERLAND trial.

Personnel working the demanding middle watch period between 2359 and 0400 have reported significant improvements in alertness and performance. The availability of convenient, nutritious food that can be collected in advance and consumed during watch rotations has proven particularly valuable.

Operations Room personnel noted that the ability to "grab and go" with healthy meal options helped maintain energy levels throughout the night, while also contributing to increased morale among watchkeeping teams.

This feedback highlights how seemingly simple catering changes can have a direct impact on both individual wellbeing and operational capability, particularly for those serving in demanding watchkeeping roles.

LOOKING AHEAD

With successful implementation now underway aboard HMS DARING, HMS HURWORTH, and HMS PRINCE OF WALES, the Generational Change to Feeding programme continues to build momentum across the Fleet.

What began as a catering trial aboard HMS SUTHERLAND has evolved into a Fleet-wide initiative that is changing perceptions of food at sea. By combining improved nutrition, greater choice, operational practicality, and modern culinary standards, the Royal Navy is ensuring its sailors are better fuelled, more satisfied, and more prepared to meet the challenges of life at sea. The Generational Change to Feeding programme is proving that food is not simply a welfare provision, it is an operational enabler.

OP HIGHMAST PART 2

Cdr Jonny Kenward RN

In the previous edition of Logistics Matters, we left the UK Carrier Strike Group alongside in Darwin, Australia after Ex TALISMAN SABRE, one of the largest and most complex warfighting exercises of a generation. In this edition, we round out the Op HIGHMAST deployment, following the Strike Group to Japan, Singapore and India, before a (thankfully) uneventful return through the Bab al Mandab Strait and Suez Canal, back to the Mediterranean for the final demonstration of Carrier Strike Full Operating Capability, traditional visit to Gibraltar, and long-awaited return home.

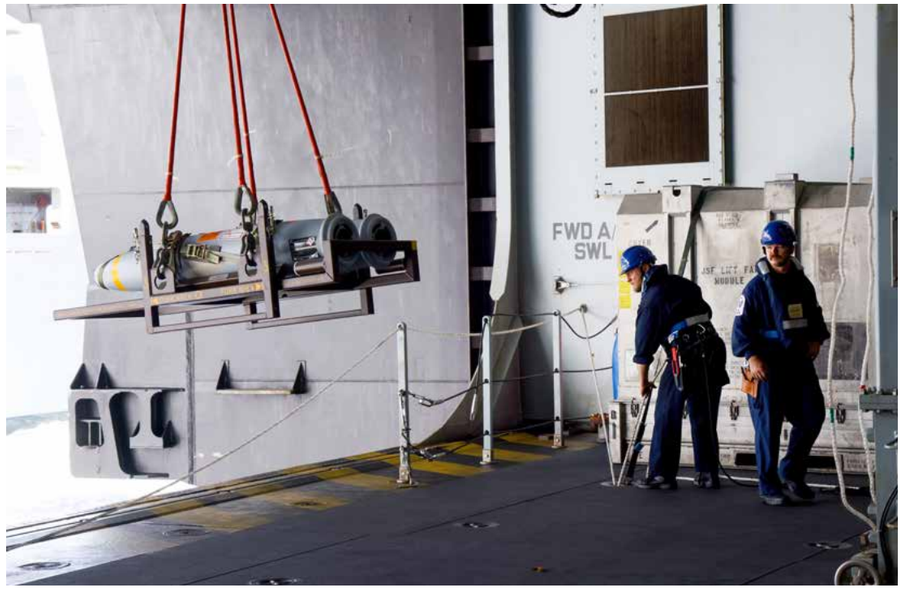
PHASE 4 – DARWIN TO TOKYO

The port visits to Darwin were a great opportunity for resupply and reconstitution following Ex TALISMAN SABRE, and the Royal Australian Navy provided phenomenal support from their base, HMAS Coonawarra, with HMS PRINCE OF WALES (PWLS) berthing alongside their new wharf and the remainder of the Group using the commercial port. An emergent towed array sonar defect in HMS RICHMOND (RCMD) re-routed a C17 flight from Japan and the Republic of Korea (the Deployed Support Period locations, more on this later) at short notice to deliver a replacement array. However, this flight also became the opportunity to receive essential stores prior to each unit's DSP, which required ruthless prioritisation to ensure that every unit received what they needed. Amongst this resupply and essential maintenance activity, the Strike Group also conducted a busy programme of Defence Engagement to close out the Exercise and reinforce the UK's close bonds with Australia and other Pacific Allies and Partners. In amongst all this, the small but tough town of Darwin survived its encounter with nearly 2,500 matelots and provided some great downtime for everyone, and thankfully no one had a close encounter with an angry crocodile!

Sailing from Darwin at the end of the July, the Strike Group met the USS GEORGE WASHINGTON CSG, before then linking up with the USS AMERICA Group and the JS KAGA Group, for two weeks of "Multi-Large Deck Exercises" in the Pacific Ocean. This involved a lot of complex flying and warfighting activity from all four ships, as well as valuable exchanges between units, and even the first F-35B landing on a Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force unit, performed by one of the UKCSG's F-35Bs. It also provided an exceptional opportunity for genuine interoperability between the UK Lightning Force and the US Marine Corps' VMFA-242 as they operated together from PWLS. We exploited this logistically as much as possible, learning valuable lessons about how the USMC sustains F-35B at sea, and keeping UK and US squadrons flying by sharing parts and expertise between UK and US Afloat Support Packs (ASP), something that continued when the UKCSG reached Japan.

However, the headline logistics operation from this period was undoubtedly the RAS between PWLS and the USNS WALLY SCHIRRA, conducting both RAS(A) and RAS(S) serials to receive complex munitions and provisions, and even bringing RFA TIDESPRING (TSPG) in for PWLS's first dual-commodity RAS. Needless to say, not that much other work was done around the combined Staff and Flagship logistics teams that day, as everyone wanted to be part of the RAS action! This event proved resupply interoperability between PWLS and the US Navy's solid support ships (T-AKEs), and an integrated supply chain for munitions. The munitions supplied were from UK stocks, flown to Guam by RAF C17, then stored by the US Navy in WALLY SCHIRRA before CTF-73 and UKCSG organised the RAS to transfer them to PWLS. It also proved UK use of the US concept of "Push Packs" for provisions, with each Pack providing a 7-day set menu for an escort, or augmentation to the stocks of a larger ship. This provides one option to streamline provisions resupply for the future RFA solid support ships.

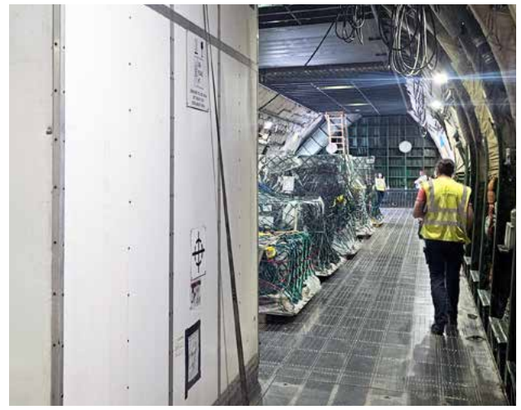




Once the quadruple-carrier exercising had finished, the Strike Group split up on its journey north, with PWLS, DNTL and HNoMS ROALD AMUNDSEN (RAMU) heading into the USN and JMSDF bases in Yokosuka, Japan, and RCMD and TSPG arriving in Busan, ROK in mid-August for their DSPs. Each DSP was a significant J4 evolution, involving the combined efforts of the UKCSG, DE&S and contractors, DSCOM and both the US Navy and JMSDF, not only through use of their dockyards but also with key logistics and engineering services. The priority during the DSPs was on the maintenance required to sustain the Strike Group through to the end of HIGHMAST, with a critical part of this being rectification of some of the OPDEFs accumulated while deployed.

For PWLS, this meant the exchange of one of her military satellite antenna (or 'SCOT domes'). The size of the antenna is impressive, and the logistics involved in moving them anywhere is complicated, but the DSP saw the culmination of an enormous effort from the manufacturer, DE&S, Defence Digital, DSCOM, UKCSG and the FLS team to charter a specialist heavy lift aircraft to move one to Yokosuka. This involved an out-size road move to RAF Brize Norton to meet the Antonov AN-124 (the only available aircraft with a large enough cargo hold to handle the height of the antenna in its case). The AN-124 then leap-frogged across the Atlantic and Pacific to meet PWLS in Japan, arriving in Tokyo's Narita International Airport to be met by the GLC and FLS Officer (who weren't going to pass up the opportunity for a nose around!). A complex series of road moves from the airport to the nearest port followed, then a short journey by sea for a local tug to move the antenna into Yokosuka by barge, before the US Navy completed the move with one of their gargantuan pierside cranes to land the antenna safely on the jetty for fitting to PWLS. Despite some last-minute customs and base access issues, the whole operation was completed in excellent time.

As well as all the exciting J4 activity, the DSPs were a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the sailors, air specialists, marines and soldiers of the Strike Group to experience Japan or the ROK, with an operational stand-down supported by an allowances package which helped people to fly out families and friends to experience these incredible places alongside their serving loved ones. Everyone experienced at least a week of stand-down that allowed them to travel and enjoy their host nations. This provided a much-needed opportunity for rest and recuperation (though not that much rest for those that made the most of their travel!) prior to completing the DSPs and moving PWLS from Yokosuka to the Tokyo International Cruise Liner Terminal for an intense period of DE, including hosting the Pacific Futures Forum with delegates attending from across the globe. This event, complemented by other DE hosted by DNTL and RAMU (and events in RCMD and TSPG in Busan), provided a great ending to the Strike Group's time in Japan and the ROK, and saw the Strike Group sail on a high. The next phase of the deployment would take the Strike Group through one of the most contested patches of water in the world: the South China Sea.

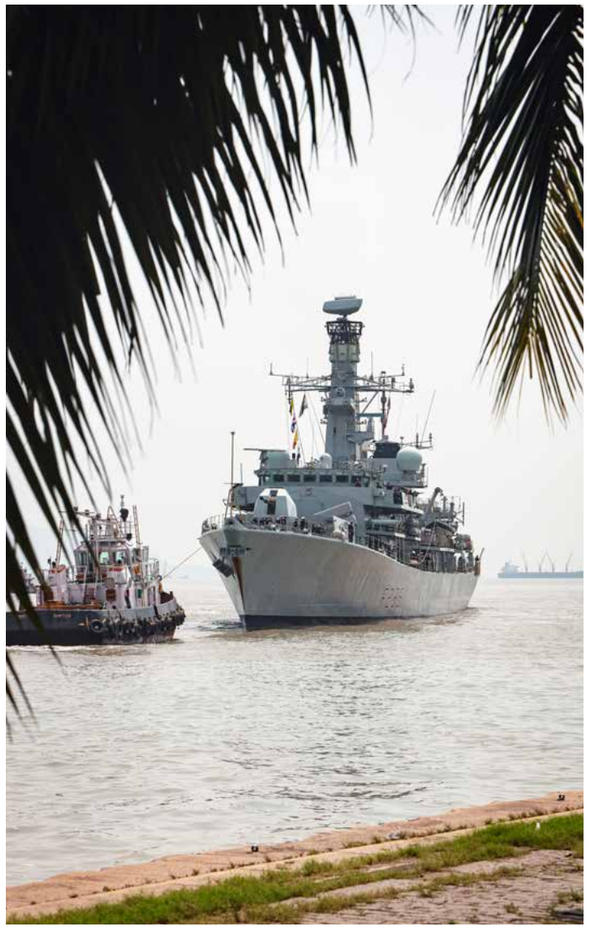




PHASE 5 – TOKYO TO THE INDIAN OCEAN



The Strike Group's departure from its respective DSP locations was not as smooth as we had hoped, with a last minute engine defect keeping TSPG in Busan, while the GLC team worked rapidly with CTF-73 to re-plan the series of UKCSG and US Navy RAS that TSPG had been due to support. While the Strike Group headed north around Japan and past the ROK, the team also planned a large Maritime Intra-Theatre Lift move to embark a large ROK delegation for a DE event at sea, a challenge for the embarked Carrier Air Wing. Some quick work by the US Navy to repair and sail the USNS RAPPAHANNOCK tanker (T-AO), and short fuel stops forRCMD and DNTL in Sasebo, Japan addressed the Strike Group's immediate fuel concerns. The team in TSPG worked round the clock to repair her engine, meaning she sailed just a few days later than planned to catch up with the UKCSG. Unfortunately, this concided with a defect in DNTL that forced her back to Sasebo for additional fuel. En route to the Strike Group, TSPG hooked up (literally) with the MT OVERSEAS MYKONOS, another of the US Military Sealift Command's Consolidated Cargo Replenishment (CONSOL RAS) vessels, for her second CONSOL RAS of the deployment.



This CONSOL RAS began to normalise the practice of CONSOL RAS for the RFA, a skill which can be a huge force multiplier, particularly as the UK MOD's new chartered tankers gain this capability. It also gave TSPG the more immediate benefit of a plentiful stock of F76 to support RAS with the Strike Group, including the newly-joined JS AKEBONO (AKEB), as well as USN and RAN vessels operating in the South China Sea, showing the flexibility that a UKCSG has by bringing our own tanker with us rather than relying on theatre AFSUP as the USN does. It also demonstrated the convening power of a UKCSG and our ability to be integral and sustain Allies and Partners while operating alongside us.

This sustainment activity all took place against a backdrop of close monitoring from People's Liberation Army (Navy) and other Chinese government vessels, detaching RCMD to conduct a Taiwan Straits Transit, a solo transit across the South China Sea by DNTL following her defect rectification, and detaching RAMU and TSPG to conduct their own Freedom of Navigation Assurance activity around some of the contested formation in the South China Sea, a first for the Royal Norwegian Navy. This highlighted the criticality of organic sustainment in such a congested and contested theatre with very limited Host Nation Support, and the importance of Allies and Partners sharing resource to improve our endurance and effect.

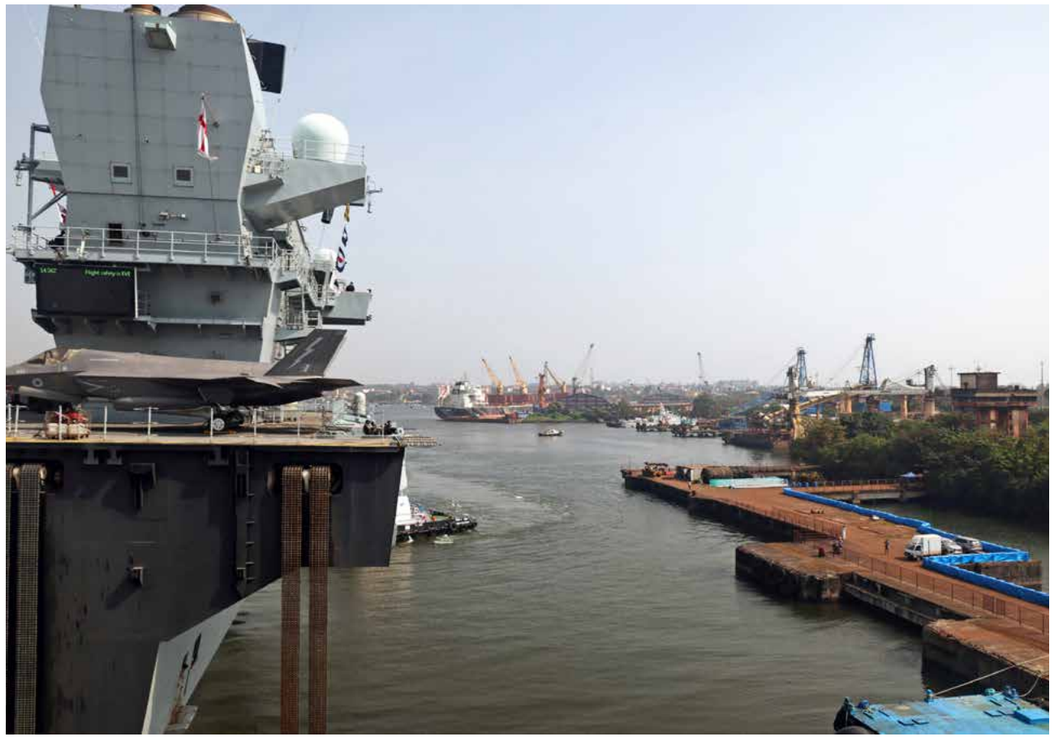
With the South China Sea safely behind the Strike Group, we sailed into Singapore in late September for resupply, repair and downtime prior to participating in Ex BERSAMA LIMA, the key Five Powers Defence Arrangement exercise and another tangible demonstration of the UK's influence and convening power in the Indo Pacific. The return to Singapore felt like familiar territory for the Strike Group, with outstanding support again provided by the British Defence Singapore Support Unit, and Republic of Singapore Navy (including receiving PWLS in Changi Naval Base) to enable significant J4 activity in what would be the last resupply and repair opportunity before returning to Duqm about a month later. The Strike Group sailed from Singapore on time and in good order, participating in Ex BERSAMA LIMA before exiting the Malacca Straits and returning to the Indian Ocean, now firmly homeward bound.

Throughout the Strike Group's period of operating in the Indo Pacific, we had a liaison officer embedded within CTF-73 in Singapore, working closely alongside BDSSU and the British High Commission. This proved to be a critical enabler time and again, with the relationships and access allowing for seamless interoperability between the Strike Group and CTF-73, as well as making both Singapore port visits smoother through close bonds with the Republic of Singapore Navy and Singapore Government. This should be considered a "must do" for a UKCSG operating in the Indo Pacific, and the UK MOD could benefit from an enduring logistics presence in CTF-73 or BDSSU.

PHASE 6 – THE INDIAN OCEAN AND INDIA

The Strike Group steamed into the expanse of the Indian Ocean, monitoring fuel levels closely to plan RAS in good time, in another region with no ashore availability of F76, with TSPG again proving her worth. The Strike Group met the INS VIKRANT Strike Group off the coast of India for Ex KONKAN, again demonstrating the convening power of a UKCSG and working closely with the Indian Navy to exercise dual carrier operations. Exercise complete, the Strike Group again disaggregated, with RCMD and AKEB heading north to Mumbai, and PWLS, DNTL, RAMU and TSPG coming alongside in Goa in early-October. This proved to be a complex visit to organise despite scaled-back J4 activity, given the constrained nature of many Indian ports and the requirements for bringing PWLS alongside, her berth was a test for the Navigator!

The scaled-back J4 activity allowed for a focus on DE and on downtime for personnel in shortened port visits, but a few critical packages were shipped from the UK to test resupply in India and better understand Indian customs and shipping requirements. Close liaison with the British High Commission was essential to navigate the complex customs requirements (greatly assisted by one of the OF5 attachés being a Mover by trade!), The critical stores arrived without incident and in quick time, proving the viability of shipping critical stores to India when required, and with the right support from the BHC and Indian Government. With DE completed and another once-in-a-lifetime run ashore in the bank, the Strike Group sailed for further successful exercise activity with the Indian Navy and Air Force, to close out a short but busy Phase of activity for the UKCSG. Throughout, the Strike Group had warfighting training and readiness firmly in mind, as we headed ever closer to the Bab al Mandab and our return transit through this high threat stretch of water.



PHASE 7 – GULF OF OMAN TO THE SUEZ CANAL

Completion of the exercise activity with India saw the Strike Group firmly shift focus to being ready for the Bab al Mandab, with training activity ramping up in preparation. The Strike Group also returned to Duqm in mid-October. This port visit was equal to the previous Duqm call in intricacy and importance, with more munitions resupply activity, more strategic lift delivering vital supplies, a lot of ship and aircraft repair activity to ensure maximum availability, and a hugely busy period of activity for the FLS, including an heroic sprint down the jetty with the blood resupply for PWLS's Role 2 capability, minutes before the gangway was lifted for sailing!

Global Hub Oman again proved itself as an absolutely vital enabler, as did the RN FLS and Navy Movements. The Maritime Medical Emergency Response Team again operated from ashore with a chartered aircraft to ensure that Strike Group personnel could reach Host Nation Role 3 in Muscat within clinical timelines, should anything have gone wrong during the port visit. In between all of this activity, personnel snatched what downtime they could in the Duqm "container village", at local hotels and at the BFBS Live show on the jetty, organised by the PWLS team for the whole Strike Group. BFBS Live was a resounding success with Strike Group personnel, especially the Norwegian and Japanese sailors who weren't used to this kind of deployed event.

The UKCSG sailed from Duqm on time and ready for the Bab al Mandab, but also with the bittersweet knowledge that this would be our last time together as a full Strike Group, with TSPG providing one last RAS to the Group before detaching to head home via South Africa, and AKEB waving goodbye to the Group, escorting TSPG out of the threat area and turning east for home as well. Having met the US DDG joining the Group for the high threat transit, the core of the Strike Group entered the Gulf of Aden, knowing that the only way home was through one of the most dangerous stretches of water on the planet.

In the event of any action during the high threat transit, the medical support laydown would be critical. After a period of tireless work by the UKCSG Medical Advisor and Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Officer, a comprehensive medical plan was put in place, supported by Navy Healthcare, PJHQ J4 Medical, the RAF's Air Staging Unit, and Host Nation Role 3 in both Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. While thankfully no casualties were taken, it proved the ability of the RAF's ASU to work with UKCSG and provide the staging capability to receive casualties from afloat, as well as reinforcing the seamless way that all Strike Group medical capabilities would work together in times of action.

Without an organic tanker, the Strike Group had to carefully manage fuel to ensure sufficient supplies for the high threat transit, but this would leave the Group with very low stocks on entry to the Suez Canal, making any RAS absolutely "no fail" in the Estern Mediterranean. To treat this issue, RFA TIDEFORCE deployed from the UK to sail south through the Suez Canal, and (escorted by a French Navy frigate) met the Strike Group in the Northern Red Sea. As the Strike Group reached the bottom of the Gulf of Aden the decision was taken to commit TFCE to the Suez Canal, and the first of wave of UK, US and French air support launched from locations across the Middle East and Levant. With these key enablers in place, COMUKCSG made the decision to commit to the Bab al Mandab and turned the Strike Group north, there was no going back now.

After a tense but uneventful high threat transit, the Strike Group entered the Red Sea and steamed towards Port Suez. As we reached the Northern Red Sea and the threat began to reduce, TFCE headed south to begin providing RAS, while the Strike Group waved goodbye to the US DDG and Allied air support. The arrival of TFCE meant that all ships were able to RAS before the northbound Suez Canal transit, again proving the value of an organic tanker within the UKCSG and the flexibility and resilience it provides. The Strike Group completed the northbound transit of the Suez Canal, finally re-entering the Eastern Mediterranean some five months after leaving it, and over six months after commencing Op HIGHMAST.







PHASE 8 – THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN TO PORTSMOUTH

Arrival in the Eastern Mediterranean brought one of the most intense periods of activity in the whole operation, with logistics activity to enable Ex FALCON STRIKE, three port visits, DE and international exercise activity with NATO Allies.

Initially, the Strike Group focussed on disembarking the three Merlin Mk4 of 845NAS into Crete, for them to hop across Europe to operate from Naples to support Ex FALCON STRIKE. This created space in PWLS' hangar to receive an additional six F-35B, bringing the total embarked up to 24 ready for the final demonstration of Carrier Strike FOC. All this happened in the short transit from the Suez Canal to Souda Bay. The Strike Group also conducted a short exercise with the Turkish Navy during this period.

