

## **On Christmas Day HMS *St Albans* escorts a Russian warship**

The Portsmouth-based Type 23 frigate *St Albans* was called upon to sail on 23 December and keep watch on the new Russian warship *Admiral Gorshkov* as she passed close to UK territorial waters.

HMS *St Albans* remained at sea on Christmas Day to monitor the Russian frigate, keeping track of its activity in areas of national interest. It was planned that the frigate would return to Portsmouth on 26 December and remain ready for very short notice tasking over the holiday period.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said: *'I will not hesitate in defending our waters or tolerate any form of aggression. Britain will never be intimidated when it comes to protecting our country, our people, and our national interests.'*

The festive season saw an upsurge in Russian units transiting UK waters. HMS *Tyne* was also called upon to escort a different vessel, a Russian intelligence-gathering ship, through the North Sea and the English Channel on Christmas Eve. A Wildcat helicopter from 815 Naval Air Squadron, based at RNAS Yeovilton, was then dispatched to monitor two further Russian vessels.

Commander Chris Ansell, CO of *St Albans*, said: *'My ship's company take great pride in serving Great Britain and the role they play dealing with both the routine and unexpected. Missing parts of Christmas and New Year with our families is never easy, but it is absolutely required as part of our duty to keep Britain safe all year round.'*

*'There is a pressing need to protect UK interests close to home, in the air, above and below the waves. Our trade, economy and information networks depend on the sea, and this operation demonstrates the Royal Navy's commitment to protecting our home waters and readiness to undertake short notice operations.'*

*'Christmas Eve saw some particularly exciting and bumpy weather, with some of my newer sailors getting used to their sea legs, but we have made sure the job was done and I will get my team back home as soon as possible. Our families have been incredibly supportive and even sneaked a few presents into our bags so we had things to open, resulting in a great Christmas Day at sea.'*

The 190-strong ship's company of HMS *St Albans* were with more than 4,000 sailors and Royal Marines deployed across the globe to respond to anything that may come their way. A total of 1,540 men and women are deployed from the sands of the Gulf to the depths of the Atlantic, helping to safeguard the UK's economic interests and maintain security at sea. A further 2,485 are being held

at immediate readiness for any defence or civil task that may emerge over the festive period.

As a high-readiness unit *St Albans* may be called upon at any time to help prevent arms trafficking, people smuggling, conduct counter-terrorism operations, maritime search and rescue, or escort duties like those she is portrayed here. She is equipped with a Merlin helicopter of Culdrose-based 829 Naval Air Squadron, and state-of-the-art radar.

#### Picture captions

*Admiral Gorshkov, photographed on 24 December 2017.*

*Photo: MoD Crown Copyright 2017 ©.*

VL170144003

*Russian ship Akademik Aleksandr Karpinsky photographed on 21 December 2017.*

*Photo: MoD Crown Copyright 2017 ©.*

VL170144002

*Russian ship Admiral Vladimirsky photographed on 21 December.*

*Photo: MoD Crown Copyright 2017 ©.*