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11 April 2024

Dear John,

As you will already be aware, towards the end of 2023 there was an agreed change to allow for the Royal Navy (RN) to use the more accurate metric of 'readiness days' as opposed to 'at sea days' to better reflect the value that Naval platforms deliver both alongside and at sea. The MOD has therefore committed to publish readiness days, defined as the days that ships spend available and delivering effect, on an annual basis.

I am writing to you to provide an update on the readiness days that the RN and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Surface Fleet have delivered in 2023. A table setting out readiness days information for the last 10 years is attached at Annex A, including the most recent data from 2023. This is broken down by category to demonstrate the outputs delivered while safeguarding operational security.

When reviewing the data, you will wish to bear in mind that the RN delivered over and above its mandated outputs in 2023, supporting UK and global defence, diplomacy and security interests.

Achievements in 2023 included:

- HMS Diamond supported Operation Prosperity Guardian, defending freedom of navigation and maritime trade in the Red Sea.
- Humanitarian support to the crises in Sudan (HMS Lancaster) and Gaza (RFA Argus and RFA Lyme Bay).
- Both Aircraft Carriers were deployed simultaneously with F-35B Lightning embarked. HMS Prince of Wales returned to the fleet following defect rectification to complete aviation trials in the Western Atlantic. Meanwhile, HMS Queen Elizabeth deployed to Northern Europe and the Norwegian Sea to support NATO and Joint Expeditionary Force tasking, providing her potent fifth-generation carrier striking power for the first time.

The Rt Hon John Healey MP  
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- Two new RFA ships (RFA Proteus and RFA Stirling Castle) were rapidly procured and entered service to help secure UK waters.
- Two Littoral Response Groups, central to future Commando Force operations, have been deployed to the Baltic and Eastern Mediterranean.
- Engine enhancements to the Type 45s are progressing well, with HMS Dauntless having completed her Power Improvement Plan upgrade and completing a successful 6-month deployment to the Caribbean.
- HMS Duncan led NATO Standing Maritime Group 2 as flagship, leading exercises and operations across the Mediterranean.
- The Royal Navy's Batch Two Offshore Patrol Vessels continued to provide persistent presence across the globe, with HMS Trent deployed to West Africa and the Caribbean, HMS Tamar and HMS Spey engaging with allies across the Indo-Pacific region and HMS Medway defending our interests in the Falklands, while her sister ship HMS Forth was in routine refit.

This letter and Annex is copied to the Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee and will be placed in the Library of the House also.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Cartlidge', written in a cursive style.

**JAMES CARTLIDGE MP**