Coming alongside in Souda Bay gave the Strike Group time to reset and prepare for Ex FALCON STRIKE. Yet again, it was a busy period of resupply and maintenance, with strategic lift, repairs, resupply and more complex munitions movements, to land air weapons being transferred back to the UK to support other commitments. This busy period again demonstrated the utility and value of Marathi Military Port, the NATO facility managed by the Hellenic Navy, in sustaining a CSG in the Mediterranean and beyond. With assured fuel supplies, a military airfield, the ability to replenish complex munitions, and facilities to receive resupply by air, sea or road, there are few locations that provide such a comprehensive support capability.

On sailing, the Strike Group exercised with the Hellenic Navy and Air Force on the way to the Ex FALCON STRIKE areas. This exercise provided an excellent opportunity to push the capability of the Strike Group and demonstrate its ability to deliver complex warfighting at sea and from the sea. TFCE was busy throughout, sustaining the Strike Group and other exercise participants, again showing the value of having an organic tanker with the CSG. 845NAS continued to operate with the Strike Group, providing MITL from ashore and working closely with the RN FLS, keeping the Strike Group supplied with the essential stores required to maximise aircraft availability.

Following Ex FALCON STRIKE, the CSG headed to Italy for another port visit and a significant DE opportunity, with ministers from the UK and Italian governments visiting the Strike Group, and the Secretary of State for Defence declaring Carrier Strike FOC to the NATO Secretary General. With PWLS at anchor in Naples Bay, this visit also reminded the Strike Group of the challenges of sustaining at anchor, including the organisation required to move large volumes of people to and from the shore, and the options for movement of stores and provisions.

After the respite that Naples provided, the Strike Group again met up with the ITS CAVOUR Strike Group, for a period of integration with the Italian Navy. This enabled the embarkation of six F-35B from the Italian Navy and Air Force in PWLS, proving seamless interoperability with another F-35 nation. This reminded the UKCSG of the challenge of moving large





amounts of people and equipment by MITL, as the Italian F-35B detachment embarked from and disembarked to the CAVOUR at sea by helicopter. The Carrier Air Wing started the disembarkation of UK F-35B back to the UK, prioritising the jets requiring maintenance to generate for their next tasks. The Strike Group also hosted a visit from NATO's senior commander; SACEUR (the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe) to showcase the capability newly declared as at FOC for NATO.

After the departure of the Italian F-35B, the Strike Group sailed triumphantly into Gibraltar for our final port visit. This visit was a first for many, and was a great opportunity for the traditional Rock Run, and other experiences that only Gibraltar can offer. It also reminded the Strike Group of the value of an assured sovereign port, and all of the sustainment activity that can take place here, including resupply of stores, provisions and munitions, the security provided by UK territory, the generation of ships in Gibraltar rather than the UK, and the ongoing work to reinstate a sovereign fuel supply.

On departure from Gibraltar, the UKCSG really was homeward bound, with disembarkation of the Air Wing underway up the Bay of Biscay and completed off the south coast of the UK. The winter weather did its best to derail the programme at this very late stage, but despite this the Strike Group returned to the UK a day early, arriving into Portsmouth and Plymouth on 30 November, 222 days after departing. Huge homecoming events were held for each ship, including a celebration of RAMU's arrival in Portsmouth, before she returned home to Bergen, Norway. These events marked the culmination of Op HIGHMAST, and a herculean effort from the UK MOD, industry and Allies and Partners to sustain and enable it. With Ship's Companies eagerly heading down gangways to meet waiting families, thoughts were rightly focussed on a difficult job well done – Op HIGHMAST was complete.

THE LEGACY OF OP HIGHMAST

With the completion of Op HIGHMAST and declaration of FOC, Carrier Strike has become a capability at readiness, with the challenges of maintaining this readiness throughout its like. Whilst the deployment represented few firsts in terms of sustainment activity, it did give UK Defence a clear view of the level of support required to sustain a UKCSG on operations. It neatly evidenced the need for sovereign support shipping (both tankers and solid support), the essential requirement for an FLS and suitable MITL aircraft, the complexity of port visits and the strategic lift requirements, and the pan-Defence effort that goes into the procurement, stockpiling, transport and delivery of everything required to keep the UKCSG on task. Capabilities such as CONSOL RAS, RAS(A) and RAS(S), the agility of the FLS and the sufficiency of MITL aircraft are all essential to the UKCSG's warfighting capability. HIGHMAST proved that the UK can do this, and helped to normalise the key activites required to do this in wartime.

GOING BIG IN JAPAN

Lt Daryl Hall RN

If you've ever tried to move a king-size mattress up a narrow, winding staircase, you may have some sympathy for those of us tasked with getting a SCOT 6 Antenna 130 km across Japan. In this case, the mattress was two tonnes of communications equipment, the staircase was the Japanese infrastructure, and the deadline wasn't all that flexible. Spoiler alert: the antenna made it, but not without a few grey hairs gained along the way.

SITUATION

The job was simple on paper: fly an Antonov AN-124 into Tokyo Narita, unload the antenna, clear customs, and drive it down to US Yokosuka, 130 km away. Easy, right? Except in Japan, oversized loads are treated like planning a festival: they need months of advance notice, permits from multiple ministries, and dedicated night-time slots for movement. What could possibly go wrong?



AIRPORT

Our first challenge came before the aircraft even landed. Narita hadn't actually agreed to handle either oversized or military cargo when the Antonov was dispatched. Cue some frantic negotiation with the Defence Section, the Japanese MOD, and a very patient local agent. Eventually, the airport relented, perhaps helped by the argument that the kit was critical to communications and safety. Once accepted, Narita handled the offload efficiently and even stored the antenna until delivery was approved. Lesson one: ask permission, ask the awkward questions early, and do both before a 300-tonne aircraft lands in someone else's front garden.

CUSTOMS

Japanese customs officers weren't initially convinced that the shipment counted as Ships' Spares in Transit. This is important because without that designation, the process slows to a crawl. What followed was a barrage of requests for Harmonised System codes, Safety Data Sheets, fluid density declarations, and more. All the information and and a carefully crafted letter from the Defence Section finally secured approval.







TRANSPORT

The original plan was to drive it straight down the motorway – this didn't survive first contact with reality. Low tollbooth canopies, narrow access roads, and Yokosuka's own restricted gates and tunnels made a full road move almost impossible. The Ministry of Infrastructure, Land and Transport would normally need a month's notice for a special oversized load route plan. We had 14 days. Plan B: put it on a barge from Yokohama and float it down. Overnight, the agent arranged permits, and soon enough the antenna was on the water. We're maritime logisticians – surely it should be less wheels and more keels anyway, right?

HOST NATION

The US Navy's Port Operations team were superb, stepping in with less than 24 hours' notice to organise cranes, jetty space, and the small matter of opening a sea gate. There was, admittedly, a 90-minute delay when the barge and tug turned up without having phoned ahead, prompting a very efficient armed security boat to turn them around and keep the anxiety going until the very last minute. Back to lesson one: the rule stands, always call before you visit – especially when it involves a barge, a sea gate, and armed security boats!

LESSONS

Looking back, the antenna made it to the ship, but only thanks to a lot of improvisation, goodwill, and people choosing to answer the phone. The main takeaways?

- Gain host nation agreement as early as possible and make sure ''yes'' really means yes.
- Keep customs happy by having every bit of cargo data you can think of (and some you can't).
- For oversized movements in Japan, assume the road will be harder than it looks and consider the maritime option.
- Engage the Defence Section early; they can unlock doors that no amount of polite emailing can. They're worth their weight in gold.
- And always, always make sure the agent tells Port Ops when you're bringing a barge.

FINAL THOUGHT

Moving the SCOT 6 Antenna was a mixture of forward planning, last-minute pivots, and occasional pleading. But that's logistics: it's never just about moving things from A to B. It's about knowing that sometimes A doesn't want you, B can't fit you in, and C has a tollbooth that's too small – but with the right relationships, a flexible plan, and a little stubbornness, you always get the job done.

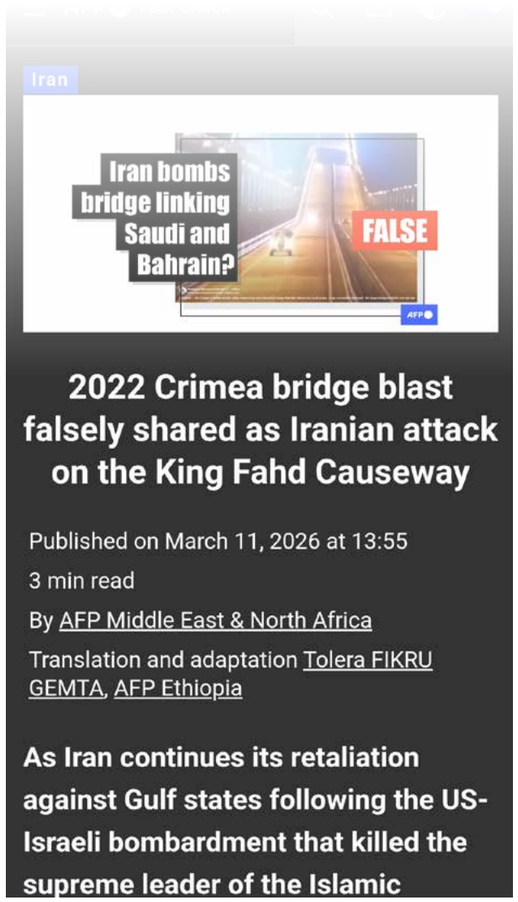
REFLECTIONS ON THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST RECOVERY PART 1

Lt Cdr Alex Hall RN

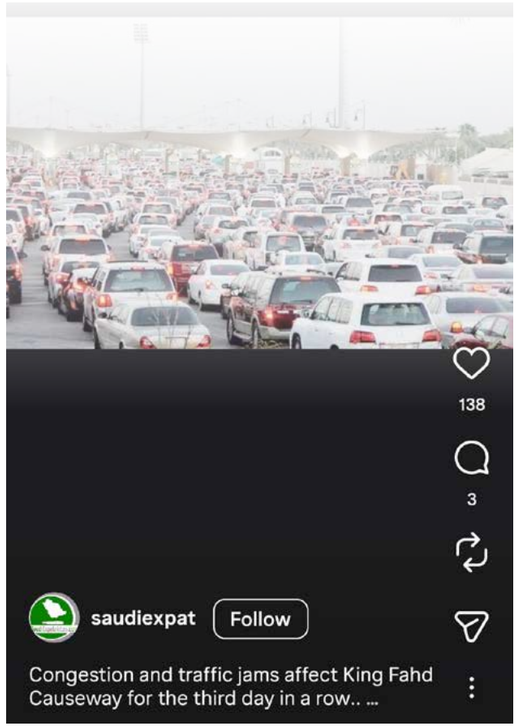
A long week started with a single text.

'Morning all... Could you please let me know where you are and when you could get back to the MOC' was the inevitable message on the FLC group chat after 24 hours of escalating tensions in the Middle East. After receiving a brief from FLC: the challenge that faced us was to extract c.320 personnel from Bahrain back to the UK as quickly and safely as possible.

Knowing that the King Fahd Causeway held significant risk of closure and could be a potential target, initial planning started to get all personnel over the causeway and into Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). With personnel dispersed across multiple locations in Bahrain, comunications blackouts from shelter in place alarms, ongoing strikes along with a high demand for coaches and vehicles, this was no easy task.



The King Fahd Causeway. A month later Iran listed the causeway as a specific target and it was closed for a significant period.



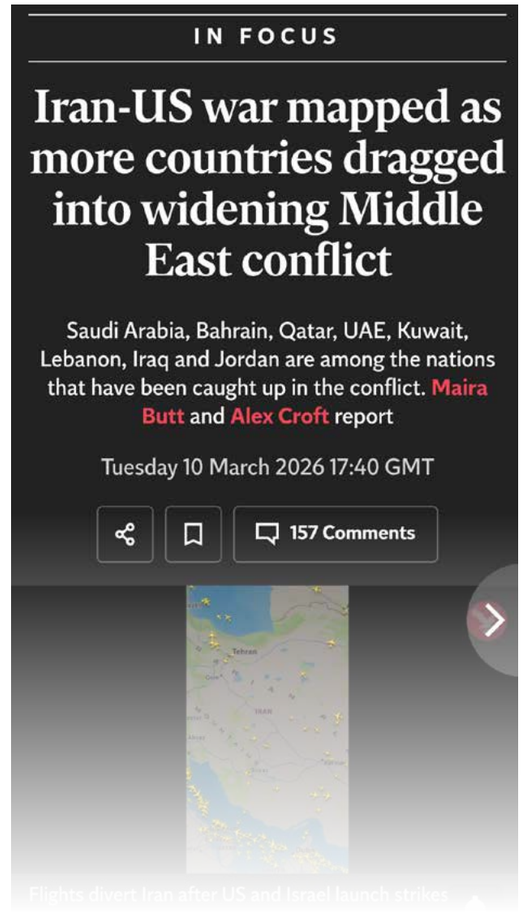
Whilst formulating an in-country movements plan we were also concurrently planning with PJHQ and FMCC who were putting together a MilAT plan to land a Voyager into KSA. With PJHQ in 24-hour watches and time zone differences the FLC team took the decision to split into watches for continuous support.

After some fairly heroic work by the Port Agent, enough coaches had eventually been sourced. At 0400Z the first coach left but it quickly became apparent that movement across the Causeway and into KSA was going to be considerably slower than anticipated. As we watched the website CCTV we could see the chaos of the traffic and the speed that the coaches were being allowed through. Hours ticked past, it was evident that the initial MilAT timings were not going to work. Cognisant of the stress personnel in country were under and the lack of sleep they had endured, the decision was taken to put personnel into overnight hotels with the last coach arriving late in the evening.

Over the next 24 hours intelligence and information was consistently changing which meant generating any plan was extremely difficult. Manifest after manifest were compiled and after further delays to MilAT due to higher priority tasking, the decision was made to enact a hybrid solution. On 5 Mar, 250 personnel were returned to the UK via a Voyager, along with 70 personnel by civilian flight. The KSA Embassy had managed to magic this flight out of thin air - it wasn't advertised on flight websites - an impressive display of the UK's soft power.

Whilst a situation you never wish to find people in, this week enabled cross government liaison in a fluid position that really tested the processes we have in place. From the basics of accounting for personnel and releasing funding through to the complexities of inter-country moves in a contested environment. The close relationship with the Embassy and unrelenting support of Black Bull in both Bahrain and KSA meant that "on the ground support" was as smooth as could be expected with regular recommendations for options that otherwise would not have been known.





Though the FLC organisation deliver operational effect every day; this was the first effectively 'Military NEO' the current team had dealt with. After an initial sigh of relief that personnel were safe it was also an opportunity to reflect on how huge the task was with the hard work and professionalism of all involved to succeed. The extraction of mass personnel once again showed the flexibility and agility of Logistics, to bring personnel home quickly and safely as well as a stark reminder that with the focus on transition to war, this sort of thing could be required again in the future.

A tiring and testing week but rewarding to see it all come together.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST RECOVERY PART 2

Lt Rob Stephen RN

Monday morning in the MOC is rarely quiet, but this one felt different straight away.

We'd seen things building over the weekend on the news, so when it kicked off properly there wasn't much surprise, more just a case of getting straight on with it. MOC N1 is a small team and we don't run a 24/7 duty, but at 0800 Monday I was the last in – Cdr Drew (SO1 N1) and WO Ed Froude (COMOPS N1 WO) had been in since Sunday (unheard of!). Our bit in N1 became clear quickly: receive everyone back into the UK, look after them, get them home.

MOC N1, only the three of us, is a mix of P&T and MOC positions, but this quickly became one of those jobs where everyone just gets stuck in and cracks on, there wasn't really another option, so very quickly we were joined in a 'tiger team' by others from within Pers Ops.

The numbers of people being 'rapidly withdrawn' were one thing. The bigger issue was that nothing stayed still for more than a few hours. Plans kept shifting, Cyprus holdover, then direct into Brize, then Heathrow, then back to a mix. Military flights became civilian, then both, then back again. Locations changed, timings slipped, manifests got rewritten, confusion reigned over numbers (at times, literally who was on what agent's bus...), people got stuck at borders, then didn't. It never really settled.

While FLC's team were focused on getting people out, we were tracking the numbers inbound and then planning for the arrival in the UK - reception, welfare, onward movement. On paper that sounds simple enough. It wasn't. It meant building a plan that could bend pretty hard without breaking every time something changed.

The small MOC team supplemented by P-Ops, and later the RN Mounting Cell Wtrs, got into a rhythm of regular check-ins every 4 hours just to keep track of it all.



The first dismount brief to the v.tired 70 pax, that had come straight from Heathrow.

Everyone naturally fell into their own bit: travel, hotels, dismount, briefings. There was also the constant battle of trying to provide updates upwards while knowing half of what was being briefed would probably be out of date not long after.

Days were spent lining things up, evenings were catch-ups on briefs and OSW, and in the background the whole time it was the same thing, give people a plan to work to, even if it's not going to last long. At one point in the middle of it all, the boss pointed out the pen he was using was made from the wood of a Dunkirk little ship (Vanguard CK69, for the history buffs). Obviously, no comparison in scale or anything like that, but the point landed, small team, messy situation, just focus on getting people home safely. That stuck and probably sums up how we approached it.

By the time we got to the actual return flights on the Thursday, we were all pretty tired, but were confident we had the best plan we could possibly have achieved in the time frame. That evening we left the MOC after finishing the staff work, including having to print and staple 300 copies of the admin instruction (no YOs around, definitely felt that one).

Then up the road to Brize, check the hotels, make sure nothing had fallen over, grab a couple of hours' sleep if possible (the boss in BZN car park... having not been told about another flight delay, which he was really happy about), then back up for the (delayed again) aircraft at something like 0400. When people started coming in during the early hours, it brought it home a bit. They were properly exhausted. Some hadn't really slept for days, some had travelled with next to nothing. They were met off the aircraft by COMOPs and the PJHQ Staff Chaplain to be welcomed home. Unfortunately, of those who had managed to grab hold of luggage, a lot of it had been bumped for weight in the Voyager, to enable the return of additional personnel from Cyprus. After that had been dealt with, it was straight onto buses, and into hotels as quickly as we could get them there.

Early on we knew this couldn't just be "stick them in a room and crack on." Military accommodation was an option, but didn't feel right after the week they had endured. Getting hotel rooms sorted was messy. No proper room lists by design - less faff, straight to bed. We'd cleared it with the hotels after some back and forth, so it was pre-checked rooms, MOD90s on arrival, and scribbled fire lists. Rough, but it worked. No queues, beds straight away. I was in the biggest hotel (about 150 people). I'd worked a Premier Inn desk before, but nothing like that. Everyone was great - exhausted, but patient – and we got them all in without much chaos.

Next was one of the things we had been working on throughout, the dismount brief. As late as we could that morning, buses brought everyone back to the Crew Room facility at BZN (think NAAFI & big bar & big briefing room). Unfortunately, the Heathrow cohort had to be brought straight to BZN from their much later flight arrival at 0800 – a really tough decision for us that ultimately we had no other option for in the time frame. There they were met by the Mounting Cell writers, led by POWtr Peprell, to M&T them home. We aimed to keep the rest simple, but to make sure the right support was there. Chaplaincy (for PJHQ's standard dismount brief), TRiM, welfare, and leadership. Nothing over the top. Most people just wanted to get home, but it gave them what they needed if they wanted it and at least some small amount of decompression or 'firebreak' between what had happened and life at home. Some didn't get why they were there, others did, but after seeing the briefs most seemed to get it and were grateful.

Then came the next problem, getting 300+ people home. That's not easy even with a neat plan. Doing it when you're not entirely sure where everyone is going makes it more interesting. We worked from a mix of JPA checks and educated guesses to stay ahead. We organised buses to Portsmouth and Devonport but built in a fallback so people could sort their own travel if it was quicker or if they were going somewhere else. Northwood Travel Office and Navy Finance were solid here, flexing things so we could use the MOC UIN to make it work. The Mounting Cell picked up booking anything complicated, and just ground through it case by case. Support like this across the board made a big difference. MT from Brize, Excellent and Devonport all stepped in, including a last-minute change and diversion to Heathrow to pick up 70 pax. Brize Norton were spot on as well, coaches, space, support, no drama even when delays crept in (as they do).



PJHQ Staff Chaplain Ralph Barber (unusually chirpy for someone who had also slept in the BZN car park the night before) and the UKMCC Chaplain, Newton Ndlovu, happy to be home.

It took a long time though with even more issues after the briefs: the bag of a civilian contractor with a locator tag in it was at one point being chased down across the station by Dir P&T's WO to a hangar that it should not have been in; MT driver hours began to run out as we waited for the replanned (and of course delayed) second baggage flight to arrive, then when it did arrive, it still didn't have much of anyone's luggage on it. At one point the Passenger Handling Flt Lt, not quite understanding what she was stepping in to (the bar had been open a few hours by this point), came to explain where the baggage was and Cdr Drew had to start 'media handling' for her.

Eventually, we had to send the last buses to HMNBs, with many unfortunately just having to register what baggage hadn't arrived and go. And just when we thought it was about to be all over, a burst water main caused traffic to block access to all the roads around the rear gate at Brize, so taxis couldn't get in. That meant that the final evolution of the whole thing ended up being the boss giving the last few individuals a lift to Oxford station in his van.

As we were planning all this, policy written for peacetime really stood out. In some areas that meant following policy to the letter wasn't going to achieve what we needed. We flexed where we needed to: accommodation; travel; claims. Do what makes sense, keep it moving, look after people. That said, the week after, there was a potentially awkward follow-up call to REM, but they were good about it and agreed the decisions made in the heat of the moment at the time were the right ones.

It wasn't tidy. It changed constantly, felt slightly chaotic at times, and nobody got much sleep. At times it felt closer to a wartime footing than anything we're used to, not just because of the pace of decision making, but because this wasn't an exercise, there were real drones and missiles landing in the background driving it all. In that environment, policy, funding and support either caught up behind us or were consciously set aside when they got in the way. In that sense it provided valuable LfE for transition to war and the way we operate across MOC and P&T, and when it matters, the system can move at pace if people are prepared to lean in and make it happen. But it came together. In the end, it did what it needed to, got people home, and looked after them on the way.

LOGISTICS AT THE END OF THE WORLD

CPO (CS) Andrew Collins

Operating over 8,000 miles from the UK, the Royal Navy presence in the Falkland Islands provides a unique and demanding environment for logisticians. Far removed from the support networks typically available in the UK or alongside a Carrier Strike Group, logistics here is defined by isolation, resilience, and the ability to deliver consistent outputs in a challenging and often unpredictable setting.

The Mount Pleasant Complex (MPC) supports a Tri-Service population of approximately 1,000 personnel daily, with Royal Navy logisticians playing a vital role in enabling operational effectiveness across the islands. From feeding the force to maintaining supply chains across remote locations, the breadth of responsibility is significant and requires a coordinated, flexible approach.

At the heart of this effort is the Catering and Rations Flight (CRF), headed by CPOCS "Tiny" Collins, supported by POCS Jay Barber and LCS Joeli Tagicakibau. The team is responsible for the supply of food stores to sustain the entire population at MPC, ensuring that circa 1,000 personnel are fed daily. This is no small task given the logistical constraints of the South Atlantic. Stock is delivered via a combination of strategic air bridge and maritime resupply, requiring careful planning, forecasting, and stock management to ensure continuity of supply.

Beyond MPC, the CRF coordinates deliveries to 18 outstations across the Falkland Islands. These include four remote mountain sites, where access is limited and weather dependent. Deliveries to these locations often require helicopter underslung load operations, adding another layer of complexity to an already demanding supply chain. Ensuring that personnel in these isolated positions receive consistent and sufficient food provision is critical, not only for sustenance but also for morale.

