

Sword and Shield Newsletter

HMS Defender's Periodical Newsletter

Defendendo Vinco – By Defence I Conquer



TO THE MEDITERRANEAN!

This edition of the Sword and Shield details the outstanding work that the sailors of HMS DEFENDER delivered during the third quarter of 2022.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

I am pleased to report that since our last issue we have completed a period of important maintenance to keep DEFENDER ready to deploy on operations around the globe. Our highly capable engineers have replaced one of our Gas Turbine engines as part of routine maintenance and we have now joined a Task Group led by the amphibious assault ship HMS ALBION. Now deployed in the Mediterranean, DEFENDER is doing what she does best – contributing to UK interests by delivering on operations.

During this period we have welcomed lots of new joiners to the Ship's Company; proceeding on operations offers a great opportunity for them to be embedded into their respective messes and departments while learning new skills and experiencing foreign port visits. The first part of our Mediterranean deployment saw DEFENDER visit Rota, Spain where we were looked after by our NATO Allies and our sailors were able to enjoy some well deserved R&R following our short notice deployment on the sandy beaches on the coast of Spain.

Looking forward, DEFENDER will continue to deliver on operations offering the Royal Navy flexibility and readiness in an ever changing world. Our present plan sees us returning to UK this winter and we very much look forward to catching up with friends, family and affiliates when we arrive back in home waters.

On the 11 Sep 22, HMS DEFENDER was joined by a cohort of Officer Cadets from Britannia Royal Naval College who spent several weeks with us completing Initial Sea Training as part of their 29 weeks Initial Naval Training (Officer) programme. The following day, HMS DEFENDER began her deployment from HMNB PORTSMOUTH to join the Littoral Response Group.

Upon leaving her base port, HMS DEFENDER wasted no time in completing several training serials, namely person over board drills, fire, flood and flying exercises. These serials are practiced regularly to ensure the Ship's Company remains safe at sea.

HMS DEFENDER waited on the UK's south coast to meet up with the rest of the Task Group. The task group is comprised of RFA MOUNTS BAY, RFA ARGUS and the Flagship HMS ALBION who is the leader of the task group. This task group is focused around the littoral environment making use of it's amphibious capabilities including embarked Royal Marine Commandos. DEFENDER's mission is to defend this task group'. We used our collective training period to integrate capabilities and practice combined maneuvering serials. As we made our way deeper into international waters, the task group met up with RFA TIDESURGE to fuel underway known as a Replenishment At Sea (RAS).



On the final evening before arriving at Puerto de Rota Naval Base in southern Spain the Wardroom organised a BBQ on the flight deck for the full Ship's Company, which was a particular highlight for many.

The next morning the Chaplain held a short memorial service to the late Queen Elizabeth II and the Ships' Company were given the opportunity to watch the funeral on TV before the Ship proceeded alongside Rota.

Rota is a Spanish town located in the province of Cadiz, Andalusia. Prominently a tourist town, it sits half way between Portugal and Gibraltar. The US Naval Base is the town's largest employer.

Monday was a harbour routine day, time for cleaning, maintenance and bringing new stores onto the Ship. The Medical Department organised a 5km Park Run around the base in the evening which was well attended by the Ship's Company. BZ to Lt Slatter for the fastest time of 18mins!!!!

Tuesday and Wednesday the Ship's Company took advantage of more relaxed working routines, heading into Rota town centre to spend time at the beach and eat at the highly regarded tapas restaurants in the warmer climes of Spain. Playa de la Costilla became a quick favourite with many of the Ship's Company gathering to socialise at the beach.

Several people took the ferry over to Cadiz, while others stayed on base to use the golf course and US Navy Exchange shopping centre. Officer Cadets undergoing their IST joined HMS DEFENDER's Chaplain in attending a church service at the US naval base and received a very warm welcome.

Following the stay at Rota DEFENDER headed into the Mediterranean through the Strait of Gibraltar, one of the busiest shipping choke points on the planet to catch up with the rest of the task group. She is now berthed in Souda Bay (NATO's forward naval base in Crete), where her freshly tanned and highly motivated crew, are completing a deployed maintenance period to enable operations further east.

Engineering Update

The engineering departments continue to keep the ship at a high state of readiness for operations. This is being achieved by continuation training with a heavy focus on qualifying personnel for their complement roles. This has improved the sustainability of DEFENDER at sea.

The Marine Engineering Department has once more delivered by getting DEFENDER to sea for her upcoming operations. The team's continued hard work is reflected by the reliability and resilience of the main machinery on board.

The Weapons engineering department have had a great quarter going from strength to strength. Of particular note is the Weapons Group who had an exemplary report back from their recent Material Assessment. Further BZs should also go to Lt Wheeler on passing her weapons charge qualification on sailing from Portsmouth!

Warfare Update

The operations room team have continued from where they left off in the Baltic by maintaining a good tactical picture in both the real world and in training scenarios. Thanks to their hard work and dedication DEFENDER remains the RN's escort of choice for both the aircraft carriers and more recently the Littoral Response Group.

The gunnery teams have again proved their metal conducting gunnery serials off the south coast and in the Mediterranean Sea showing that they have lost none of their fighting edge during the summer leave period!

The sea specs continue to perform at a high standard and recently conducted a highly successful visual signaling (flag hoist) exercise the other ships in the taskgroup (we won)! There have also been numerous sea boat and swimmer of the watch training serials which have provided invaluable experience for all personnel.

Logistics Update

The Logistics Department has had an exciting time following on from the intense support period alongside in Portsmouth. With plenty of new joiners, our stop in Rota provided the perfect opportunity for those who are new to life onboard DEFENDER to integrate into their respective sub-departments, with some experiencing their first run ashore in the RN.

With the change of programme a great effort was made from the writers branch to organise flights for new joiners and sufficient foreign currency for the crew. As always, the catering service team have done an excellent job of thinking on their feet to source fresh ingredients and provide meals during an ever changing operating pattern.

The supply chain team provided much needed support to ensure the smooth movement of essential stores through the complexity of customs. They switched out all of the cold weather stores at short notice and exchanged all for much needed warm climate clothing. During their down time the team has the chance to go paddle boarding which was thoroughly enjoyed and became a highlight of the stop for many of the Logistics Department, a period which also included beach volleyball!

The medical team are working to improve the overall fitness of the Ship's Company, championing a new "Port Stop Park Run" (5km) for each stop during the deployment; the first of which was a great success with a total of 79 members of the Ship's Company taking part.



Welfare and Support Onboard

For those wanting to send letters or small parcels to friends or family onboard the following address should be used:

303123456 (Service number)
AB Bloggs (Rate and Name)
HMS DEFENDER
BFPO 267
OP ACHILLEAN

Congratulations!

Huge congratulations to PO James (ME) who has been selected for Chief Petty Officer. Also LH (SEA) Molloy who has been promoted to Local Acting Leading Seaman. Further congratulations go to CPO Taylor (WE) and ETME Thompson who were both presented with the Hammerman Award for outstanding services to their department. A remote ceremony was held on the 11 October to present them their awards.