The reach of the team extends beyond the Falkland Islands themselves. The team also supports Ascension Island, demonstrating the wider operational footprint of the unit, and has recently delivered short notice support to a deployed submarine visiting the region, highlighting the agility and responsiveness required in this theatre. In addition, Royal Navy logisticians provide ongoing support to the Falkland Islands patrol vessel, HMS MEDWAY, ensuring it remains sustained while operating in the South Atlantic.

Supporting this effort is a small but highly effective Supply Chain team, responsible for the procurement, storage, and distribution of a wide range of stores. From essential equipment to day-to-day consumables, the team ensures that units across MPC and beyond remain operationally capable. Working within a constrained and remote environment requires innovation, adaptability, and strong relationships with UK-based supply networks.

Equally important are the Writers, who provide the administrative backbone of the operation. From managing appraisals and documentation to ensuring compliance with policy and financial governance, their role is essential in maintaining the integrity and efficiency of the logistics function.

Royal Navy logisticians also contribute beyond traditional supply roles. At MPC, an AB MA is embedded within the Medical Centre, providing frontline healthcare support to the deployed population. In addition, 2 Leading Hands (Police) fulfil a dual role, supporting base security while also engaging with and assisting the local Falkland Islands community.

Alongside core outputs, there is a strong focus on improving the lived experience of personnel. Through proactive engagement and external funding opportunities, initiatives have been delivered to directly benefit those deployed. This includes securing funding to provide Garmin smartwatches to all Royal Navy personnel based in theatre, alongside several other welfare-led improvements aimed at enhancing morale, wellbeing, and day-to-day quality of life in a remote environment.

Despite its isolation, the Falkland Islands also offer a rewarding and memorable operational tour. Personnel can experience a unique and unspoilt environment, including witnessing penguins in their thousands, alongside a wide range of native wildlife. The islands are steeped in history, with opportunities to visit key battlefield sites and gain a deeper understanding of the 1982 conflict. For many, the ability to explore this distinctive landscape provides a valuable balance to the demands of operational life.

In a location where support is not readily available and delays can have significant consequences, the importance of getting logistics right cannot be overstated. The work conducted by Royal Navy personnel in the Falkland Islands is a clear demonstration of the branch's ability to deliver operational support anywhere in the world, no matter how remote.





STRATEGIC ENABLEMENT: ‘THE LAST DETERRENCE BEFORE WAR’

Lt Cdr Ben Samuel RN

As the UK faces its most demanding security environment since the Cold War, warfighting readiness is evolving. Deterrence now depends not only on forward combat power, but on the credible ability to mobilise, move, sustain and recover forces at scale from the Strategic Base[1]. While the SDR recognised the Strategic Base as a capability, but with several OpDefs, Op FORCEFUL reframes it as a deliberate action to get it.

At its heart, Op FORCEFUL recognises a central truth highlighted by recent analysis of Strategic Base Outload (SBO)[2]: At its core logistics is no longer a supporting function, but a decisive one. Delays or disruption in mobilisation can shape outcomes before combat begins. Adversaries recognise this and are likely to target logistics early – through cyber activity, disinformation, legal friction, workforce pressure, and disruption of civilian infrastructure. In logistics terms, delay is effect.

FROM VULNERABILITY TO DETERRENCE

Op FORCEFUL seeks to turn this vulnerability into deterrence. By developing, rehearsing, and demonstrating credible readiness, the UK signals commitment to both allies and adversaries. Linking Homeland Defence, NATO reinforcement, and National Resilience, it is recognised that strategic outload will occur in a congested and contested environment. The UK is inside the battlespace and the term ‘Home Bank’ should be retired.

Outlanding assumes suboptimal conditions. SBO will compete with civilian inload, including food, energy, and medical supply chains essential to national functioning. Even without interference, ports, rail, roads, and fuel systems will be strained. Our ability to deploy, sustain, and recover forces will be tested under these pressures.

Op FORCEFUL therefore prioritises resilience and recovery over efficiency, asking: how do we repair, recover, and continue the fight?

STRATEGIC ENABLEMENT: A LOGISTICS PERSPECTIVE

DSCOM supports Strategic Enablement within Op FORCEFUL, balancing finite resources to deploy, sustain, and recover UK forces as part of the NATO Force Model. This addresses key challenges: shipping constraints, reliance on civilian infrastructure, workforce fragility, and the need for national coordination.

Key areas of focus include:

- Building and testing a UK Recognised Sustainment Network (RSN).
- Identifying alternative ports, airfields, and railheads to reduce single points of failure (multi-nodal).
- Testing multiple transport modes, including commercial and charter options (multi-modal).
- Leveraging LogFAS[3] to develop multinational plans.
- Expanding cross-government and industry integration through Adaptive Capacity.

“Adaptive Capacity provides what I would describe as a “break glass” option. It is about understanding, in advance, what the private sector can provide across the sea, land, air, space and cyber domains: warehousing, storage and distribution, rail, shipping, airports, energy, and critically, the skilled workforce required to operate them”.
VAdm Kyte CB FCILT, CDLS.



Adaptive Capacity in action for Ex RHINO STORM

A PHASED APPROACH

Support to Strategic Enablement follows a phased approach: develop, rehearse, and demonstrate capability, each aligned to NATO exercises.

The **DEVELOP** phase focuses on designing C2, identifying dependencies, engaging government and industry, and testing concepts such as distributed ports and alternative airfields to expose early friction.

REHEARSE then stresses these systems at scale, deliberately challenging shipping availability, workforce constraints, and deployment flows.

Finally, **DEMONSTRATE** validates credible capability under realistic conditions, ensuring sustainment and recovery can function effectively, and proving the UK can operate as a nation under pressure while supporting NATO.

Exercise RHINO STORM 26 demonstrated Adaptive Capacity in action. Personnel were rapidly deployed with reduced reliance on airlift, avoiding up to seven flights and easing network pressure. Rail movement managed through NSPA improved cohesion and reduced delays, while an overnight sea crossing enabled 1,400 personnel to rest before onward movement.

TESTING FOR PRESSURE, NOT PERFECTION

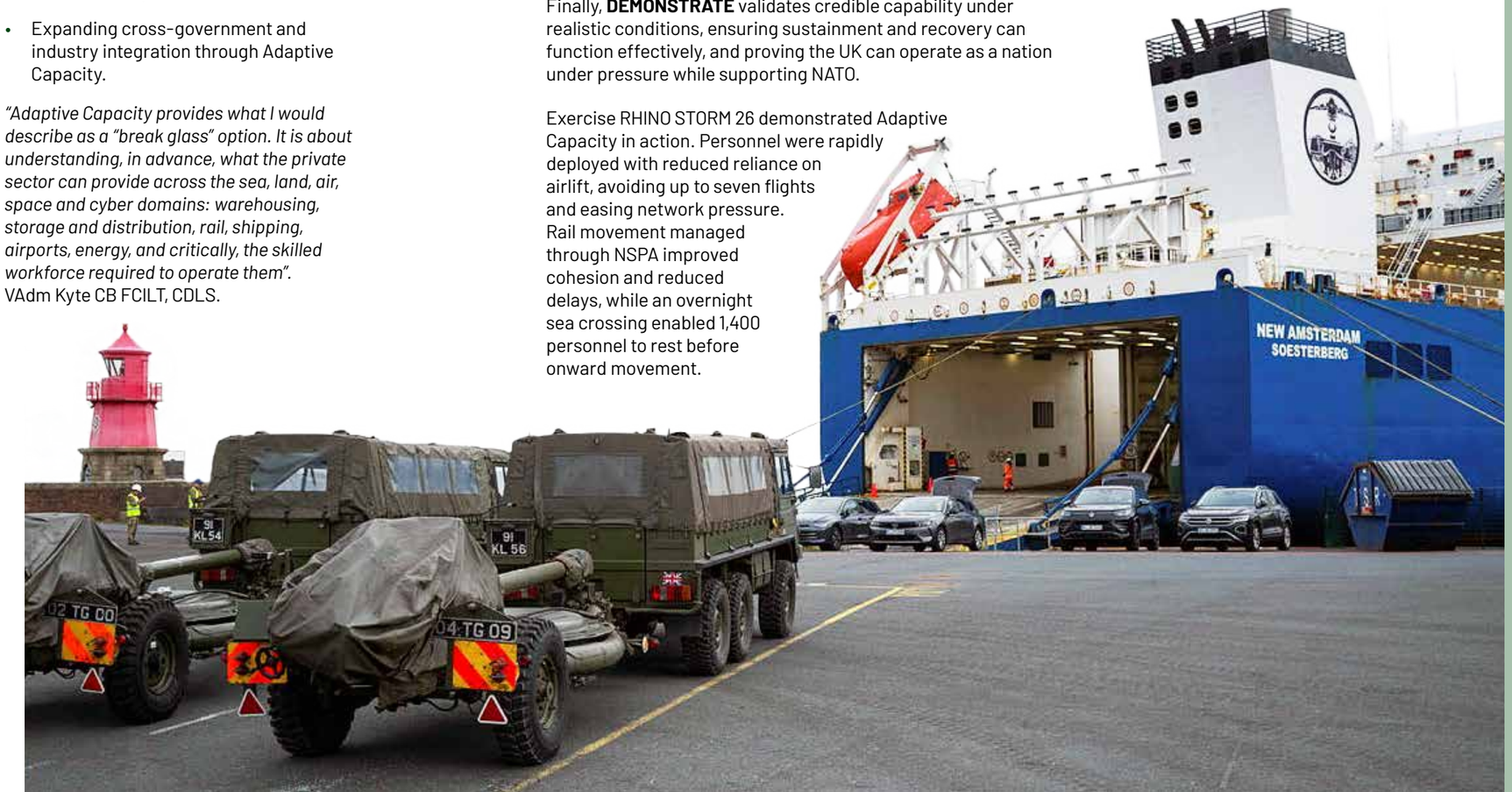
Op FORCEFUL prioritises testing under realistic, uncomfortable conditions. It assumes contested logistics, constrained resources, workforce pressure, and imperfect information. Success is defined by the ability to adapt, recover, and continue.

In doing so, SBO shifts from a background planning issue to a visible deterrent effect. A nation that can mobilise and sustain forces under pressure demonstrates credibility; one that cannot invite disruption.

A CALL TO LOGISTICIANS

Logisticians are central to this effort. Ideas and opportunities to test these concepts are encouraged. In future conflicts, logistics will be tested first, and readiness will be determined at the Strategic Base.

If you have an idea, raise it with DSCOM Plans, and you too will be part of building Warfighting Readiness and Resilience.



1 The Strategic Base is the UK network of warehousing, storage, movement, distribution and outload capabilities, including depots for munitions, fuel and vehicles and stocks and importantly for Defence, the ports of embarkation

2 A Strategic Base Outload is the simultaneous large-scale outload of stocks, materiel, vehicles, fuel, munitions and personnel at pace and scale from the strategic base.

3 NATO’s suite of software tools, supports critical J4, J3, and J5 functions, including deployment, Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM), sustainment planning, execution, and reporting.



ICE, ICE MAYBE

Lt James Devine RN and CPO(SC) Carl Harrison

250 miles inside the Arctic Circle at the northern coast of Alaska lies Deadhorse, home of oil rigs and the base for the US Navy's Arctic Submarine Laboratory (ASL). Every two years, ASL relocate from San Diego to Deadhorse to conduct the two-month long Operation Ice Camp, formally known as ICEX. NATO support to the operation comes from Australia, Canada, France, and the UK providing two logisticians from the Submarine Service along with a MET team. This provided an opportunity to develop logistics SQEP operating submarines at far reach, understanding the process involved in moving personnel and materiel, as well as the practicalities of sustaining in such a harsh environment, -40°C feels far colder than it sounds!





We arrived a week ahead of the planned start of Ice Camp. The initial efforts surrounded analysing Ice Floes which were tracked by satellite and Pathfinding flights to identify a suitable site. Once the site was agreed approximately 150 miles into the ice, three small planes flew three flights a day to deliver the kit needed to establish and sustain a camp which became home to 60 ASL staff, Servicepeople and scientists. Starlink system at Deadhorse and at Ice Camp allowed communication and co-ordination to ensure the right kit could get to the right place at the right time. Along with two Royal Canadian Navy logs personnel, James and Carl formed the core logs team with each person spending a week on the ice as the logistics co-ordinator. This entailed tracking incoming flights and the manifested equipment and personnel, requesting priority items needed at camp and daily reports to leadership on food endurance, water and fuel levels.

The main effort of Operation Ice Camp is to support submarine operations and Arctic Warfare tactical development. ASL staff and camp personnel formed a field party of three personnel led by an ASL Field Party Leader. The aim was to discover a potential submarine surfacing site in the Beaufort Sea. We took a helicopter flight three miles away from Ice Camp and landed on a remote area of Ice. We used a 2-inch auger to determine the thickness of the ice which needed to be between 2ft and 3ft thickness. We found the perfect surfacing site so created a 10-inch hole in the ice and secured a bladder kit in the ice which laid out a low frequency pinger. This is used by the dived submarine as a reference point to a safe surfacing site. Once the bladder kit was installed, we marked out a 50ft cross so it was identifiable by air to enable helicopters to visibly see where the submarine would be surfacing and to enable the surfacing field party team to stay well clear of the area until it was safe to approach.





Alongside this, scientists from Alaska University, MIT, Tokyo University alongside multiple defence contractors arrived. All of their kit required logging, moving and tracking through Deadhorse, up to the ice and back again. Scientists it turns about, are very, very precious about their equipment and required a surprising amount of tactful direction!

This camp also provided an opportunity to test clothing and equipment in order to make recommendations for a SUBFLOT Mission Specific Package which will be used by Royal Navy submarines in the High North, an increasingly contested area.

Fast forward four weeks and operations are complete, it's time to de-mob and return all kit and personnel to Deadhorse to be dried, cleaned and stored at ASL's hangar ready for next winter. This was a week-long evolution and following this the team flew down to Anchorage for a much needed beer!





FEEDING THE FIGHT IN THE HIGH NORTH

WO1 (CS) Duncan Thornhill

FIELD CATERING TROOP AND 45 COMMANDO LOGISTICS COMPANY – WINTER DEPLOYMENT 2026

Nobody deploys to Norway talking about the catering. A few weeks later, everyone is.

When temperatures drop below -20°C, a hot meal becomes more than something to look forward to; it becomes part of how people get through the day. During Winter Deployment 26 (WD26), while Commando Force personnel operated across the High North, the chefs of Field Catering Troop (FCT) and 45 Commando Logistics Company were fighting their own battle against demand, distance, and the Arctic environment.

Operating in the Arctic changes the basics. Food is not simply a comfort or a routine part of the day; it is vital to sustaining people in one of the most demanding environments faced by UK Armed Forces. The cold drains energy, the working days are long, and keeping personnel properly fuelled quickly becomes an operational issue.

Field Catering Troop, Commando Logistic Regiment.





Over the past year, FCT and 45 Commando Logistics Company supported a six-month Winter Deployment and more than 40 Commando Force exercises and operations, including TRIDENT PATHWAY, COMMANDO PHOENIX 25, CATAMARAN, COPTIC WHISPER, NEPTUNE STORM, ARCTIC TIDE, and OP VENTUS. Yet during WD26, the size and nature of the task became impossible to ignore.

FEEDING 1,400 FROM A GALLEY BUILT FOR 400

At Camp Viking, the largest of the Arctic outstations, the numbers alone tell the story. The galley was designed to feed approximately 400 personnel on a Scandinavian diet. During WD26, it was routinely required to support more than 1,400 people while delivering a British Operational Diet of around 5,000 calories per day.

Every meal service required planning, coordination, and determination. Queues regularly stretched outside the galley, meal periods ran for hours, and demand never really eased. Yet the meals kept coming, allowing deployed personnel to return from training, refuel, and go again.

To put the scale into perspective, Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers routinely feed similar numbers, but with two significantly larger galleys and around three times the number of chefs. With far fewer resources, FCT delivered three substantial meals a day, alongside large quantities of bagged meals and hot-boxed catering support during CETUS ENABLER 25 and CETUS 26.

By the end of the deployment, Camp Viking had become one of the busiest operational feeding locations in the Royal Navy. The volume of supplies was staggering: since November 2025, personnel at Camp Viking have consumed approximately 32,000 litres of milk and 21.6 tonnes of meat, enough to weigh more than two BvS10 Viking vehicles.

TURNING A SCHOOL INTO A GALLEY

Not every challenge was measured in numbers. At Sørreisa, the team from 45 Commando Logistics Company arrived at a disused school with no functioning catering facility. What they did have was a requirement to feed personnel, four Operational Field Catering Systems, and enough determination to make it work.





Fine Dining for high-profile Defence Engagements is another very important part of what FCT has provided during WD26.

Within a short period, the team transformed the space into a functioning galley capable of supporting deployed forces. It was a practical reminder that logistics rarely waits for perfect conditions; more often, success comes from making a working galley out of what they had.

LIFE ON THE EDGE OF THE DEPLOYMENT

Further north, Helligskogen presented a different challenge. Unlike Camp Viking, scale was not the issue; isolation was. Supporting a camp of around 65 personnel, a small catering team delivered the same standards expected across the deployment while operating from one of the most remote outstations in theatre.

Together, Camp Viking, Sørreisa, and Helligskogen demonstrated the breadth of capability required of Commando Force chefs. In a single deployment, they may be feeding more than a thousand personnel, building a galley from scratch, or operating independently at a remote Arctic outstation.

MORE THAN OPERATIONAL FEEDING

While feeding deployed personnel remained the primary task, FCT also supported high-profile Defence Engagement activities during WD26, including catering for senior government visits by the Secretary of State for Defence and the Foreign Secretary.

Switching from large-scale operational feeding to formal dining and engagement events required a different skill set. Whether serving personnel returning from the field or supporting distinguished visitors, the expectation remained the same: deliver to standard, whatever the environment.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Operational capability is often measured by what happens on the training area, on the flight deck, or at the point of delivery, but every exercise and deployment depends on people working out of sight to keep the force moving.

Long before first light and long after others had finished for the day, the chefs of Field Catering Troop and 45 Commando Logistics Company were preparing meals, managing supplies, solving problems, and ensuring thousands of personnel remained fed, motivated, and capable of performing in demanding Arctic conditions.

Winter Deployment 26 showcased the Commando Force's ability to operate in the High North. It also demonstrated an enduring truth of military operations: people perform best when they are properly sustained.

For those who worked in the galleys throughout the deployment, success was measured in every hot meal served, every challenge overcome, and every person able to focus on the mission because someone else had taken care of the basics. That's logistics at its best.

G'DAY, MATE!
A TRI-LATERAL APPROACH TO SUBMARINE SUSTAINMENT

Lt Cdr H Gallaher, Lt Cdr C Barnett, Lt Cdr A Barley

With the AUKUS agreement gaining traction, it was announced in the autumn of 2025 that an Astute-class submarine would deploy to HMAS STIRLING to conduct a maintenance period supported by Australia and the USA. As part of AUKUS, this visit was an opportunity for the UK to demonstrate its commitment and assist in the generation of a nuclear-powered submarine force. Why is it important? Twelve SSN-AUKUS submarines will be built in Barrow-in-Furness, the investment in UK industry will be significant, and we will simultaneously gain a strategic base in the Far East to bolster our international engagement and tactical reach. The benefits are both near and far.

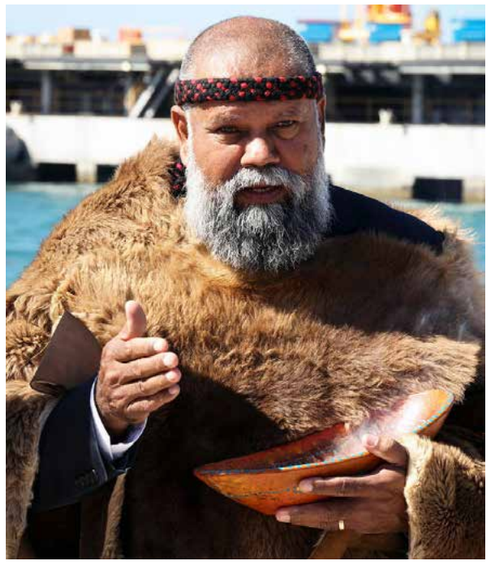
One small problem: the unit needing to deploy to the other side of the world was already deployed, and without communications. Its current endurance profile, material state and stock inventory were all unknown. The Submarine Flotilla regularly stages stores ahead of a unit, but usually in ports with a good connection to high-traffic MILAT locations, rather than the deep south. With parts of the four D's missing, this quickly became the logistician's version of a perfect storm. SUBFLOT OPLOGS utilised a catalogue of demand history, averaging around 9300 annual demands against a >5000-line CAL to generate a suitable pool of equipment and consumables.





This could both sustain a unit and be compared with what was available in Australia to enable contracts and suppliers for future purchases. Submarine stores and consumables are a jigsaw of non-compatible consignments, leading to a selection of Sea Freight, MILAir (thanks to HIGHMAST's RSC, an opportunity to exploit!), CivAir and, eventually, charter flight.

On the SUBFLOT team's arrival in country, familiarisation between three nations speaking three versions of the same language became an interesting evolution. Identifying policies, processes, laws, agreements and organisations became an increasingly challenging dockyard bimble, albeit one with a very useful outcome. We were fortunate to build strong ties with the Joint Logistics Unit – West (Warehousing and Logistics Support), Submarine Rotational Force – West (Flotilla) and Fleet Logistics Support Element – Submarines (WLSG/Stores Support), allowing us to embed and understand how the UK could, as far as possible, loop straight into their supply chain.





HMS ANSON deployed from Faslane on Op HIGHFIN in January 2026, making her way across the world to add the final piece to the puzzle. Her arrival was welcomed by military and political seniors from all three nations and delivered across all pillars of interoperability in the maintenance arena. The highlight of interoperability was the immediate merge of SUBFLOT caterers into the dining facilities, where our submarine caterers supported official functions and routine catering for RAN personnel, showcasing their talents. For ANSON, emergent maintenance still required a steady stream of supporting materiel from the UK, with CivAir becoming the prime mover for everything that could be transported. The only thing that could possibly make things more complex would be a war.

As the situation in the Strait of Hormuz began to intensify, so did the preparations to re-role and be ready to go at very short notice. In total, it took four days to transition from shut-down demonstrative maintenance to Harbour Stations. This used a multinational supply chain to its limits and also relieved the local supermarkets of their potatoes. ANSON sailed very early on a Monday morning, to the surprise, but equally good understanding, of the Australians. It provided an unexpected example of how an expeditionary and global submarine service can deliver the Astute-class submarine worldwide.



With a slightly shorter, yet successful, maintenance demonstration in Australia completed, the challenge of RSC became more complex. Many items going back were required to feed maintenance for other submarines in the UK, and with the supply chain network effectively broken in the Middle East, around 75 personnel and a multitude of stores needed to be re-routed back to the UK. For many, this meant experiencing a trip home 'the long way round'.

The AUKUS programme now moves towards its next stage, where an Astute-class submarine will base and operate from HMAS STIRLING from as early as next year. There will be opportunities across the N4 world for personnel to work in roles in Australia, and AUKUS will only grow in the coming years. So keep an eye out, pack your thongs (that's flip-flops) and be ready to join in on the beach barbie.



MEET THE TEAM:
NAAFI RECRUITS SUPPORTING THE ROYAL NAVY'S CATERING OPERATIONS

Simon Tear
Galley Watch Supervisor (Chef)

"The thing I always loved about life at sea is that no two days are ever the same."

For Simon, a career at sea was always the ambition.
Starting out in a local fish and chip shop aged 13, Simon went on to train at catering college before building an impressive career across London restaurants, luxury superyachts and international cruise ships.
Now, as one of NAAFI's first Galley Watch Supervisors, he's returned to life at sea, bringing decades of experience to Royal Navy catering operations.

"The camaraderie is unlike anything else. Everyone shares the same experience and that creates a really strong bond."



Simon enjoying a NAAFI Break
The Bridge Deck, Whitley

LIFE ONBOARD

Working alongside Royal Navy personnel has been one of the highlights of the role for Simon.

One of Simon's proudest moments came when returning to Portsmouth after deployment.

"Manning the rail as we arrived back into harbour and seeing family and friends waiting on the dockside was something I'll never forget."

ABOUT THE ROLE

Galley Watch Supervisors bring experienced civilian catering expertise into Royal Navy operations.

Through its recruitment partnership with the Royal Navy, NAAFI has helped introduce skilled hospitality professionals into a role that strengthens catering capability, supports crews at sea and brings fresh experience from across the industry.

LOOKING AHEAD

Nine months into the role, Simon has already supported major deployments, integrated into multiple catering functions and visited locations many chefs never get the opportunity to experience.
For him, the role is about far more than cooking.
"It's an experience you'll never forget. Come in with an open mind, be prepared to learn and make the most of every opportunity."

"The NAAFI chefs have become a key part of the team. Their skill levels are exceptionally high, they bring a brilliant work ethic and have made a significant impact onboard."
CPO Geldart - Royal Navy

"Get me ten more."
WO J Barnes - Royal Navy

NAAFI



New **coveralls** have been introduced to incorporate **more inclusive sizing** across all three services.

NSNs Available

1. White action coverall: 8415-99-350-3871 to 8415-99-350-3895.
2. FR Antistatic AMR Coverall: 8415-99-565-6487 to 8415-99-565-6511.
3. Non-Op FR Coverall Navy: 8415-99-587-4608 to 8415-99-587-4632.
4. Op FR Coverall Navy: 8415-99-665-1996 to 8415-99-665-2020.

NEW
PTI SHORTS



New **PTI shorts** have been introduced after a review across all three services. **RM are entitled to red shorts** whilst the **RN are entitled to black shorts**.

NSNs Available

1. RN black: 8410-99-238-3832 to 8410-99-238-3838.
2. RM red: NSN's 8410-99-238-3839 to 8410-99-238-3845.

NEW
ECW THREE-LAYER GLOVE SYSTEM



Glove, Contact

Glove, Close Combat (Cold)

Glove, Mitten, 3 Finger Thermal

A new **three-layer glove system** has been introduced. These are to be worn together **for use in the High North** to temperatures down to -30°C. Sizes range from 6 - 11.

NSNs Available

ECW Three-Layer Gloves: 8415-99-285-6752 to 8415-99-258-6774.

BRITISH DEFENCE STAFF UNITED STATES

BRITISH NAVAL STAFF, BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON

Cdr Gordon Clark RN

Despite what might seem like relentless headlines about the United States, the UK-US defence relationship remains as close and important as ever. More than 900 UK Service personnel are based across the United States, working alongside American counterparts in NATO headquarters, US military organisations, UK units and exchange appointments. Among them are Royal Navy logisticians serving in a remarkable variety of roles, from operational support and capability development to strategic planning and international engagement. The following accounts offer a glimpse into some of their experiences, highlighting not only the breadth and depth of their professional employment, but also the unique opportunities that life in the United States provides for travel, cultural immersion, and personal and professional development.

NATO ALLIED COMMAND TRANSFORMATION

CPO (Wtr) Lucy Gibson

I started my overseas assignment to HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) – NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) based in Norfolk, Virginia, USA in March 2025. My professional role is Staff Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Simon Asquith, CB OBE and Office Manager to the Office of COS which comprises a team of 8 officers between OF2-OF5 and 2 Ratings at OR6.

My responsibilities range from managing the Chief of Staff's diary; his UK admin (Travel, Leave, Expense Claims and LSA/LOA Allowances on duty travel, Respite and GYH Overseas warrants and Appraisals where he is the 2RO) including his own SOAR; NATO and UK Hospitality requests; Event Management of High-Profile Visits of 3* and above who have an office call with the COS (including the UK Fleet Commander and 1SL) and organising OCOS Socials including quarterly team building sessions, team members leaving functions and the office Christmas Party.

The additional roles I volunteer for are Treasurer to the International Enlisted and Civilians Mess and Secretary to the UK RN Divisional Meetings.

This assignment has given me the fantastic opportunity to work within an international environment of US and Other NATO Armed Forces and International Civilians and Contractors. This has enabled me to build collaborative working relationships with ranks from OR4-OF9 to support current NATO tasking. On a personal level I have used this opportunity to broaden my understanding of other NATOs military service and culture.

Last year I had the fantastic experience of representing the UK Armed Forces within the NATO ACT team during the New York Veterans Day parade on 5th Avenue. Being in the US has given me great travel opportunities during my Christmas and Easter leave periods. Spending time visiting all the states on the East Coast and this Christmas, a road trip across the old Route 66 (from the East to West Coast) and staying in Las Vegas.

Living in the USA did bring its challenges at first during my initial move to Norfolk. Within my first 2 weeks I needed to find somewhere to live and deal with the contractual paperwork and funding; open a bank account; set up utilities; deal with the delivery of MOD furniture into a 2nd Floor apartment and source transportation!





However, despite the trepidation of this situation before starting my role, with the support of a sponsor from the UK Armed Forces who was already working in NATO ACT, the BDSUS Pers Admin Team at the Embassy in Washington and the advice from my predecessor, WO1Wtr Nichola Sweet, the transition was less daunting and actually felt exciting for the adventures that were to come during my 3 year assignment.

LAW OF THE SEA DEPARTMENT, THE PENTAGON

Lt Cdr Jamie Brotherton RN



The Strategic Leaders International Course is a four-week in-resident course designed to build partner capacity by offering senior military leaders (OF5-OF7 level) and senior government officials of partner nations new perspectives, methodologies, and opportunities for thinking strategically and for designing strategies that successfully address complex challenges. Strategic Leaders are introduced to methods and processes for Design Thinking, Systems Thinking, and Public Interest Communications and receive instructions from professionals who currently use these methodologies and processes in the public and private sectors. During the course, Strategic Leaders will apply the aforementioned methodologies in hands-on exercises in various case studies and in a capstone exercise designed against a current strategic challenge relevant to student countries.

PARTICIPATING NATIONS

To date, senior leaders have attended from Albania, Angola, Barbados, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Seychelles, Sao Tome and Principe, Thailand, Tunisia and Zambia.

COURSE INSTRUCTION

This course is aimed at senior leaders predominantly from the Global South that the U.S. Military and State Department identify as future leaders of their respective nations' militaries.

Consequently, NAVSCIATTS (Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School) under the Special Operations Command umbrella provides the training and funding for the course at their home base in NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, in order to develop leading-edge strategic thinking and foster enduring international relationships in an increasingly complex world.

ROYAL NAVY INVOLVEMENT

Lt Cdr Jamie Brotherton, the Royal Navy Legad seconded to the National Security Division of the Office of the Judge Advocate General in the Pentagon, lectures on the course three times a year. This involves conducting high-level discussions with the senior leaders on subjects including International Relations, Law of War, International Human Rights Law and Law of the Sea. In 2025 alone, 61 leaders from 37 countries attended the course including seven OF7s/SES/RAdms. On completion, the leaders are examined on their knowledge and ability to apply international law in scenario-based exercises, the results of which are reported to Congress as part of its enduring commitment to this mission.

HEAD NAVY LEGAL

During the most recent iteration of the course in May/June 2026, given the close partnership and valued tuition provided by the Royal Navy during the Strategic Leaders International Course, Commodore Matthew Rees, Head Navy Legal, has been invited to observe the final capstone exercise and deliver the final strategic leadership panel alongside VAdm Kilrain, USN at the SLIC participants' graduation.

AIR AND SPACE WARFARE CENTRE USA SUPPORT FLIGHT

Lt Nart Farouqa RN

Based at Edwards Air Force Base in southern California but operating across a geographically dispersed footprint, the Air and Space Warfare Centre (ASWC) USA Support Flight provides the essential support functions that enable UK personnel and units to deliver operational outputs throughout the United States. Since its formation, the Flight has developed into a high-output organisation delivering personnel, welfare, security, logistics, engineering oversight and communications support across multiple locations.

The team's role is diverse, spanning everything from personnel administration and welfare to cyber, communications and security support. Acting as the in-country welfare focal point, the Flight provides pastoral support to Service personnel and their families, helping navigate both UK and US systems and ensuring access to appropriate support networks when required.

Personnel administration forms another key function, with the team managing arrivals, departures and routine HR processes that allow personnel to transition smoothly into and out of overseas assignments.

Alongside this, the Flight provides security advice and assurance for UK personnel and assets, acting as a focal point for security-related enquiries and ensuring compliance with policy and risk-management requirements.

The Support Flight also delivers specialist Communications and Information Systems (CIS) support, including cyber protection activities, cryptographic support and assistance with operational testing and evaluation. These capabilities help maintain secure and resilient communications across the ASWC enterprise.

Supporting personnel spread across multiple time zones and locations presents unique challenges. Balancing UK and US processes while providing consistent, responsive support requires flexibility, initiative and strong teamwork. Although much of its work takes place behind the scenes, the USA Support Flight plays a vital role in sustaining ASWC activity and ensuring personnel remain supported, connected and operationally effective wherever they are based.

KEY METRICS

Emails Processed	Visits Hosted	Miles Travelled	Locations Visted	Deployments Supported	Courses Attended	Training Delivered
42,918	41	276,240 (11 laps of Earth)	13+	3	6	13

J1/WELFARE

Claims Processed	Claims Value	New Values	Leavers	Personnel Supported	Compassionate Cases	Benevolent Fund Grants Approved
2,893	£3.16m	37	29	140	12	4

J2 FOREIGN VISITOR REQUESTS

500 Requests (100%)

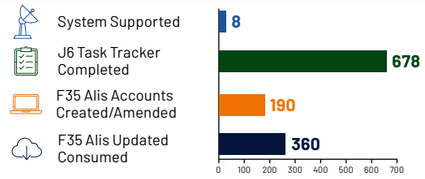
FOREIGN VISITORS REQUESTS OVERSEEN

J4 ASSET ACCOUNTING

45m

of ASWC equipment mustered and accounted for on MJDI after 10 years of unofficial local accounting across multiple locations.

J6 SYSTEMS & SUPPORT



MAJOR PROJECTS COMPLETED

- ✓ Project OPTIMA
- ✓ MFA Rollout
- ✓ Modnet Locker Install
- ✓ F35 TR3 Kit Induction
- ✓ MPS Rollout
- ✓ Creech AFB J6 Kit Removal
- ✓ Window 11 Laptop Roll Out: 192
- ✓ Move & Track App
- ✓ Education Review
- ✓ Welfare Amalgamation
- ✓ Local Handbooks
- ✓ SharePoint Page
- ✓ TRiM Plan
- ✓ School Closure Support
- ✓ Disaster Plan

THEATER UNDERSEA SURVEILLANCE COMMAND, VIRGINIA BEACH

LWtr Lex Underdown

Professionally, the LWTR position is both fast-paced and incredibly varied. You are responsible for the logistical heartbeat of the unit, managing everything from move and track data to coordinating the arrival of new personnel and arranging complex travel bookings. The operational environment is tight-knit and efficient. The executive team consists of the Senior British Officer (SBO), currently a Wing Commander, the Executive Officer (XO), a Lieutenant Commander who serves as your 2RO, and the Executive Warrant Officer (EWO), a Warrant Officer Class 1 acting as your 1RO. This compact structure means your work has an immediate impact. Furthermore, the role involves attending US-led meetings that frequently include our Canadian counterparts. Working within TUSC is deeply rewarding, offering an unparalleled opportunity to gain experience on how the US command operates and firsthand insight into their strategic objectives.

Beyond the office, living and working in Virginia Beach provides an exceptional quality of life. The local climate features distinct seasons, with hot summers and cold winters, alongside spectacular summer thunderstorms. It feels pleasantly familiar to the UK, but with noticeably better weather overall. Financially, the overseas allowance package is a major benefit, providing excellent support for individuals and families. Personnel live off base, with a wide variety of housing options available to suit any personal situation. Fitness and recreation are highly supported, with access to on-base gym facilities across three different military stations. Alternatively, many people choose to purchase monthly memberships at local commercial gyms to suit their specific training needs.

The geography of Virginia Beach caters to every lifestyle, whether you prefer a fast or slow pace of life. The region boasts miles of beautiful beaches, an abundance of bars and restaurants, and extensive shopping districts. For those interested in adventurous training or outdoor pursuits, the coastal landscape provides the perfect backdrop. Additionally, Virginia Beach serves as an ideal launchpad for travel. There are endless opportunities to fly or drive to neighbouring states for leave. Taking advantage of this is highly recommended, with Florida being a particular highlight for an unforgettable American road trip.



On a personal level, this draft has been transformative. The flexibility of the role and the superb local facilities have allowed me to pursue my passion for competitive bodybuilding at the highest level. Whilst in the US, between September 2024 and November 2025, I competed in 18 bodybuilding competitions. During my US debut within the OCB federation, I earned two Pro Cards. This built upon my previous success in the UK between 2022 and 2024, where I achieved six Pro Cards with the FMC federation in 2024. Living here also brought me incredibly close to earning an IFBB Pro Card, the most prestigious pro card in the worldwide bodybuilding community, across the US stages.

Of course, adjusting to a new role and moving to a different country brings its own unique set of challenges. Navigating unfamiliar systems and adapting to a different military culture takes time, but no draft or country is entirely without its hurdles. The rewards of this role vastly outweigh any temporary friction. I highly recommend a US draft to anyone looking to push their boundaries, regardless of the specific location. It is an unforgettable experience, and if the opportunity ever opens again in the future, I would put my name in the pot without a second thought.

FROM OPDEFS TO CASREPS: A LOGISTICS OFFICER'S FIRST YEAR ON THE SAN DIEGO WATERFRONT

Lt Cdr Lauren Wildish RN

As I look out my window across Naval Base San Diego, I still find the sheer scale of the United States Navy (USN) awe-inspiring. As an Exchange Officer stepping into the role of Director of the Logistics Support Center (LSC), my first year has been a masterclass in operational tempo and learning new acronyms. With around 65 homeported ships, including 3 aircraft carriers and over 20,000 military personnel in this base alone, the footprint is staggering. I quickly discovered that the USN loves acronyms just as much as the RN, but the terminology is distinctly different: an OPDEF is a CASREP, a STOROB is a CANAB, and a Career Manager is a Detailer, to name a few.

The USN Supply Corps is also structured quite differently. The 3 primary enlisted branches consist of Culinary Specialists, Logistics Specialists (our Supply Chain equivalent), and Retail Specialists; an entire branch dedicated to their NAAFI equivalent, laundry, and barbering services. Meanwhile, Medical and Writers do not fall under the Supply Corps at all. Needless to say, it was a steep learning curve to begin with. The diverse, multi-disciplinary team of USN personnel and civilians I look after covers everything from direct logistics support, provisions, and the onboard 'Navy Cash' system, to training, advice and guidance on food management and retail services.

Photo Credit: Roy Guillermo USN



Photo Credit: Frank Valdez USN



Despite these structural differences, I have been struck by the commonality of issues across both our Navies; the friction points usually boil down to finance and people. With this inevitability comes the impact on logistics through, for instance, gaps in the supply chain. To combat this and manage the sheer size of the Fleet, the USN employs some fascinating efficiencies that offer valuable food for thought for the RN. Under their 'Quality of Life' initiative for example, which aims to reduce the workload for sailors in ships, the on-load and off-load of food provisioning and material handling can be supported by contractors. Requesting civilian labour support to on-load all food for a ship trying to reach, say, 90 days endurance, is a real win! This is an incredible force multiplier if about to deploy and frees up the Ship's Company to do other important preps. Additionally, another part of my team runs the 'Global Distance Support Center,' providing 24/7, 365-day call and email support to track stores through comprehensive access to all Supply Chain related software – an incredibly useful service.

The USN truly possesses a global presence. Fleet Logistics Center (FLC) San Diego is just one of eight FLCs, many of which also maintain several 'Over-the-Horizon' sites. Throughout Operation EPIC FURY, I saw first-hand why permanent overseas support is absolutely essential. Simultaneously supporting the logistics for all U.S. Naval forces in the region is no mean feat, demonstrating the power of forward-deployed supply chains.

My favourite part about the job, other than living in California with practically year-round sunshine(!), is my weekly interaction with the Fleet. Having the chance to get on board Nimitz-class aircraft carriers, Wasp-class amphibious assault ships, San Antonio-class amphibious transport docks, and Zumwalt-class guided missile destroyers amongst others, to meet with Supply Corps Department Heads and their teams has been very insightful. It is the best way to truly understand their issues and how we as the Logistics Support Center can best support them. I also have the privilege of briefing incoming department heads preparing for their first SUPPO (Supply Officer) tour, as well as delivering pre-deployment briefs for departing warships, including Carrier Strike and Amphibious Readiness Groups, heading to 7th Fleet (Far East) and 5th Fleet (Middle East).

Being fully welcomed into the Supply Corps community and supporting the provision of direct waterfront support to the USN has been a privilege and a true career highlight. As I look ahead to the remainder of my tour, I look forward to continuing my professional evolution, tackling the logistical challenges that invariably come with supporting a Fleet of this size and sharing best practices. Ultimately, this experience has reinforced to me that while at the tactical level our terminology and branch structures may differ, the seamless interoperability and deep cooperation between the RN and the USN remains an incredibly important strategic asset.

NAVIGATING NATO LOGISTICS: A JUNIOR OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVE ON COLD RESPONSE

SLt Imogen White

Receiving my assignment order to COMUKSTRFOR, I wasn't sure whether the career manager had accidentally stepped on his keyboard or in fact assigned me to my first job post BLOC. But nothing says you're joining a 2* HQ like turning up nervously at the RN Warfighting Centre in your No1s on Day 1 and being let in by a passing Commodore. Introductions aside, I was quickly thrown into the throes of preparing to deploy the entire HQ to Bergen a month later to conduct Exercise DYNAMIC MARINER as part of COLD RESPONSE 26 (CORE26). This NATO mission rehearsal was designed to test how allied forces would respond to a hypothetical threat from a fictitious adversary, Murinus, on Norway's Arctic border.



PREPARING FOR DEPLOYMENT

Once I'd got my head round the exercise, it was time to understand how we, CSF HQ, fit into the NATO planning process. While the Norwegian 3* organisation controlled the joint space, command of the land, air, and maritime components was delegated to their respective 2* commanders. For the Maritime Component Command (MCC), this was Rear Admiral Mark Anderson CBE.



'The Tent'

As expected in a HQ predominantly focused on planning, there are Warfare Officers a plenty. However, as part of the N1/N4 team, our role was to provide the logistics input to the planning process, ensuring that 1* Task Group Commanders (CTGs) had the support they needed to keep their units operational. Group Logistics Commanders (GLCs) oversee the tactical sustainability picture for the units in their Task Group, coordinating RAS schedules, and ensuring the delivery of stores for defect rectification. At the operational (2*) level, discussions focus on the viability of Task Groups to achieve their missions and, ultimately, the Taskforce's ability to deliver its desired effect.

CHALLENGES IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

With real world events impacting the commitment of units to the mission rehearsal, the biggest challenge we experienced was the out-chop of real assets and replacement by paper assets – not usually too much of an issue in the logs world, until the asset in question is an Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment (AOR) ship…

The exercise also introduced me to the complexities of NATO systems and processes, such as LOGFAS (Logistics Functional Area Services), and the intricacies of a HQ battle rhythm. While initially overwhelming, these systems began to make sense as the mission rehearsal progressed. However, some aspects, like the art of a paper RAS of a safeguard ship, remain a mystery to me.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN N1/N4 OFFICER

A 2* HQ to a mere sproggy subby seems like a foreign land, so in an attempt to demystify the top floor of the Warfighting Centre, a typical day in my life on deployment looks a little bit like this. The days are bookended by logs huddles to understand new developments, set priorities and assign tasks in line with the wider battle rhythm. Between these, the morning is spent primarily working with Operational Planning Teams (OPTs), which draw in representatives from each pillar and liaison officers to add the meat to the bones with plans. These efforts culminated in the production of Operational Staff Work (OSW) – such as Warning Orders, Fragmentary Orders (FragOs) and Concepts of Operations (CONOPS) for our subordinate Task Group Commanders. No operational day is complete without the Daily CUB which punctuated every afternoon. In between the various meetings with our 1Up, we prepared for the recovery of the HQ back to the UK upon completion of the mission rehearsal.

Despite the long days, intensive battle rhythm and fast-paced OSW production, we did enjoy some downtime in Bergen, allowing for some parkrun tourism for the keen runners amongst us, followed by a fantastic run ashore for the entire HQ.



Parkrun Tourism in Bergen

REAL-LIFE SUPPORT AND CULTURAL INSIGHTS

As well as the 'for exercise' aspect of the deployment, we as the N1/N4 team organised the real-life support (RLS) for the Battlestaff, who are typically used to working out of the comfort of the RN Warfighting Centre. Deploying to Bergen provided an opportunity to understand how other services and nations operate. To remind us we were in fact on deployment and not in our comfortable Warfighting Centre, we ate all meals in a tent on top of a building (albeit a state-of-the-art Norwegian tent, equipped with LED lights). Despite our novel eating surrounds, the welcome, gym facilities and food provided by our Norwegian hosts was nothing short of exceptional; and none of us were going to complain about the fact Norwegians find food waste offensive meaning unlimited RTB was not only accepted but encouraged! I experienced the joys of MILAT, including the RAF's impeccable dedication to arriving early, deploying to Brize Norton at midnight for our 7am flight!

REFLECTIONS

Despite some slightly less enjoyable firsts, my first foray into the joint and NATO world of logistics has been incredibly insightful, and this mission rehearsal has highlighted how the knowledge from both oppos from other services and other nations can knit together to inform effective planning for warfighting. Our Norwegian colleagues can help us to understand the environment and terrain – both the opportunities it offers and challenges it poses. When integrated with the knowledge from our RM, Army and RAF colleagues on timings, capabilities and advantages, ideas become fleshed out plans and the benefit from a diverse Battlestaff becomes apparent.

The COMUKSTRFOR N1/N4 team, comprising a mix of RN and Army personnel, exemplifies the joint approach to logistics. As a Sub-Lieutenant (SO3 N1/N4 B), I worked alongside a Commander (ACOS), Lieutenant Commander (DACOS), Lieutenant (SO3 N1/N4 A), Warrant Officer 2 (SC), and an Army Major (Land Logs). From navigating the complexities of a 2* HQ to understanding the nuances of multinational collaboration, this mission rehearsal has ensured my first couple of months off course have been anything but dull. Whilst the joint/NATO space can be confusing at first, with such a diverse team there's always something to be learnt. For anyone stepping into this environment, my advice is simple: embrace the challenge, seek out the expertise of those around you, and always remember… N4 wins the war.

STRONGER TOGETHER: INTEGRATING US NAVY PERSPECTIVE INTO RN OPERATIONAL LOGISTICS TRAINING

LT George E. May, USN

On 11 January 2026, I arrived at Worthy Down to begin a unique assignment as the only permanently stationed United States Navy Supply Officer on site. My prior exposure to the Royal Navy had been limited, largely shaped by time spent alongside a Royal Navy submariner engineer at the US Navy Nuclear Power School in Charleston, South Carolina. Transitioning into a new logistics system initially felt daunting; however, the timing of my arrival proved fortuitous.

Just one week later, Exercise Maritime Integration, better known as Op Logs Week, commenced. Leading this exercise would be one of the key outputs of my new role. The exercise offers a valuable opportunity to merge LO courses at every level and available SR career courses, to conduct logistics planning. It also provides opportunity to engage with a range of experienced guest speakers and subject matter experts from across the logistics community. It provided me an ideal introduction to how the RN approaches operational logistics and I was impressed at how the courses integrated, the renewed focus on sustaining warfighting and the support the exercise received from external stakeholders. While there are clear structural differences between the US Navy Supply Corps and the RN Logistics Branch, the similarities are equally striking.

Having graduated from Basic Qualification Course (now the Basic Supply Officer Course, or BSOC) at the US Navy Supply School in December 2023, I have observed a marked shift towards embedding a stronger warfighting ethos within US logistics training. This mirrors the Royal Navy's own evolution. In the US system, this shift has included greater integration with the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where students are immersed in scenario-driven learning that challenges them to consider second and third order effects, work collaboratively and respond to dynamic and often unpredictable events.

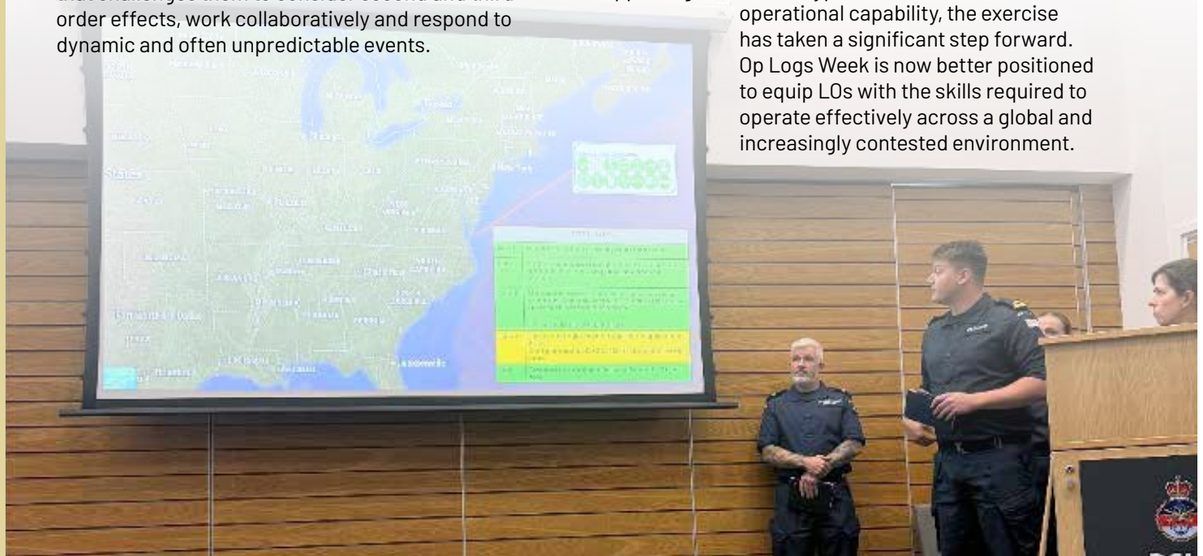
Inspired by this approach, I identified an opportunity to further develop Op Logs Week to better align with a warfighting mindset. During the January iteration of the exercise, while the MCTS team responded to routine RFIs as part of the exercise, we began shaping a revised model that would push students beyond traditional peacetime planning. The aim was clear: to better prepare future Logistics Officers for the realities of a contested and rapidly evolving operational environment.

Central to this evolution was a shift in focus. We redesigned the core scenario around the Type 26 City-class frigate, reflecting the Royal Navy's future operational platform. With the support of HMS GLASGOW's DLO, Lt James Bell RN, we developed scenario CLSRs tailored to the Type 26, enabling students to work through more realistic and contemporary deployment challenges.

The exercise structure was further refined, introducing two additional scenarios to ensure each syndicate undertook distinct deployments. Greater emphasis was placed on warfighting readiness, with students encouraged to apply lateral thinking to resolve complex challenges within a contested environment. This evolution resulted in a more demanding, realistic and ultimately more valuable training experience.

This updated iteration of Op Logs was delivered in May 2026. The response from students was positive. Across all syndicates, there was clear evidence of improved understanding in task prioritisation, stronger appreciation of supporting logistics infrastructure and greater confidence in decision making under pressure.

While further work remains, particularly in refining supporting data as the Type 26 moves closer to full operational capability, the exercise has taken a significant step forward. Op Logs Week is now better positioned to equip LOs with the skills required to operate effectively across a global and increasingly contested environment.



NATO SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING UKRAINE

Cdr James Lancaster RN, NSATU Logistics & Movements Branch Head

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted NATO to provide immediate material and training aid to help the nation withstand the unlawful assault. As the war progressed, NATO has moved from a crisis response onto a campaign footing to ensure the long-term sustainability of critical support. Key to this was the establishment of NATO Security Assistance and Training Ukraine (NSATU) in early 2025. Since that organisation stood-up, a succession of Royal Navy logisticians have contributed to the mission bringing multi-domain and pan-Career Field expertise to aid Ukraine in resisting the invasion.

Material donations are overseen by the Support Division's Logistics & Movements Branch. Since NSATU was formed in March 2025, the movements team have facilitated and enabled the movement of over 300,000 tonnes of war material through Logistics Enabling Nodes in Poland and Romania by sea, air, road and rail. Priority deliveries have focused on Integrated Air and Missile Defence in order to counter the Russian assault on Critical National Infrastructure. Equally, with a drone saturated frontline, delivery of countermeasure systems along with a wide range of increasingly autonomous and jamming resistant Uncrewed Aerial Systems has been essential to maintain operations. Moreover, support to the Maritime Flank has also become increasingly important as Ukraine has sought to block Russia's freedom of manoeuvre and disrupt sea launched missile attacks, including with successful strikes on KILO-Class submarines.

Whilst such actions are sustaining the fight tonight, another important Section within the Support Division is Logistics Plans which is responsible for activities to shape longer-term improvement and optimisation activity. Currently headed by Lieutenant Commander Dan Walker, he has drawn upon his Capability & Acquisition experience in DE&S to drive through a review of the governance and use of KOROVAI, the Logistics Information System through which Ukraine articulates its annual material requirements to sustain operations. Moreover, the Plans team cohered the inaugural Combined Joint Logistics Lessons Learned Conference; an event which captured the Ukrainian experiences in conducting operations and replenishment activity to enable NATO nations to adapt their own doctrines.



Canada has put their C130 detachment based at Prestwick in the UK at the disposal of NSATU. The aircraft are extensively used for movements into the Logistics Enabling Nodes in Poland and Romania.





Most NATO donations provided to Ukraine are delivered through the NSATU Logistics Enabling Nodes where goods and vehicles are cross-loaded between trucks, aircraft and trains as required.

Beyond material support and plans, Royal Navy Logisticians are actively engaged in the NSATU Training Division with, at time of writing, Commander Owen Tudor and Lieutenant Commander Jack Dudley in key roles. Training remains one of the most decisive levers available in war, and Ukraine's experience has underscored just how critical it is to invest in people. Against an adversary with numerical and warfighting advantages, Ukraine has demonstrated that appropriate training of every individual is a key factor for success on the battlefield. For logisticians this means far more than simply upskilling, it is about building a cadre of professionals able to mentor, regenerate, and sustain capability.

Working with NSATU, Ukraine's approach has been to re-train personnel in vital logistics functions which has demonstrated how a workforce can be preserved and repurposed to maintain operational effect even during the extremes of war. An example, is the rapid development of Ukraine's additive manufacturing capability, highlighting the importance of investing in specialist logisticians who can unlock emerging technologies to rapidly deliver effect on the battlefield. By embedding these new skills into policy and doctrine, and by partnering with industry, Ukraine has accelerated innovation and ensured continued interoperability on the frontline.





Training is a vital part of the NSATU mission and extensive facilities have been established in the Extended Rear to support this activity.



The Combined Joint Logistics Lessons Learned Conference (CJL3C) in November 2025 enabled the capture of Operational Logistics experiences arising from operating and sustaining in a drone saturated environment.



Tanks are extensively used in Ukraine but the nature of the conflict has seen their use change into mobile, long-range direct-fire artillery. Whilst many nations have made donations of such weapon systems, variants of the German Leopard are the mainstay of those used by the Partner Force.

Notwithstanding the outward focus of Support and Training Divisions, NSATU would not function without support from the Department of Management. This team's responsibilities include contract enablement, finance, personnel and infrastructure; all key enabling functions which allow the Headquarters to deliver timely and effective support to Ukraine. Here too there is Royal Navy Logistics support with Petty Officer Chris Pearson as the current incumbent leading the Mayoral Operations team.

The role delivered by NSATU has been critical in aiding Ukraine to resist the Russian assault and the UK support to the mission has been significant. The versatility of Royal Navy logisticians past and present - who have drawn upon experiences encompassing Operational Support, Personnel and Capability & Acquisition as well as core Maritime skills and Joint expertise – have all played an important part in that contribution across all areas of NSATU outputs. Whatever the shape or nature of the Operations over the months ahead, the breadth and versatility of the Logistics Profession means its personnel are well placed to support.

LA LOGISTIQUE – C'EST IMPORTANT!

Lt Cdr Paul Holland RN









France is one of the most important Defence relationships for the UK as highlighted by the 65 exchange and liaison personnel that currently work across 'l'hexagone'. The relationship is structured under the Lancaster House agreement and operationally enabled through the recently renamed Combined Joint Force (CJF); recent international planning initiatives have also heavily relied on the leadership and investment of these two countries.

Within this UK Defence community in France, there are several opportunities for naval logisticians, with three roles based in Paris. There is a J1 SO1 within the Marine Nationale HQ, an SO2 J4 (LogOps/Plans) position in CECIA (Centre Expert de Commandement Interarmée) and a CAPPS appointment as an SO1 Staff Officer working in the French Naval Staff.

The UK sends five officers to the Ecole de Guerre (EdG), the French War College, every year. It is a historic establishment that enjoys a sublime position at the end of the Champ de Mars in front of the Eiffel Tower and hosts a range of staff courses including the French ACSC and HCSC; the former is counted as an Overseas Staff Course (OSC) and the latter as a prerequisite to becoming a lead Attaché at the British Defence Section (BDS) in the Embassy. The ACSC teaches 400 stagiares who endure a 2-year competitive selection process; the UK participants have a slightly easier route! There are also 100 foreign students that reflect France's global influence; indeed international participation can be a gauge for France's current diplomatic successes and challenges. Napoléon would turn in his tomb to learn that the EdG now offers the OSC in English, although this is not recommended for any UK personnel that will stay to complete a subsequent assignment.

Student working groups offer fascinating discussions and broader networking opportunities. The tempo is manageable with academic and presentational deliverables; all students must complete a thesis on a contemporary military theme. The year encompasses staff rides, visits to French military and industrial sites, as well as NATO and EU institutions. All students join an additional interest group (i.e. Africa, art & war, military philosophy, wargaming…) which offer opportunities for further learning and travel; additionally students organise acquaint visits; UK students have enjoyed Raffale flights, training with the French Foreign Legion and parachuting with the French Parachute Regiment – the opportunities are endless! There is a focus on joint planning and operations that culminates in the final exercise COALITION. There is also an international CJEX with the possibility to work in Rome, Madrid, Hamburg (or Shrivenham). Clearly, it is not all about work and the French really understand the importance of a morning croissant, extended lunch, and an apéro or two to discuss the themes of the day. There is also a competitive rugby XV that compete annually with Shrivenham in Le Crunch. Passing out of the War College enables students to wear the coveted EdG brevet (pin) which is proudly worn on almost every formal occasion.

The French OSC is not a pre-requisite for all roles. All of the Paris maritime logistics positions are located in Balard, a large site in the SW of Paris that hosts among others: French General Staff; single Service Staffs and Operational Commands; French DES (called DGA); Africa Command; Home Command; Military Intelligence Command. CECIA is a small organisation that used to mirror SJFHQ but was modified as the French reviewed their operational Command and Control structures. The multitude of French Overseas territories led to France delegating OPCON to regional Commanders, who then require training and support to deliver joint multi-domain operations. CECIA acts as a trainer, assessor and source of additional planning personnel (i.e. OHQ, M3 SoH). It also engages in joint C2 innovation projects and prepares Joint Contingency Plans for possible French NEOs. The main effort during 2025/26 was Ex ORION, a huge 4-month international joint exercise that included operational planning, LIVEX/CPX, and interministerial/NATO participation.

French operational logistics is similar yet different to the UK; they have no JFLogC and the CPCO J4 (imagine MSOC and CSOC combined) coordinates operational (and sometimes tactical) level logistics planning and execution. Often French joint logistics responsibility is passed to single service organisations (i.e. CALT who are broadly similar to 104 Log Bde). They also have a range of joint specialist organisations who offer deep expertise (SEO for POL; SIMu for munitions; CSoA for strategic movements; SCA for personnel support; SSA for medical and others). As an experienced colleague said, the French and British gateaux look the same but are sliced slightly differently. The French also have an interesting military-industrial relationship with the State maintaining a 51% ownership in key Defence enterprises, which offers certain advantages in state control, whilst maintaining commercial efficiencies.

Moving to Paris is a fantastic opportunity for single persons or those bringing families. There is a flexibility to choose where to live (from a flat in the centre to a small chateau in the outskirts). The international schools are good and some of the braver families have even opted to put their children into the French state system. The financial package is generous and recent GYH(Overseas) and Respite provision have further improved the offer. However, it is France and therefore there is a limited bureaucratic burden. That said, it is thoroughly worth it and France is a country that is varied in geography and climate, and that offers sports, culture and great cuisine. The French Overseas Territories are amazing and much easier to reach from France. Paris is one of the world's most beautiful cities with plentiful history and entertainment. However, recent French sporting successes mean that sport is no longer mentioned in the office!

The Defence relationship between the UK and France continues to deepen with both countries committed to Ukraine and enduring European security. Any future conflict would likely involve the UK and France at the forefront of any initial response, likely under a CJF leadership. Attendance at the EdG and subsequent employment opens doors for continued roles in France with the Naval Attaché in France currently being a naval logistician. France offers the benefits of interesting LFS roles with a fantastic family package. Vous êtes tous les bienvenus[1].

1 You are all welcome!



MY TIME AT THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

LCS Edward Cornish



Being offered the opportunity to spend four months working as a Sous Chef at the British Ambassador's Residence in Washington, D.C. has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. It gave me the opportunity to develop my skills, work alongside an exceptional team and be involved in some incredible events that I'll never forget.

My day-to-day role involved preparing for upcoming official events while also looking after the daily catering requirements for the British Ambassador and his family. Alongside this, we produced freshly baked biscuits and cookies for meetings held at the Residence. No two days were ever the same, and every day brought a new challenge that helped me grow both professionally and personally.

One of the things I enjoyed most about the deployment was learning new skills and seeing a different way of working within a galley. Working alongside such an experienced team pushed me to improve my own knowledge and gave me a fresh perspective on planning, preparation, and delivering high-quality food in a unique environment.

During my time in Washington, I was fortunate enough to be involved in a number of prestigious events. One of the biggest was the Great British Food event, A Reception for 350 guests, which showcased British produce to the American market. It was rewarding to be part of an event that generated more than £2.5 million in trade on the night, with even more trade opportunities following afterwards.



I also helped prepare a formal banquet for 84 guests from an Oxford college, afternoon tea for the wife of the Vice President of the United States, another afternoon tea for 150 guests, and numerous evening receptions ranging from 10 to 400 guests for both trade partners and government organisations. Each event brought its own challenges and gave me the chance to gain experience that very few chefs have the opportunity to achieve.

The standout moment for me, however, was helping prepare and deliver the afternoon tea garden party for Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla, which was attended by 650 guests. Playing a small part in such a significant occasion was something I will always be proud of and is undoubtedly the highlight of my deployment.

Outside of work, I made the most of my time in Washington by exploring the city whenever I could. I visited several museums, experienced the local culture, and even had the chance to see the White House. Living and working overseas was a fantastic opportunity, and I wanted to make the most of every moment.

If anyone is ever offered the chance to work at the British Ambassador's Residence in Washington, D.C., my advice would be simple, take it! It's an incredible opportunity to develop your skills, work with an outstanding team, and experience something completely different.





Finally, I'd like to say a personal thank you to Head Chef Craig Harnden and Sous Chef Andy for all of their support during my placement. Their patience, guidance, and willingness to share their knowledge made a huge difference to my experience, and I'm grateful for everything they taught me.



Looking back, this deployment has been an unforgettable experience. I've returned with new skills, greater confidence, and memories that I'll carry with me throughout my career. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity and proud to have represented the Royal Navy while working at the British Ambassador's Residence.

TWO ORGANISATIONS. ONE TEAM. A SHARED COMMITMENT TO NAVAL SERVICE

Natalie Bywater, Communications Manager

For generations, Royal Navy officers have served across the globe, leading people, managing complex operations and supporting the delivery of maritime power. While service may eventually come to an end, the bonds forged through a naval career endure.

Today, those bonds are strengthened through two distinct organisations: **The Association of Royal Navy Officers (ARNO) and The Royal Navy Officers' Charity (RNOC)**. Although separate organisations with very different purposes, both are managed by a single Headquarters team, ensuring a joined-up approach to supporting serving and former officers throughout every stage of life.

This distinction is important.

The ARNO exists to connect people, during and post service. The RNOC exists to support people in their time of need.

Together they represent a lifelong commitment to the Royal Navy officer community.



THE ASSOCIATION OF ROYAL NAVY OFFICERS

The ARNO is the professional and social association for thousands of serving and retired Royal Navy, Royal Marines and QARNNS officers, together with members of the Maritime Reserves, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, WRNS, RNVR and the various cadet officer communities.

Its purpose is simple but enduring; to maintain the friendships, professional networks and sense of belonging that define naval service.

Membership provides opportunities to remain connected long after leaving uniformed service through networking and prestigious social events.

As well as helping to maintain connection, membership also comes with a wide range of benefits, including:

- A Taste of the Army & Navy Club (The Rag) – the opportunity to spend up to four nights per year at the private members club without the need to join the club as a member.
- Pre-loved quality uniform – For example, Gieves and Hawkes No1, No2, greatcoats, boat cloaks, British Warms, waistcoats, tin trousers, caps, epaulettes, and the occasional sword, at member rates of approximately 10% of original cost.
- A discount service on par with Blue Light and Defence Discount Service.
- Port Sponsorship. Planning an event or dinner? In exchange for promoting the Association, we will pay for a round of Port.
- RAC Breakdown Cover at incredible rates.



We continue to expand our digital engagement, using social media to ensure members around the UK and overseas remain connected to the wider naval family. Whether supporting serving officers, those approaching retirement or those who have been retired for some time, the Association continues to evolve while remaining true to its founding purpose: fostering fellowship among those who have served.

We'd be delighted to welcome you to The Association.

Join here:



THE ROYAL NAVY OFFICERS' CHARITY

The Royal Navy Officers' Charity is completely separate to The Association of Royal Navy Officers. The RNOC does however share the same commitment to the wellbeing of the officer community through charitable support.

Founded in 1739, The Charity exists to assist serving and former Royal Navy officers, Royal Marines officers, QARNNS officers and their dependants who find themselves facing financial hardship or unexpected challenges. Support extends beyond grants, with beneficiaries receiving advice, guidance and signposting to other organisations across the wider Armed Forces charitable sector where appropriate.

Every case is different.

Sometimes assistance is required following illness or bereavement. Sometimes families need help adapting to changing circumstances or accessing statutory benefits. In other situations, the Charity works alongside partner organisations to ensure beneficiaries receive the most appropriate long-term support.

The impact of this work is rarely visible to the wider naval family, yet it changes lives every day.

If you, or a fellow officer, require assistance from the Charity please contact: grantsadministrator@arno.org.uk or visit the website: www.rnoc.org.uk. If you would prefer to speak to someone, please call 020 7402 5231 (option 2).



ONE HEADQUARTERS TEAM

Although The ARNO and The RNOC have different objectives, both organisations are delivered by one dedicated HQ team.

Based at Porchester Terrace in London, the small team of five manages every aspect of both organisations, from membership services, communications and events through to charitable casework, governance and finance. This shared structure enables knowledge, resources and expertise to be used efficiently whilst ensuring that each organisation remains focused on its own mission.

Our Chief Executive Officer, Gillian Russell, joined the team in April this year, and brings with her a wealth of experience as the Military Program Manager at Amazon and the Race Manager at the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, after an 18-year career as a Logistics Officer. Simon our Chief of Staff is a former Warfare officer, fairly recently retired. Some of you may remember him from his time as SO1 Executive in Navy Command HQ. Natalie, our Communications Manager is a former WO1Wtr, and Stephen, our Operations Manager has spent 20 years volunteering as a Sea Cadet officer. Geraldine is our Grants Manager and has extensive experience in the charity sector having joined us from the organisation SAIL.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Supporting the team is an experienced Council and Board of Trustees whose collective careers span operational command, logistics, engineering, warfare, personnel management and the charitable sector. We are extremely proud to have as our Chairman, the current CDLS, Vice Admiral Sir Andy Kyte KBE CB.

The Council and Trustees provide strategic oversight for both organisations, ensuring that The ARNO continues to develop as a thriving membership association whist The RNOC remains responsive to the changing needs of serving personnel, veterans and their families.

LOOKING FORWARD

Both organisations continue to evolve. Recent developments, including the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer, reflecting a commitment to ensuring The ARNO and RNOC remain relevant for today's officers whilst building on a proud heritage of service. Digital engagement continues to grow, professional networking is expanding, and partnerships across the wider Armed Forces charitable sector are strengthening the support available to beneficiaries.

The needs of today's serving Logistics Officer may differ from those of previous generations, but the importance of belonging, professional connection and knowing that support is available when life becomes challenging remains unchanged.

Whether through the fellowship offered by The Association or the practical assistance delivered by the Charity, The ARNO and RNOC continue to provide something invaluable: reassurance that membership of the Royal Navy officer community does not end when service does.

A FIRST FOR CATERING: THE CATERING SERVICES MLCAG AT HMNB CLYDE

PO (CS) (SM) Daniel Carrington

HMNB Clyde hosted the Catering Services Maritime Logistics Command Advisory Group (MLCAG), marking the first time the event has been held at the base. Over three days, senior catering services personnel from across the Royal Navy catering community came together to discuss emerging initiatives, share best practice and to gain a greater understanding of catering capability across the Fleet.

As the home of the Continuous at Sea Deterrent (CASD) and the Submarine Service, HMNB Clyde provided an ideal setting for the event. Alongside discussions on governance, food safety, workforce sustainability, training and supply chain resilience, those attending were given the opportunity to see first-hand how catering is delivered in one of Defence's most demanding operational environments.

The first session brought together Catering Services Senior Rates, the FLO team and the Career Manager for an open discussion on career management, workforce challenges and future opportunities. Visits to both V Class and A Class submarines allowed MLCAG members to observe submarine catering operations. The visits provided valuable context to discussions around resilience, sustainability and maintaining standards while operating within the constraints of a submarine environment.

A highlight of the programme was a session in the VSCOT simulator, which placed attendees in a realistic submarine command and control environment. The experience gave our surface counterparts a better appreciation of the wider operational role carried out by submarine Catering Services personnel, including their responsibilities as watchkeepers. It also reinforced the close connection between catering delivery and the effectiveness of the wider ship's company.



A key feature of the programme was the Day 150 lunch, designed to demonstrate the standard of catering that can be maintained deep into a CASD patrol. The meal showcased the professionalism, skill and adaptability of submarine catering teams, highlighting the important contribution catering makes to morale and operational effectiveness. The lunch also highlighted a number of initiatives developed by the SUBFLOT WLSG CS team to promote morale and encourage healthy eating, offering concepts currently being trialled on submarines that could be adopted across the Fleet as it prepares for transition to war.

Throughout the event, attendees shared challenges, discussed emerging issues and identified opportunities for improvement across the maritime catering community. The MLCAG also provided a valuable opportunity for engagement between assurance authorities and catering delivery teams, helping to ensure assurance activity remains relevant and proportionate to operational requirements.

The event was organised by POCS Benton, with support from the SUBFLOT WLSG CS Team, whose efforts enabled platform access, simulator activity and delivery of the Day 150 lunch. The event concluded with a quiz in the WO and SR Mess on the final evening, where the MLCAG team claimed victory to round off a successful few days at HMNB Clyde.



Hosting the Catering Services MLCAG at HMNB Clyde for the first time provided an excellent opportunity to showcase submarine catering capability while strengthening links across the wider catering community. The relationships developed and lessons identified during the event will help inform the continued development of Catering Services across Defence.

PRESTIGIOUS DEFENCE LOGISTICS COURSE SECURED UNTIL 2031

Lt Col Richard Whetter

The Defence Logistics Staff Course (DLSC) will continue to develop skilled, industry aligned logistics leaders who strengthen Defence readiness and resilience.

Defence has recently secured the future of the Defence DLSC until at least 2031. Following a competitive process, the University of Lincoln will continue delivering the course. This matters because DLSC builds skilled logistics professionals. These people keep Defence ready, supplied, and able to operate at pace, at home and overseas.

WHAT IS THE DLSC?

DLSC is a fully funded postgraduate-level course in logistics management. On completion, students gain a Postgraduate Diploma, with the option to extend this to a Master's degree. The course blends academic teaching with military and industry speakers, ensuring learning is practical and directly relevant to Defence.

The course is primarily aimed at officers at SO2 and SO3 level across all three Services, and Civil Service logisticians at C2 and above. Warrant Officers, Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, Reservists, Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel and international partners may also apply.

WHY THE COURSE MATTERS FOR DEFENCE

Logistics underpins everything Defence does. If supply chains fail, operations fail. This contract secures high quality training that directly improves how Defence plans, sustains and delivers operations.

The course develops people who can think differently about logistics. Graduates return able to improve processes, manage risk and strengthen supply chains which then helps support faster decision-making, greater resilience and stronger operational output.

COURSE BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND DEFENCE

The DLSC supports the Defence Support Strategy by providing a recognised, industry-aligned qualification that enhances professional practice and career development. Graduates report increased confidence, stronger critical-thinking skills and a deeper understanding of logistics across Defence and industry.

Sarah Liggins, a graduate of the DLSC reports "The Defence Logistics Staff Course gave me a strong understanding of logistics across Defence and industry and helped me develop the critical thinking skills essential for modern Defence roles and to operate effectively in complex environments".

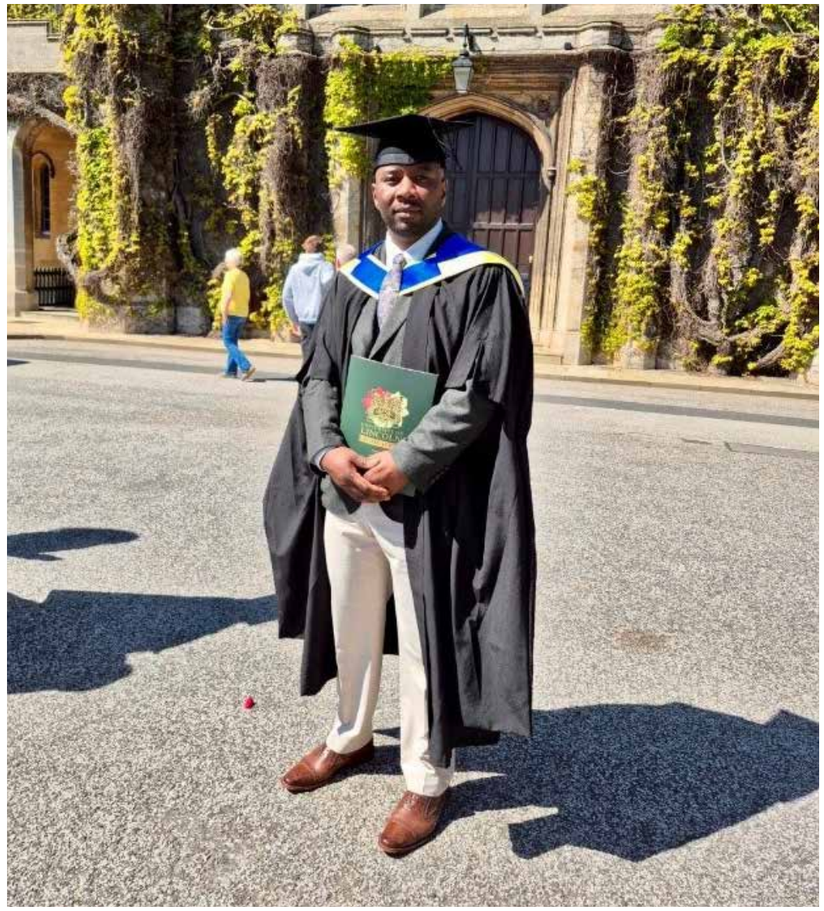
Another graduate, Jemma Clarke said "the DLSC and the opportunities from networking with fellow logistic colleagues provided me with a stronger understanding of the breadth and complexity of logistics in Defence. It contributed massively to my critical-thinking skillset and grew my confidence in my subject area".

FIND OUT MORE

If you are eligible, consider applying. The latest Defence Instructional Notice 2026DIN07-035 provides more detail. If you manage people, think about who in your team could benefit. This is an investment in individuals and in Defence capability.



Some recent graduates of the DLSC collect their award at a graduation ceremony at the University of Lincoln in April.



Staff Sargeant Mansa Campbell collected his Masters degree at a ceremony in April. He now intends to pursue a PhD in logistics management.

EXCERCISE JOINT CATERER

CPO(CS) Stuart Bradshaw

Royal Navy chefs and stewards scooped 44 awards for their expert cookery as they took on their counterparts from the Royal Air Force and British Army in an Armed Forces cook off.

The RAF came out on top at the two-day Exercise Joint Caterer competition at the National Agricultural and Exhibition Centre near Coventry, but the Royal Navy team did themselves proud.

The 40-strong Culinary Arts Team showed off their stunning cookery, professionalism and creativity that they bring to gallies on warships across the globe, bringing home two gold, nine silver, fourteen bronze, nine merit and seven best in class titles.

They won Best Galley Team in the Senior Cook and Serve category, Junior Steward of the Year and Best Galley Team in the Parade de Chefs competition.

Team captain Chief Petty Officer Shaun Willis said: "I couldn't be prouder of the entire team and the journey each of them has been on throughout the two-week workshop and the competition itself."

"From those who stepped up to mentor our newest team members, to individuals entering the arena for the first time, the level of professional and personal growth has been outstanding. I'm already excited to see how we continue to build on this success and attack the competition full on next time."

The team served stunning dishes from around the world, including street food, fine dining courses and incredible celebratory cakes.

Competitor Catering Services Able Rating Tate Creese said: "Having competed for the first time, I enjoyed the rush of adrenaline when stood on the stage and looking out upon the crowd."







The chefs demonstrated technical ability, teamwork and resilience, reflecting two weeks of preparation delivered through a workshop at Worthy Down.

Culinary Arts Team Director Warrant Officer 1 Wes Cain added: "Exercise JOINT CATERER is a cornerstone event for Defence catering, and this year's competition has once again highlighted the exceptional skill and dedication of our Royal Navy team.

"What we saw at Stoneleigh was more than culinary excellence, it was teamwork, resilience, and innovation under pressure."

Wes continued: "These qualities are vital in the operational environment, where our catering services personnel deliver world-class support to the Fleet every day. I am immensely proud of how our competitors represented the Service, and I know the experience gained here will strengthen capability across the Royal Navy. This is about raising standards, inspiring confidence, and ensuring our people continue to deliver the very best for those on the front line."

A number of chefs from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary were part of the RN team, including Assistant Chef Kirstie Adams, Assistant Chef Catherine Cowley and Petty Officer Chef Gaynor, as the joining and welcoming coordinator.

Assistant Chef Adams created a pasta dish from scratch that was awarded bronze in the pasta classes.

Assistant Chef Cowley drew upon all her knowledge and experience gained over the past six years with the RFA to produce an exceptional pastry dish in the Great British Pie Challenge: a Highlands Heartbeat Steak Pie, served with triple-cooked homemade chips, whisky ketchup, with a smashed peas garnish. It earned her a merit and fourth place.

"I could not have been prouder of the RN team," said Fleet Logistics Officer, Commander Alex Savage. "They have not only performed to the highest of standards, but they have done so by bonding as a team and supporting each other."

"They overcame nerves which come from performing on the big stage, against their RAF and Army rivals, to produce excellent dishes and service and will have learned so much about themselves."

"I hope they will now go back to the Fleet to spread the message of this wonderful competition and raise both standards and morale for our Chefs on the front line."

IF WE CANNOT SEE THE REASON, WE CANNOT DEFEND THE DEMAND

WO1 (SC) Isla Mooney

Maintenance readiness depends on knowing what work needs doing, what materiel is needed and when it is required. Scheduled maintenance should be forecastable. Defects are less predictable, but they can still be modelled when jobs, demands and consumption are linked.

Until deeper integration is delivered through DEEAMS, the Fleet must make better use of UMMS and MJDI. Over the next two years, disciplined data capture will be central to forecasting, prioritisation and readiness decisions for Alpha Code demands supporting Cat A maintenance and non-OPDEF rectification.

This is not new. The practice began in 2015 with Cat B - external resource requirements ordered through Maintenance Accounts. For scheduled maintenance, DAR lines or work arising from Work Requisition Forms (WRFs), the MJDI demand carried the UMMS job number.

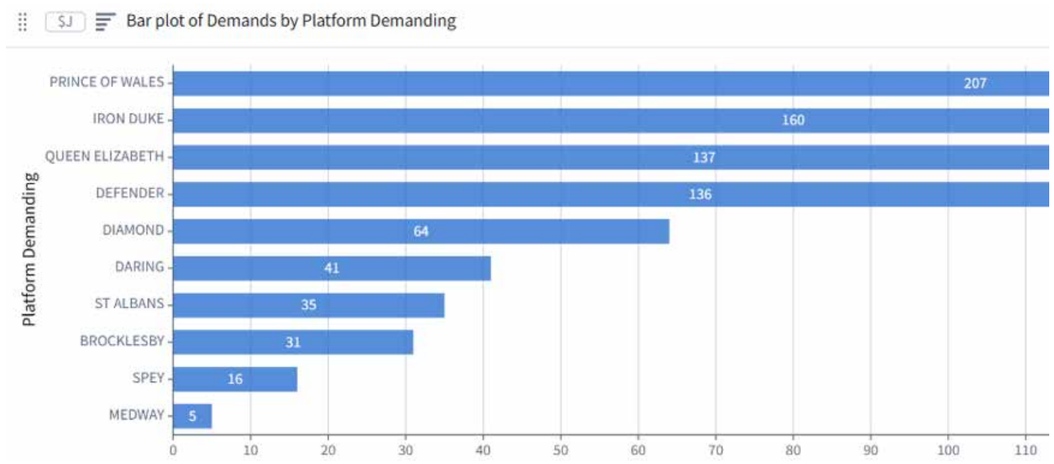
That reference was never just a number. It links the MJDI demand to the UMMS maintenance task, giving Logisticians, Engineers and Delivery Teams a shared point of truth. When stock is unavailable, it gives procurement teams confidence that the item supports a valid maintenance requirement and helps set priorities. It also exposed a 76% error rate in Cat B demand activity, giving Navy FGen Logs JSC Team evidence to support change.

That same discipline now needs to apply to Cat A - platform staff maintenance ordered through Alpha Code demands. The UMMS reference explains why the item is needed and links the demand to the engineering task. This will aid population of Job Instruction Cards.

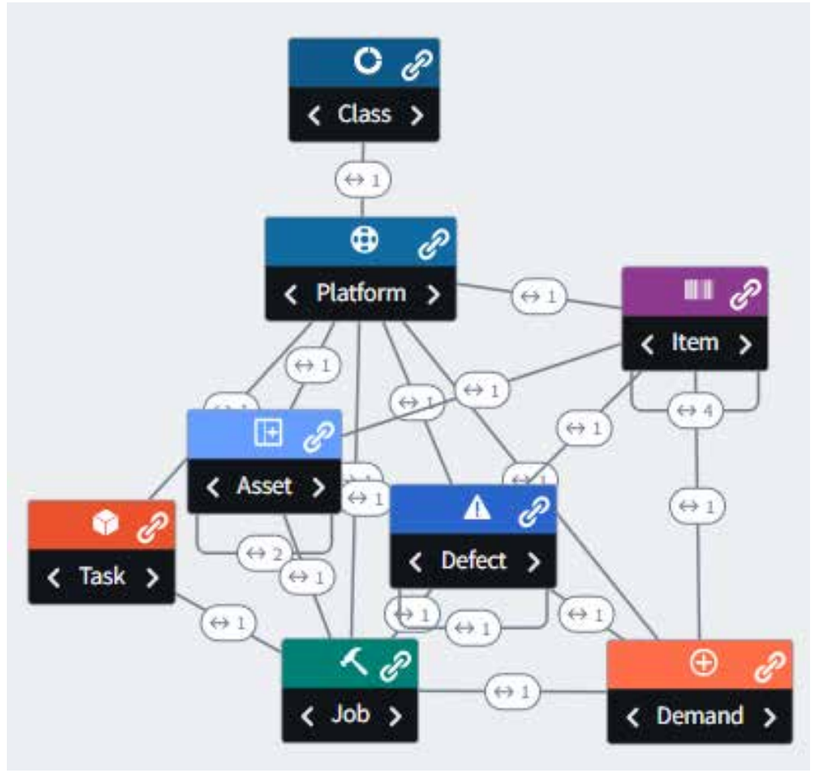
Between Jan and Jun 26, Navy UINs placed more than 270k demands on MJDI. Fewer than 900 Alpha Code demands included a supporting UMMS job number. Most engineering demands therefore moved through MJDI without the job-level context needed to explain why the item was required. So why are you demanding technical items?

From policy to practice. RNTM 04-017/20 formalised the use of UMMS job numbers in MJDI for Alpha Code engineering demands. The CRISP failure in 2024 proved why data resilience matters: during demand recovery, the support chain needed to know what each demand supported and which risks mattered most. RNTM 03-033/25 reinforces the same principle: capture defects in UMMS, generate the job number and link the MJDI demand to that reference.

Why it matters on the platform. The UMMS reference gives the demand context. It shows whether the item supports safety, environmental protection, operational output or routine upkeep. For platform staff, it reduces follow-up questions, strengthens the case for scarce stock and helps prioritise support to the most urgent engineering work.



Why it matters ashore. UMMS and MJDI data show what is breaking, what platforms are demanding, where delays occur and where stock holdings may need to change. Accurate references help Class Cells and Delivery Teams identify recurring defects, weak UMMS source data, obsolete parts, incorrect allowances, heavy consumable use and class-wide fragility. They also help planners forecast warehousing needs, position stock to draw forward and support priority demands when availability is constrained. During the transition to war, the same data helps the support chain decide what to move first, what to hold forward and where Fleet risk is growing.



What good looks like. Engineers record the defect or maintenance job number before passing the requirement to Supply Chain via the demand book. Supply Chain staff enter the UMMS job number in the correct MJDI demand field. Without it, the demand loses engineering context and becomes harder to prioritise and defend from being cancelled. Logistics Officers use the data to strengthen demand control, prioritisation and assurance.

Commanding Officers and Heads of Department should treat this as readiness discipline, not a stores process. The aim is not more bureaucracy. The aim is to make existing activity visible, useful and defensible. Engineers define the need. Supply Chain staff manage the demand. Logistics Officers connect the two. Command uses the result to understand risk.

Call to action. If tasked operationally, could you identify all Cat A maintenance, defect and OPDEF materiel requirements from one onboard Supply Chain report in MJDI?

LO, WE and ME HODs should test this now as part of 1SL's Transition to War planning. Run a short simulation training serial, use the scenario and check whether Engineering and Supply Chain teams can trace each demand back to the UMMS job number and equipment. Identify gaps, fix what can be fixed locally, share findings with FGen Logs to support Fleet-wide improvement.

The point is simple: if we cannot see the reason, we cannot defend the demand when challenged to cancel down. Make the requirement visible, make the demand defensible and turn better data into the readiness and resilience the Fleet needs.

FROM SAUSAGES TO SYSTEM LEADERSHIP: A LOGISTICIAN'S PATH TO THE 2040 FLEET

Lt Emma Maynard RN

Calling forward medical supplies at short notice, drumming up a confined space rescue team in Estonia or justifying buying nicer sausages on the way back from SNMG1 instead of waiting untill we were back in the UK, appear, on the surface, to be different problems. Yet at their core they rely on the same logistics principles: understanding priorities, working within governance, managing risk, and delivering an outcome on time. I have found that those same principles apply equally when working with what was DE&S (now National Armaments Materiel/NA-M) to deliver complex Cat A torpedo contracts to schedule.



As the Royal Navy continues to integrate operations, capability, and support more closely for war fighting readiness, I thought the best thing I could do was follow the Logs Branch Strategy and get out my comfort zone. As a taxpayer I was also really interested in 'how the sausage gets made and paid for'.

This led to a role as Deputy Programme Manager to the Torpedo Capability Support Programme in Navy Command (Acquisition). Whilst the learning curve was steep (and my new CS Engineering boss patient) I have found the role to be very rewarding.

I work in a team of 3 in Navy Command, working daily with a project team at MoD Abbey Wood, who in turn engage with key suppliers like BAE to ensure we have a sustained, available and safe UK torpedo stockpile for the Navy and RAF.

Logisticians are trained to understand policy, apply it proportionately, and enable delivery rather than allow process to become a barrier. In Navy Acquisition, this translated into navigating layered approvals, assurance activity, and senior decision-making forums to keep capability delivery on track; much like working within financial delegations or compliance frameworks on a ship.

A defining organisational skill developed through Phase 2 training is the ability to deal with ambiguity and just make things happen. On a ship, this may involve managing incomplete information/competing demands to meet the command aim. In my current role, similar challenges arose through evolving guidance (as Defence Reform is implemented), shifting timelines and a wide stakeholder base from DLOD inputs, the Cabinet Office, MSHQ or Economic Leads who interrogate/challenge/present 'problems' as we go. Working with NA-M daily to maintain clear ownership, accurate records, and controlled information flows, enabled steady progress to ensure 2* deliverables are met, despite uncertainty.

Governance is another area where logistics skills translate directly. We do it all the time on operations; risks are identified, mitigations tracked, and evidence maintained to support command decisions. Supporting Programme Boards, coordinating evidence, and tracking actions to closure required exactly the same rigour and discipline expected of logisticians safeguarding public money and operational readiness. We even have inspections on the programme and progress, known as 'Gate Reviews' instead of 'FLIs'. To cohere activity we have daily 'SCRUMs' instead of departmental meetings and 'Evidence Working Groups' instead of HODs (as a crude example).

Stakeholder management is equally central. Whether engaging suppliers, host nations, or Commanding Officers, logisticians must build trust and credibility across diverse networks. In this role, this meant coordinating cross functional teams from finance, approvals, scrutiny, and industry, ensuring alignment and coherence throughout delivery. Clear communication and follow through with SMEs proved just as important as they would be when coordinating a complex port visit or supply chain.

Whether afloat, ashore, or working alongside NA-M and industry, the branch's identity; professional judgement, disciplined governance and just 'getting on with it' remains its enduring strength. Whilst I initially struggled to adjust after the fast paced nature of an operational warship, the slow and steady bureaucratic churn most recently help deliver a Category A Programme (£BN) to schedule and thus enable Heavyweight and Lightweight torpedoes to the front line; a career highlight.







By Photo: LA(Phot) Dan Rosenbaum/MOD

HOW HAS THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT CHANGED NAVAL LOGISTICS?

A/Cdr Calvin Shenton RN

INTRODUCTION

Maritime logistics is particularly important because naval forces operate over vast distances, depend upon continuous resupply, and require complex support contracts to maintain combat effectiveness.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has highlighted the critical importance of logistics in modern warfare. While much attention has focused on battlefield tactics, drones, and precision weapons, the conflict has also revealed profound changes in how military logistics functions in the twenty-first century. These developments extend beyond land warfare and have significant implications for the Royal Navy.

Traditional assumptions regarding secure rear areas and protected supply chains are obsolete. Military logisticians must now operate in an environment where every supply node, transport route, fuel depot, and maintenance facility will be targeted by long-range precision strikes, cyber-attacks, satellite surveillance, and autonomous systems.

For the Royal Navy, these lessons are particularly relevant. As a global maritime force responsible for protecting sea lines of communication, and maintaining overseas deployments, the Royal Navy depends upon effective logistics. The Ukraine conflict offers valuable insights into how naval logistics must evolve to remain effective in future conflicts. Future naval logistics must become more distributed, resilient, technologically integrated, and capable of operating in highly contested environments.

THE TRADITIONAL MODEL OF NAVAL LOGISTICS

Historically, naval logistics has relied upon centralized support structures. Base ports provide maintenance facilities, fuel storage, ammunition depots, and repair capabilities. Fleet operations were sustained through replenishment ships, strategic sealift assets, and secure maritime supply routes. Which to date, has proved effective. Western navies generally operated in environments where they enjoyed significant control of the sea and air domains. Supply chains could be established with relatively little interference from adversaries.

However, the Ukraine conflict suggests that future adversaries will possess capabilities capable of disrupting the traditional logistics model. Logistics infrastructure is no longer safe simply because it is located away from the front line.

THE END OF THE SAFE REAR AREA

One of the most important lessons from Ukraine is that the concept of a secure rear area has largely disappeared. Countries that are less developed still have access to commercial satellite imagery, social media intelligence, and drone reconnaissance. The emergence of long-range strike systems means that logistics facilities can be attacked hundreds of kilometres from the conflict zone with minimal risk. Previously these attacks/raids came at huge risk, such as Dieppe in 1942 which cost the allies 3367 casualties, or at huge cost and complexity such as the Anglo-French bombardment of Odessa in 1854.

For naval logistics, this lesson is particularly significant. Naval bases, ports, fuel storage facilities, and dockyards represent critical infrastructure. In a future conflict, these facilities could be targeted by missiles, cyber-attacks, or autonomous systems. The Royal Navy must therefore assume that traditional logistics hubs will face persistent threats. Future planning should focus on increasing resilience rather than relying exclusively on large, centralised facilities.

DISTRIBUTED LOGISTICS NETWORKS

The Ukraine conflict has reinforced the value of distributed logistics.

Rather than concentrating supplies in a small number of large depots, Ukrainian forces have often dispersed resources across multiple locations. This approach complicates enemy targeting and reduces the consequences of successful attacks.

Distributed logistics offers several advantages:

a. Increases survivability. If one logistics node is destroyed, others can continue operating.

b. Improves flexibility. Supplies can be rerouted through alternative pathways when disruptions occur.

c. Creates uncertainty for adversaries attempting to identify high-value targets.

The concept of distributed maritime operations, already being explored by NATO and allied navies, should be matched by distributed logistics systems capable of supporting dispersed forces across multiple theatres.

PRECISION STRIKE WEAPONS AND SUPPLY VULNERABILITY

Another major lesson from Ukraine concerns the vulnerability of logistics infrastructure to precision weapons. Modern missiles can strike targets with extraordinary accuracy. Russia's attacks on Ukrainian fuel infrastructure demonstrated how targeting logistics can affect military operations. Conversely, Ukrainian strikes on Russian ammunition depots and supply centres significantly disrupted Russian offensive capabilities, as shown by the Russian advance slowing almost to a stop. The Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil production is effecting the Russian economy, which in turn harms the Russian military supply chain as there is less money for stores and enablers.

Future logistics planning must assume that supply nodes will be detected and targeted. Resilience must therefore be built into every aspect of logistics architecture.

The Royal Navy should invest in:

a. Hardened storage facilities

b. Underground infrastructure

c. Mobile fuel systems

d. Rapid relocation capabilities

e. Decentralized supply networks

DRONES AND LOGISTICS

Perhaps the most significant innovation emerging from Ukraine is the widespread use of drones. Unmanned systems have transformed both offensive and defensive operations. They have also created new challenges and opportunities for logistics.

From a threat perspective, drones enable adversaries to identify, track, and attack supply routes with unprecedented precision. Convoys, fuel depots, maintenance facilities, and ports can all be targeted by relatively inexpensive unmanned systems.

At the same time, drones offer important logistics opportunities.

Future naval logistics may utilise drones for:

a. Delivering critical supplies

b. Conducting inventory management

c. Monitoring infrastructure

d. Inspecting vessels

e. Providing real-time situational awareness

The Royal Navy should accelerate the integration of autonomous systems into logistics operations. The Malloy drones of 700X NAS have provided rapid delivery of urgent supplies between ships on Op HIGHMAST. Production and use of Malloy drones must be increased so that it becomes as much a cultural norm within the Royal Navy as using a VERTREP via a Helicopter. Similarly, unmanned surface vessels could support logistics missions in contested maritime environments where manned platforms face elevated risk.



Ukraine has achieved a great of success by targeting Russian Supply lines

DATA, INFORMATION, AND LOGISTICS INTELLIGENCE

Ukraine has demonstrated the value of digital logistics systems capable of rapidly tracking resources and adapting to changing conditions. Modern military logistics depends upon accurate and timely information regarding inventory levels, transportation networks, maintenance requirements, and operational demand.

For the Royal Navy, logistics based artificial intelligence will become increasingly important. Advanced data analytics can improve:

a. Inventory forecasting

b. Maintenance scheduling

c. Fuel consumption analysis

d. Supply chain optimisation

e. Risk assessment

Future logistics systems should provide commanders with real-time visibility of supply networks. This capability enhances decision-making and improves operational responsiveness. The integration of digital technologies into logistics processes will likely become a defining characteristic of future naval operations.

CYBER WARFARE AND LOGISTICS SECURITY

Military logistics relies heavily on digital systems. Transportation management, inventory control, maintenance scheduling, and communications all depend upon networked technologies. Cyber-attacks have disrupted these systems on both the Russian and Ukrainian side without firing a single shot and have resulted in:

a. Delayed resupply operations

b. Loss of inventory visibility

c. Communication failures

d. Corrupted maintenance data

e. Disrupted transportation networks

Protecting logistics networks from cyber-attack will be just as important as protecting physical infrastructure. The Royal Navy must therefore treat cyber security as a core logistics requirement and future logistics systems should incorporate:

a. Secure communications

b. Network redundancy

c. Cyber resilience measures

d. Regular testing and training

e. Alternative manual procedures



700X NAS Malloy in use on OP HIGHMAST

MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINMENT LESSONS

Many military systems on the front require extensive maintenance support to remain operational. Poor maintenance results in equipment losses, something the Royal Navy are already aware of as warships are highly complex systems requiring continuous technical support. The Royal Navy must assume that in future conflicts access to major repair facilities will not be guaranteed. Consequently, the Royal Navy should emphasise expeditionary maintenance capabilities such as:

a. Forward repair teams

b. Additive manufacturing (3D printing)

c. Mobile maintenance facilities

d. Increased onboard repair capability

e. Predictive maintenance technologies

STRENGTHENING NATO LOGISTICS COOPERATION

One of the most important lessons from Ukraine concerns the value of alliances.

Ukraine's ability to sustain military operations has depended significantly upon international support. Logistics cooperation among allies has enabled the transfer of equipment, ammunition, fuel, and technical assistance. For the Royal Navy, NATO logistics integration will remain essential and future cooperation should focus on:

a. Shared logistics networks

b. Common standards

c. Interoperable supply systems

d. Joint maintenance arrangements

e. Collaborative stockpiling

The ability to draw upon allied logistics resources increases operational flexibility and resilience. In a future conflict, no single navy is likely to operate entirely independently. Logistics cooperation will therefore become a key component of maritime strategy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ROYAL NAVY FORCE DESIGN

The lessons from Ukraine suggest several priorities for future Royal Navy development.

a. Logistics must be considered a warfighting function rather than a purely support activity.

b. Resilience should become a central design principle.

c. Autonomous systems should be integrated into logistics operations.

d. Digital transformation must accelerate.

e. Logistics planning should assume operations in highly contested environments.

These changes require adjustments to doctrine, procurement, training, and force structure.

CONCLUSION

The Ukraine conflict has fundamentally changed perceptions of military logistics. The war has demonstrated that logistics infrastructure is now vulnerable to precision weapons, drones, cyber-attacks, and persistent surveillance.

For the Royal Navy, these lessons are highly relevant. As a globally deployed maritime force, its effectiveness depends upon resilient and adaptable logistics systems capable of operating in contested environments.

The conflict highlights the need for distributed logistics networks, enhanced cyber security, greater use of autonomous systems, improved maintenance capabilities, and stronger cooperation with NATO allies. It also demonstrates that logistics should be viewed not merely as a support function but as a critical component of operational success.

Future naval warfare will be shaped by technological innovation and increasingly sophisticated threats. The Royal Navy's ability to adapt its logistics systems to this new reality will play a major role in determining its effectiveness in future conflicts. By learning from Ukraine, the Royal Navy can strengthen its resilience, improve operational sustainability, and ensure that it remains capable of supporting British and allied maritime objectives in an increasingly complex security environment.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY: SURFLOT TENDERS BRING SUPPORT TO LIFEHOUSE

CPO(CS) Stuart Bradshaw

The LifeHouse is a community kitchen and support centre based in Albert Road, Southsea, providing free meals and a welcoming space for those in need. They open weekly, serving a hot breakfast/brunch on Wednesdays from 9am and a nutritious evening meal on Thursdays from 6pm.

Beyond food, the LifeHouse offers a sense of community, support and guidance to people facing difficult circumstances. Their aim is to help individuals see that there is always a positive way forward, offering encouragement and a first step towards stability and personal progress.

In addition to providing meals, the LifeHouse offers a wide range of practical support services. These include clothing, shoes, sleeping bags and toiletries, as well as access to weekly free counselling. Visitors can also receive help and guidance with benefits, official paperwork and letters through the Advice Portsmouth team.

Further support includes assistance with CV writing and printing, hairdressing, foot care and ear care services. The LifeHouse also provides a welcoming space for people to sit down, have a hot drink and talk through any worries, with the option of prayer and support for spiritual wellbeing. Regular visits from the Street Vets team ensure that pets belonging to service users also receive care and advice.

Catering Services personnel from SURFLOT Tenders have launched a new quarterly initiative with the LifeHouse, combining community support with training and development.

Tenders teams have worked with LifeHouse in the past, providing meals for its patrons, which have always been well received by both those using the service and the staff who support them.

As part of the new initiative, a team of chefs led by Tenders personnel plan, cook and serve a quality two-course meal for around 150 members of the local community. It not only supports those who need it most but also gives junior CS personnel a valuable opportunity to develop their skills in a real, hands-on environment outside of their unit commitments.









From my perspective as CPOCS Tenders, it's a real honour to have the chance to show the public the professionalism and quality that RN chefs take pride in every day. From a training point of view, it's a brilliant opportunity for our junior CS personnel, the experience they gain is genuinely invaluable.

We're grateful to Mike and the team for giving us the opportunity to get involved and showcase what we can do within the community. It's also great to be able to take a bit of pressure off their team, even if it's just for a night, so they can focus more time on supporting their members.

The aim is simple: build teamwork, boost confidence and reinforce high catering standards. It gives junior personnel the chance to step away from their usual roles, try something different and grow both professionally and personally.

Leadership of delivery is driven by Tenders CS, bringing teams together and giving them the chance to work closely with people they would normally support and guide in their day jobs.
It's a great way to build stronger working relationships, improve engagement and give individuals more ownership and pride in what they deliver.

POCS Ben Lynch, who oversaw the delivery of the March event, said:

"It was a really rewarding experience that helped build teamwork while giving something back."

The initiative is already proving its value, both in supporting the community and developing people. It's a great example of how CS personnel go beyond their core role, making a real difference both inside and outside the Service.

Mike Morell, LifeHouse Manager, said:

"Having the RN chefs come in is a real boost for everyone, both for our guests and our volunteers. The standard of food is incredible, and it takes a huge weight off our shoulders for the evening. It's a great example of people coming together to support the community."

With plans to continue the programme each quarter, SURFLOT Tenders are showing how strong teamwork, and a bit of initiative can have a lasting impact.

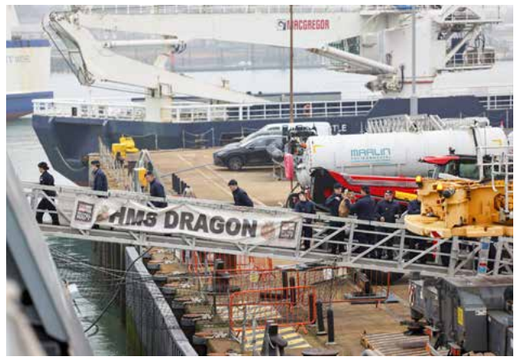
TEAM LEIDOS RAPID LOGISTICS SUPPORT TO ROYAL NAVY SHIPS

Simon Boon – Customer Relations Manager (Maritime)



Public attention has been focused on the Royal Navy's response to hostilities in the Middle East in early 2026, particularly the deployment of **HMS DRAGON**. Less visible was the extensive logistics effort required to help generate and prepare several vessels at short notice. Even in routine circumstances, getting a ship to sea is resource-intensive; and the demand increases sharply when a ship is tasked immediately after maintenance and when other platforms, including an aircraft carrier, are also being readied. Meeting the requirement on this occasion depended on a coordinated, whole-force approach.

Team Leidos, the consortium of global defence and logistics specialists led by Leidos and supported by strategic partners under the Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation (LCST) programme, helped rapidly support three vessels activated at short notice: **HMS DRAGON, HMS PRINCE OF WALES**, both in the UK, and **RFA LYME BAY** in Gibraltar. In support of the Government's tasking, and consistent with the First Sea Lord's whole-force approach, activity included urgent delivery of food and medical stores, accelerated replenishment for the carrier, rapid assembly of a deployable medical module, and establishment of a new ground line of communication (GLOC) to sustain activity in the Eastern Mediterranean. Team Leidos specialists (Operations, Medical, Commodity Support Services and Customer Relations) worked closely with Royal Navy stakeholders and supply chain partners to deliver.



HMS DRAGON – RAPID RESPONSE PROVISIONING

When **DRAGON** was tasked to sail at short notice, it required immediate resupply of food and medical stores. On 3 March 2026 the ship signaled a requirement for a full store ship within six days (the MoD's minimum requirement is 10 days). Team Leidos activated emergency procurement, our partners in Bidfood confirmed a provisions order within hours and pulled deliveries forward, while medical stores were prepared for dispatch, coordinating with Royal Navy Supply Chain logisticians to Portsmouth during ammunitioning, enabling DRAGON to sail fully provisioned despite the incredibly compressed timeline.

HMS PRINCE OF WALES – LARGE-SCALE REPLENISHMENT AT SHORT NOTICE

For **PRINCE OF WALES**, Team Leidos supported a concurrent large-scale resupply operation under significant time pressure. Substantial demands for ambient and frozen food were brought forward, and an additional fresh-produce demand was fulfilled within 48 hours. This required close coordination between Team Leidos' food supply-chain team, Portsmouth Naval Base and the Waterfront Logistics Support Group to manage high delivery volumes and access over a 24-hour period, supporting the PRINCE OF WALES in meeting its revised readiness date.

RFA LYME BAY – DEPLOYING MEDICAL CAPABILITY AND ESTABLISHING A MEDITERRANEAN GLOC

In parallel to events in Portsmouth, planning identified the potential for **LYME BAY**, at that time in Gibraltar, to host an enhanced medical capability. Joint Medical Capability requested a second Maritime Medical Emergency Response Team (MMERT) module to be generated at speed, with associated uplift activity coordinated through Devonport. Team Leidos contractors identified equipment and supplies from UK stockpiles and, within 24 hours, assembled plans to build a deployable treatment module using inventory and newly procured items. Although the requirement was later stood down, the work demonstrated the team's readiness to support this capability at short notice.

Team Leidos also addressed sustainment to the Eastern Mediterranean. With military air at capacity and commercial options disrupted and costly, the team established a new GLOC to move cargo by land and sea, using Souda Bay (Crete) and Cyprus as logistics hubs and standing up forward logistics support at both ends. Working with Defence Supply Chain Operations and Movements (DSCOM), as well as military personnel in the Sovereign Base Area, Team Leidos dispatched multiple 40-foot trucks with provisions, equipment and spares on expedited schedules and developed a return plan for Reverse Supply Chain stores.



A further GLOC delivery for DRAGON followed in early April. The team also generated and held cold-chain pharmaceutical pallets ready for rapid call-forward to theatre to meet short shelf-life constraints.

There are several ex-Royal Navy personnel now working within Team Leidos who can share their experience with the company to the benefit of RN operations. One of those is Ben Hughes, the Team Leidos Operations Director of LCST, who is a former Royal Navy Logistics Commander with experience providing support to operations. "All the members of the Team Leidos family are proud to have supported the Royal Navy through expedited procurement and flexible supply-chain solutions to meet urgent operational requirements in challenging circumstances."



A TALE OF TWO BLUE SUITS

CPO(SC) Simon Pickett

ONE CHIEF, TWO 'NAVIES' AND MORE ACRONYMS THAN ANYONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED

"There are only two certainties in life: death, taxes and somebody asking ‘where are my stores".

When I was informed that I would be seconded into the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Force Generation Tier 3 Supply Chain role for 18 months to cover a RFA personnel gap, I imagined it would be a fairly straightforward case of ‘swapping’ one dark blue uniform for…well…another dark blue uniform.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

A DIFFERENT FLEET, A DIFFERENT CULTURE

The first lesson I learnt was that while the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary share the same oceans, the same operations and often the same ships alongside each other, they operate in remarkably different ways.

The RN is a military organisation driven by service law, rank structure and operational necessity. The RFA, meanwhile, is crewed by civilian seafarers operating under maritime employment contracts, commercial legislation and collective agreements negotiated through maritime trade unions.

For someone who had spent an entire career where "because the Command said so" usually settled the debate, entering a world where consultation, contractual interpretation and industrial agreements formed part of everyday business was both fascinating and, at times, humbling.

I quickly realised that if I wanted to help, I first needed to listen.

LEAN BY DESIGN…OR NECESSITY?

In the RN we are used to working with a lean workforce, but the RFA Supply Chain branch is lean on a whole different scale.

Every individual carries responsibility that in many RN units would be spread across several people. There is very little redundancy built into the system, meaning every absence, maintenance period or deployment creates pressure somewhere else.

Despite this, the professionalism displayed by RFA Supply Chain personnel is nothing short of remarkable.

Nothing illustrated the challenge better than the final drawdown of the WAVE Class. With RFA WAVE KNIGHT and RFA WAVE RULER entering disposal after several years alongside, an enormous volume of equipment remained on board and stored within containers at Donnington.

The task was far more than emptying ships; it required identifying, accounting for, redistributing or disposing of thousands of items while preserving valuable capability for the wider Fleet. CPOSC Terry Mullens and his team of recently recruited ABSCs, the first for the RFA SC branch in preparation for the solid support capability, spearheaded the operation on board WAVE RULER in Birkenhead, often working in the less-than-glamorous conditions of a mothballed ship where lighting and power were more of a luxury than a guarantee – a situation that perfectly demonstrated what a lean workforce routinely has to overcome.

Once the ship was stripped, CPOSC Steve Edney took the team on the equally daunting challenge of clearing the containerised holdings at Donnington. Through determination, and ingenuity, both teams delivered an outstanding result, leaving the WAVE Class completely free of equipment and ensuring valuable assets were recovered for future operational use rather than disappearing into history with the ships themselves.

It was a quiet success that will never make the headlines but perfectly encapsulates the RFA ethos: achieve the mission with the people you have, adapt to the challenges in front of you, and get the job done without fuss – preferably with a brew in hand.

Whether supporting a ship alongside in a commercial dockyard, preparing vessels for deployment or solving complex provisioning problems thousands of miles from the UK, the RFA SC simply get on with it.

LEARNING TO SPEAK RFA

Every organisation has its own language.

The RN has enough acronyms to confuse NATO.

The RFA somehow manages to have even more.

Early meetings often involved enthusiastic nodding while desperately trying to determine whether the conversation concerned maintenance planning, industrial relations or somebody's lunch order.

Fortunately, colleagues were incredibly patient, taking time to explain nuances that only years of RFA experience can provide.

It soon became apparent that the differences between organisations weren’t barriers - they were opportunities.

BUILDING BRIDGES

One of the most rewarding aspects of the secondment was acting as a bridge between RN and RFA Supply Chain communities.

A visit to commercial dockyards highlighted opportunities to improve maintenance period accounting through dedicated U-code UINs, providing better cost capture and bringing RFA processes closer to established RN methodology. Fortunately, colleagues were incredibly patient, taking time to explain nuances that only years of RFA experience can provide.

Having previously served as part of the SURFLOT East Force Gen inspection team, I quickly recognised how blending RN compliance expertise with the RFA's pragmatic operational experience could produce more effective assurance while preserving the flexibility that RFA operations demand.

A perfect example was the review of the Fleet Date Inspection (FDI) Supply Chain question set. Over time, the FDI had evolved into what many would consider a "mini FLI" – comprehensive, but increasingly focused on administrative compliance rather than its primary purpose of assuring a ship's ability to operate safely and effectively.

We challenged that approach, stripping away unnecessary duplication and refocusing the inspection on what really matters. The revised question set now closely mirrors the RN Surface Ship Safety and Readiness Check (SARC) 1 and 2, providing a proportionate, risk-based assessment that delivers meaningful assurance without imposing unnecessary burden on already lean ship's staff. It is a small change on paper, but one that demonstrates what can be achieved when two organisations start sharing best practice.

THE HUMAN SIDE

What impressed me most wasn't the systems or the processes.

It was the people.

I've worked with individuals who routinely overcome workforce shortages, ageing platforms, changing priorities and challenging deployment schedules while maintaining a sense of humour.

I've seen Supply Chain professionals support maintenance periods in commercial yards one week and prepare ships for operational deployment the next.

I've watched teams solve high-priority operational defects with creativity that would make some procurement organisations nervous.

And through it all, there has always been somebody willing to put the kettle on.

MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT

The secondment reinforced something I perhaps didn't fully appreciate beforehand.

Whether you're wearing RN or RFA rig, everyone shares the same objective: delivering operational capability to the Fleet.

The methods may sometimes differ.

The terminology may often differ.

The employment contracts certainly do differ.

But the professionalism, pride and commitment look exactly the same.

HANDING THE BATON BACK

As I hand the role back to my RFA colleagues in June 2026, I do so knowing this appointment has been the perfect progression in my career. Having previously undertaken the Tier 3 Supply Chain role within the Royal Navy, it was a privilege to provide the same level of assurance and support to the RFA, only this time as the standalone Supply Chain Subject Matter Expert. The role demanded far more than inspections; it meant providing specialist advice to Senior Rates and Logistics Officers, supporting Force Generation activities, influencing MOD Supply Chain policy, and acting as the vital link between RFA Supply Chain and the wider Defence logistics enterprise.

I'd like to think the RN and RFA Supply Chain communities are closer than when I arrived, with stronger relationships, better mutual understanding and practical improvements that will continue to benefit both organisations long after I've departed. More importantly, I've seen that the challenges facing both services are similar and that the best solutions are often found by sharing experience.

For me personally, it has been one of the most professionally rewarding appointments of my career. I've learnt that "civilian" certainly doesn't mean "less operational", that maritime trade organisations are simply another stakeholder to engage professionally, and that the RFA consistently delivers extraordinary outputs with an exceptionally lean workforce.

Most importantly, I've learnt that interoperability isn't created by policy documents or organisational charts. It's built through trust, shared experiences and people willing to understand each other's world.

And if that understanding occasionally comes with a debate over whether it's called ‘stores’, ‘parts’, ‘a consignment’ or ‘that thing we ordered six months ago’, then all the better. After all, logisticians have always spoken their own language.

A SUMMER BBQ WITH A BIGGER PURPOSE

The annual SURFLOT Summer BBQ returned on Wednesday 29 July, bringing together SURFLOT East Logistics personnel and their families for an afternoon centred on connection, support, and time together away from the normal demands of work.

More than just a summer event, the BBQ provided a valuable opportunity to recognise the families who support our people throughout the year. Whether managing the pressures of duty, deployments, long working days, or the routine uncertainty that comes with Service life, families remain an essential part of the wider logistics community.

With support from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, the Gosling Foundation, and the Leisure and Amenities Fund, the event was able to offer a relaxed and welcoming environment for personnel, partners, children, and wider family members to spend time together. That support made a real difference, helping turn a simple gathering into something that strengthened relationships across the community.

The afternoon included face painting, a bouncy castle, an inflatable football shootout, a magician, a DJ, and a selection of outdoor games. These activities helped create an atmosphere where families could meet, children could enjoy themselves, and colleagues could speak as friends rather than simply as shipmates or members of the same branch.

Aggie's also attended the event, speaking with families and offering advice, signposting, and support. Their presence added genuine value, particularly for those who may not always know what help is available or where to go for guidance. It was a useful reminder that welfare support is most effective when it is visible, approachable, and part of the community it serves.

Behind the scenes, events like this take time, patience, and careful coordination. From securing charitable funding and arranging activities to managing the practical details on the day, a significant amount of work goes into creating something that feels easy and enjoyable for those attending. That effort is often unseen, but it is what allows families to simply arrive, relax, and feel part of something positive.

The Tenders team and students due to commence LCSQC invested considerable time into organising and delivering the event. Their contribution was not about seeking recognition, but about doing something worthwhile for the people around them. That practical commitment to the wider logistics family reflects the best of what community support should look like.

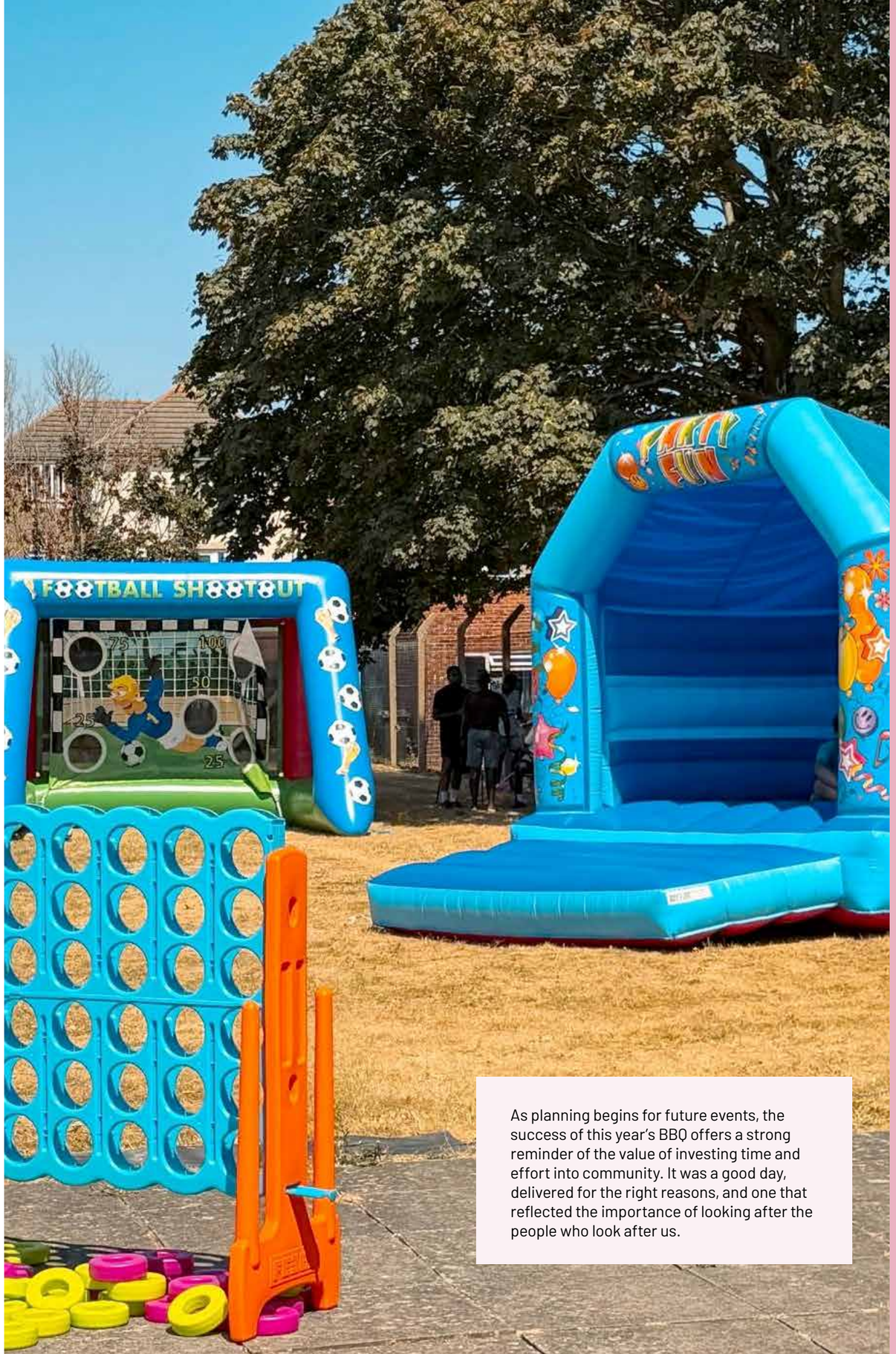
Particular thanks go to POCS Stu Trotman, who led much of the organisation and helped bring the different elements together. His efforts, along with those of the wider team, ensured the day ran smoothly and achieved what it set out to do: bring families together, say thank you for their support, and strengthen the network around our Service personnel.

The continued support of the RNRMC, the Gosling Foundation, and LAF remains invaluable. Their funding enables local events that have a direct and visible impact, supporting welfare, morale, and family cohesion in a way that is both simple and meaningful.

For those who attended, the BBQ was a chance to pause, connect, and enjoy the company of others who understand the demands and rewards of Service life. For the SURFLOT Logistics community, it was also a reminder that support does not always have to be formal. Sometimes it is found in shared conversations, children playing together, and families knowing they are part of something wider.







As planning begins for future events, the success of this year's BBQ offers a strong reminder of the value of investing time and effort into community. It was a good day, delivered for the right reasons, and one that reflected the importance of looking after the people who look after us.





MEMORIAM

This year's edition of Logistics Matters is dedicated to the memory of our fellow Logisticians who have passed away during the past year. Through their service, dedication, and friendship, they made a lasting contribution to the Royal Navy and to those who served alongside them.

Leading Chef James Hill

Leading Chef Tomas Stevenson

Writer Prashal Fonseka

Writer Samuel Anorkwah

The Royal Navy Logistics Branch remembers them with gratitude and respect. Our thoughts and deepest condolences remain with their families, and loved ones.

Fair winds and following seas.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

CELEBRATING RECOGNITION ACROSS THE ROYAL NAVY LOGISTICS COMMUNITY

Royal Navy logisticians have again been recognised across a wide range of honours and commendations, reflecting the reach of the branch and the people whose work underpins operational delivery. From national awards to allied recognition, the past year has highlighted logisticians contributing through operational delivery, leadership, specialist support, training, and international engagement.

IN THE NEW YEAR HONOURS 2026:

Andrew Scraggs, Navy Logistics Commodities Team Leader, was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to Defence.

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS 2026:

Vice Admiral Sir Andy Kyte, Chief of Defence Logistics and Support, appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE). His award underlines the importance of logistics and support as a core Defence function.

Warrant Officer First Class Lee Reeves (Supply Chain) was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of his outstanding service.

Captain Mat Gee RN received a King's Commendation.

RECOGNITION EXTENDED BEYOND THE NATIONAL HONOURS SYSTEM:

Warrant Officer First Class Duncan Thornhill received the Meritorious Service Medal.

Lieutenant Commander Andrew Bass RN received the NATO Meritorious Service Medal.

Together, these awards show the contribution made by Royal Navy logisticians within the UK, across Defence, and alongside our allies.

COMMENDATIONS ALSO FEATURED

Lieutenant Commander Matt Ford received a Joint Commander's Commendation.

Chief Petty Officer (Catering Services) Collins was awarded a First Sea Lord's Commendation.

Their recognition points to the depth of talent across the Logistics specialisations and the value of work often delivered behind the scenes.

These awards recognise individual achievement, but they also reflect the wider contribution made by the Naval Logistics community. Whether enabling operations, sustaining people and platforms, or providing specialist support, logisticians remain central to the Royal Navy's ability to deliver.

Congratulations to all those recognised.



Lt Cdr Andy Bass being awarded his NATO MSM

CHIEF NAVAL LOGISTICS OFFICER'S AWARDS 2026

The Chief Naval Logistics Officer's Awards and Defence School of Logistics and Administration Training Awards provide an important opportunity to recognise the professionalism, commitment, and achievement of our people across the Logistics Branch. From those excelling in training to individuals and teams delivering across operations, force generation, and support activity, these awards celebrate the contributions our people make every day.

AWARD	CRITERIA	WINNER	
The Robert Florence Trophy	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during Phase 2 Supply Chain training.	Supply Chain Ruby Watson	
The John Standring Memorial Cup	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during the Leading Supply Chain Qualifying Course.	Acting Leading Supply Chain Shannon Carr	
The John Smith Memorial Cup	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during Petty Officer Supply Chain Qualifying Course.	Acting Petty Officer Supply Chain Katie Todd	
Worshipful Company of Cooks – Catering Trainee of the Year	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during Phase 2 Chef training.	Catering Services Dean Wadd	
The Thompson Cup	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during the Leading Chefs Qualifying Course.	Leading Catering Services Charlotte Kent-Woolsey	
The Keith Collick Memorial Trophy	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during the Petty Officer Catering Services Qualifying Course.	Petty Officer Catering services Jamie Barber	Unable to Attend
The Royal Naval Writer's Association Trophy	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during Phase 2 Writer training.	Writer Joel Day	

AWARD	CRITERIA	WINNER	
The Peter Grocott Trophy	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during the Leading Writers Qualifying Course.	Writer Brett Campbell	Unable to Attend
The Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators Award	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during Petty Officer Writer Qualifying Course.	Leading Writer Adam Schofield	
The Younghusband Award	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during the Royal Marine Logistics (Supply Chain) Class 2 course.	Lance Corporal Ross Verrills	
The Leidos Trophy	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during the Royal Marine Logistics (Supply Chain) Class 1 course.	Sergeant Dyllan Briggs	
The Gedge Medal	For the trainee who achieved the highest overall examination results during BLOC.	Sub Lieutenant Imogen White	
The Royal NAAFI Ronnie Smith Maritime Colleague Award	Awarded to the Royal NAAFI individual working with the Royal Navy who consistently demonstrates exceptional dedication, integrity, and professionalism, and customer service.	Mr Bir Tamang Laundry Manager HMS ST ALBANS	Unable to attend
Family and People Support – Team Award	The Family and People Support team that has consistently produced the highest professional standards and demonstrated the highest levels of commitment and pride throughout the year.	Royal Navy Family and People Support Portal	
Family and People Support – Individual Award	The Family and People Support individual that has consistently produced the highest professional standards and demonstrated the highest levels of commitment and pride throughout the year.	Colour Sergeant Rachel Abbott	Unable to Attend

AWARD	CRITERIA	WINNER	
Fleet Supply Chain Individual Award	The Supply Chain individual that has consistently produced the highest professional standard and demonstrated the highest levels of commitment and pride throughout the year.	Leading Supply Chain Lilly Dell	
Fleet Supply Chain Team Award	The Supply Chain team that has consistently produced the highest professional standard and demonstrated the highest levels of commitment and pride throughout the year.	Enhanced Base Support His Majesty's Naval base Clyde	
Fleet Writer Team Award	The award for the Writer team that has consistently produced the highest professional standards, team pride and cohesion throughout the year.	HMS IRON DUKE	
The Nige Prouse Award	A member of the Writer Specialisation who has demonstrated exceptional professional standards and who has consistently motivated, led and engendered an 'esprit-de-corps' that adopts all the Naval core values.	Leading Writer Mark Johnstone	
Catering Services Team Award (Submarines)	The award for the Catering Services team that has consistently produced the highest professional standards, team pride, and cohesion throughout the year.	HMS VENGEANCE (Port)	Unable to Attend
Catering Services Team Award (Smaller Unit)	The award for the Catering Services team that has consistently produced the highest professional standards, team pride and cohesion throughout the year.	Field Catering Troop & 45 Logistics Company	
Catering Services Team Awards (Major Unit)	The award for the Catering Services team that has consistently produced the highest professional standards, team pride, and cohesion throughout the year.	HMS RICHMOND	

AWARD	CRITERIA	WINNER	
Royal Navy Chef of the Year	The Royal Navy Chef who demonstrated the highest standards of professionalism for food quality, culinary flare, innovation, nutritional balance, training and professional development of themselves and others.	Leading Catering Services Luke Upton	
The Rear Admiral Sir David Allen Sword	Awarded to the Officer who has most effectively contributed to Operational Capability.	Lieutenant Commander Alex Hall	
Chief Naval Logistics Officer Writer Award	Awarded to a Writer for logistics excellence across Operations, Training, and Force Generation.	Leading Writer Emily Riley	
Chief Naval Logistics Officer Supply Chain Award	Awarded to a Supply Chain rating for logistics excellence across Operations, Training, and Force Generation.	Petty Officer Supply Chain Michael Thompson	
Chief Naval Logistics Officer – Caterer of the Year Award	The RN caterer who has made an outstanding contribution to the moral component through their delivery of catering services throughout the calendar year.	Leading Catering Services Thomas Simpson	
The Rear Admiral Bradbury Award	Awarded to an Officer for logistics excellence across Operations, Training, and Force Generation.	Lieutenant Peter Reynolds	



Our thanks go out to the following sponsors:

- The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity
- The Worshipful Company of Carmen
- The Worshipful Company of Cooks
- The Royal Naval Writer's Association
- The Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators
- Team Leidos

Congratulations to all our winners, and thank you to all nominating officers for taking the time to recognise your people. The standard of nominations reflects the depth of talent, commitment, and professionalism across the Logistics Branch, and each winner should be rightly proud of their achievement.



LOGISTICS AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Lt Kate Bowden RN

During a World Cup summer hosted in part by Canada, it's only fitting that the Royal Navy Women's Senior Football Team hosted the Canadian Armed Forces and their Patron, Major General Krista Brodie, for a reciprocal overseas fixture this July. With the Royal Navy Women's and Men's teams visiting Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the summer of 2025, the two nations continue to strengthen their bonds of friendship through football, not Soccer as our Canadian cousins would say.

Behind every successful overseas visit is an incredible amount of co-ordination and planning, in which logistics plays a central role to ensure all essential activity is aligned and delivered effectively. From co-ordinating travel, transport, and accommodation to supporting fixture timings, venue access, equipment requirements, and wider administrative arrangements, logistics provides the structure that allows teams, officials, and support staff to focus on the sporting occasion itself.

It was the Royal Navy Football Association's privilege to host Vice Admiral Sir Martin Connell KCB CBE, Patron of the RNFA, at Havant and Waterlooville for the fixture, which, after a hard-fought 90 minutes in unprecedented British weather, saw the Canadian Women's team eventually overcome a stubborn RN defence, scoring in the 85th minute with a tidy finish at the near post.

With some players and staff travelling over 4,500 miles from Victoria, Canada, to Portsmouth, it is only fitting that we shared some of the RN's and Pompey's most treasured experiences, including a tour of Fratton Park, the Ship Anson, HMS VICTORY, and a morning testing their Damage Control in the DRIU. With only a handful of Canadian sailors in their team, it was no surprise the mess deck and engine space were lost!

This was logistics doing what it does best: bringing people, plans, and purpose together. Beyond supporting frontline units and the wider Royal Navy, the same skills help deliver an occasion that was about more than football. It strengthened friendships, built shared memories, and showed how sport can connect nations long after the final whistle.









Royal Navy Women's Senior Football Team welcomes home team captain Lt Nat Bavister from Op FIRECREST.



THE UNSINKABLE WORD

Image: IWM (Q 18672)

"Can someone get the POM?"

It is a phrase still heard in Royal Navy galleys today. New recruits hear it, chefs say it without thinking, and most sailors know exactly what it means. Few, however, know where it came from.

The story starts during the Second World War.

As the Battle of the Atlantic raged, Britain faced a constant struggle to move food and supplies across submarine-infested seas. Every tonne of cargo mattered. Fresh potatoes, although a staple of the British diet, created an unexpected logistics problem. They were bulky, heavy, and prone to spoilage. Most of their weight was simply water.

The answer came in powdered form.

A dehydrated potato product became widely known as POM. Some sources suggest it stood for Preparation of Potato, while others claim sailors and soldiers interpreted it as Potato One Minute because of its quick preparation. Whatever its true origin, the name stuck.

For logisticians, POM was an elegant solution. It weighed less, occupied less space and lasted far longer than fresh potatoes. Just add hot water and it was ready to serve. Whether it was always ready to eat was a matter of opinion.

Despite its mixed reputation, POM solved a genuine problem and remained in military use long after the war ended. In fact, it became such a familiar feature of Service life that it eventually found its way into Parliament.

On 27 July 1960, MP John Hall questioned the government about the continued use of powdered potato for troops serving overseas, particularly in remote locations such as Aden. The debate focused on its quality and popularity, but the response was telling. Whatever people thought of it, POM remained practical. It stored well, travelled well and could feed large numbers of personnel almost anywhere.

Eventually, newer products arrived and the original brand disappeared from civilian life. Supermarkets moved on and most people forgot it had ever existed.

The Royal Navy did not.

Today, the dehydrated potato used at sea bears little resemblance to the wartime original. Manufacturers have changed, recipes have improved and packaging has moved with the times. Yet sailors still call it POM.

There is something rather fitting about that. The Royal Navy is full of words, phrases and customs that have survived long after their original purpose has faded. New ships enter service, equipment evolves and generations pass, but some pieces of naval language prove remarkably resilient.

More than eighty years after it first appeared, POM remains part of everyday life in the Fleet. The product that inspired it may have changed beyond recognition, but the name endures.

Not bad for a powdered potato.

BEFORE THE FIRST SHOT

In the early nineteenth century, the Royal Navy possessed a form of global freedom difficult to imagine today. Its principal warships, driven by sail, were not tied to a fixed fuel supply. Food, water, ammunition and maintenance still mattered, but a ship could remain at sea for months without a land-based energy network. Sail gave navies reach without a vulnerable fuel chain.

Steam changed that freedom. It gave ships greater speed, control and tactical independence from the wind, but introduced a new dependency. Coal was heavy, bulky, and consumed quickly. The more capable the fleet became, the more tightly it was tied to fuel, infrastructure, and distance.

The consequences were unforgiving. Coal took space from stores, ammunition and provisions, while replenishing it was filthy and exhausting work. A fleet that had once ranged widely under sail now had to calculate where it could refuel, how far it could steam, and whether the infrastructure behind it could keep pace.

Britain responded with a worldwide network of coaling stations, including Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Singapore, and Hong Kong. These locations underpinned imperial maritime power but exposed a hard truth. The Navy was now dependent on fixed and vulnerable points to keep moving.

The Russia-Japanese War showed what happens when fighting power outruns sustainment. In 1904, Russia sent its Baltic Fleet on an 18,000-mile voyage to the Pacific to support the besieged Russian base at Port Arthur. Almost immediately, anxious Russian crews triggered the Dogger Bank incident by mistaking British fishing trawlers for Japanese torpedo boats. British hostility made the route harder. Without access to the Suez Canal or a British-style network of overseas bases, the fleet endured a punishing passage around Africa, dependent on contracted colliers meeting it at awkward rendezvous points.

Logistics soon undermined the fleet's fighting condition. Ships were overloaded with coal, stacked in bunkers, on decks and in living spaces. Coal dust clogged ventilation, conditions deteriorated, and extra weight drove ships low in the water. Before the battle began, fuel anxiety had degraded endurance, morale, and combat readiness.

By the time the fleet reached the Tsushima Strait in May 1905, its crews were exhausted, machinery worn, and hulls fouled. The Japanese fleet, operating close to home support, met an opponent already weakened by distance. Tsushima was a tactical disaster for Russia, but also a logistical defeat delivered long before the first shot.

The modern parallel is obviously not coal, but dependency. Advanced ships, missiles, sensors and digital systems offer extraordinary capability, but create new sustainment vulnerabilities. A leap forward in combat power can quietly deepen reliance on infrastructure, industry, and supply chains.

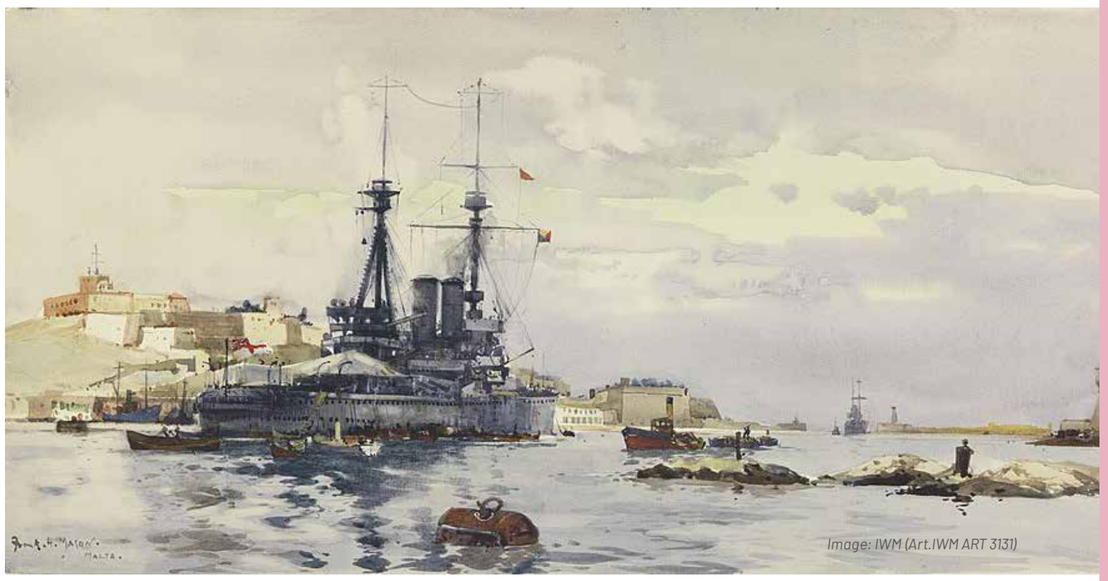


Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 3131)

This is the essence of logistics at reach. Modern maritime operations must cover vast distances, including the Indo-Pacific, while ports, airfields, fuel sites, digital networks and supply routes may be observed, targeted or disrupted. The assumption of a safe rear echelon is increasingly fragile.

The first pressure point is munitions. A nineteenth-century ship could not fight without coal. A modern destroyer or frigate cannot remain credible if it expends its magazines and cannot reload forward. Vertical Launch Systems remain difficult to rearm safely at sea, so magazine capacity can set the tempo as much as speed or range.

The second pressure point is maintenance. Today's warships combine propulsion, combat systems, software, radar, networks, and specialist components. A critical defect thousands of miles from home may require contractor support, scarce spares, secure data, and strategic lift. The ship may be at sea, but the answer may sit in a supply chain an adversary can threaten.

The third pressure point is basing. Coaling stations solved one Victorian problem while creating another. Fixed points became essential and vulnerable. Modern forward hubs, ports, fuel depos, ammunition facilities and logistics information systems present the same dilemma. They sustain operations at distance but cannot be assumed secure.

History reminds us that technology alone is never enough. The sail-to-steam transition was made viable through bases, contracts, engineering and hard institutional learning.

Today, at-sea rearming, resilient supply chains, distributed support, additive manufacturing, allied access and better logistics information are central to warfighting credibility.

For planners, the uncomfortable message is clear. A force built around advanced platforms but fragile sustainment risks repeating Russia's mistake in 1905. It may arrive in theatre impressive on paper, but already weakened by the journey. The support system must be designed with the same seriousness as the weapon system.

The enduring lesson is that logistics does not sit behind strategy. It shapes it. In the age of sail, reach appeared almost natural. In the age of coal, it depended on fuel, bases, and labour. Today, it depends on munitions, data, maintenance, industry, allies, and resilient infrastructure. The forces most likely to succeed will be those able to sustain combat power across distance when the supply line itself is under attack.

SERVICE LEAVERS

One of the most memorable moments of the Logistics Officers' and Warrant Officers' Dinner is the opportunity to formally dine out those leaving the Royal Navy. It is a chance to pause and reflect on decades of service, recognising the impact they have had on our profession and Royal Navy.

Although their careers have taken very different paths, each has left the Logistics branch better than they found it, the influence they have had on colleagues and the profession will endure long after they have left the Service.

The Logistics profession extends its sincere thanks and best wishes to the following officers as they leave the Royal Navy:

- Vice Admiral Phil Hally CB MBE (September 1991)



- Commodore Ben Wales (September 1993)



- Captain Sam Kinsey-Briggs RN (Army: August 1998, Royal Navy: April 2001)



- Commander Mick Hine RN (March 1987)



- Lieutenant Commander Fi Sloan RN (October 1988)
- Lieutenant Commander Gary Turner RN (September 1992)



- Lieutenant Commander Chris McLaughlan RN (May 2005)

WE THANK THEM FOR THEIR SERVICE AND WISH THEM EVERY SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE



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