

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER: ALLIED NAVAL AVIATION IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

“Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.”

By Mark L. Evans

With these words before Congress on 20 September 2001, President George W. Bush asked America’s allies to step up and be counted. In response to the terrorist atrocities of 11 September that killed thousands, many nations are demonstrating their resolve to rid the world of terrorism. Four months after the attacks, a snapshot of the forces gathered in the Indian Ocean illustrated the most powerful concentration of allied Naval Aviation since the Arabian Gulf War in 1990–1991.

United Kingdom

“We therefore here in Britain stand shoulder to shoulder with our American friends in this hour of tragedy and we, like them, will not rest until this evil is driven from our world.” Prime Minister Tony Blair’s comments on 11 September 2001 pledged Britain’s unwavering support.

At the time of the attacks, British forces were already in the Indian Ocean conducting Exercise Saif Sareea (Swift Sword) II with Oman, their largest deployment since the Gulf War. These forces immediately supported U.S. strikes against Afghanistan with the British Operation Veritas (Latin for “truth”).





Top, British *Sea Kings* spotted on board the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* (R 06) are ready for launch. Right, the RAF's *Canberra* first flew in May 1949, and the PR9 is again proving crucial in the reconnaissance role. Opposite top, a British *Lynx* and its destroyer hunt for terrorists. Opposite bottom, *Illustrious* is followed by assault ship HMS *Fearless* (L 10), their screen and vital replenishment ships.



helos or two *Sea Kings*. The *Lynx* on destroyer HMS *Southampton* (D 90) is from 815 Squadron 211 Flight.

Replenishment ship RFA *Fort Victoria* (A 387) can operate five *Sea Kings* or *Merlins*, and RFA *Fort Rosalie* (A 385) four *Sea Kings*. Repair ship RFA *Diligence* (A 132) can carry one *Chinook* HC 1. Landing ships RFA *Sir Percivale* (L 3036) and RFA *Sir Tristram* (L 3505) can operate either one *Chinook*, *Gazelle*, *Lynx* or *Sea King*.

Approximately 4,200 personnel are currently in theater. Fleet Air Arm and Royal Air Force (RAF) commands include:

Carrier HMS *Illustrious* (R 06) can operate either eight *Sea Harrier* FA 2s and eight *Harrier* GR 7s; a rotary-wing complement of four *Sea King* AEW 2s and two *Sea King* HAS Mk 6s or *Merlin* HM Mk1s; or a combination of all three. Embarked are 820 and 845 Squadrons, supported by “flights” (detachments).

Assault ship HMS *Fearless* (L 10) has two *Lynx* AH Mk 3 helos and two *Gazelle* AH Mk 1s from 847 Squadron on board. Between one and three destroyers and frigates each embark one to two *Lynx* Mk 3 or Mk 8

Shore-based RAF aircraft supporting naval operations include VC-10 C1K/K3-4 tankers from 10 or 101 Squadrons; *Tristar* K1/KC1 tankers from 216 Squadron; E-3D *Sentry* AEW1s from 8 or 23 Squadrons; *Nimrod* R1s from 51 Squadron; *Nimrod* MR2s from 120, 201 or 206 Squadrons; *Canberra* PR9s from 39 Squadron; and C-130J-K C1/C3-5 *Hercules* from 24, 30, 47 or 70 Squadrons.

Australia

On 16 October, the day after President Bush’s request

to Prime Minister John Howard, the prime minister formally announced Australia's commitment to the war against terrorism.

A total of 1,550 Australian personnel are deployed, including aviation elements:

Two frigates, each capable of embarking two S-70B-2 *Seahawks* (an SH-60F derivative) or one *Seahawk* and one AS 350B *Squirrel* helo.

Amphibious troop ship HMAS *Kanimbla* (L51), former U.S. tank landing ship *Saginaw* (LST 1188). *Kanimbla* has been modified to accommodate either four *Black Hawks*, three *Sea King* HAS 50/50As or one *Chinook*.

Royal Australian Air Force support comprises four F/A-18A *Hornets* (also known as AF-18As), two P-3C/Update II *Orions*, two KB-707 tankers and one C-130 *Hercules*. Air defense for these commands while deployed ashore, primarily at Diego Garcia, B.I.O.T., is provided by the 16th Air Defense Regiment. Naval aircraft are deployed from squadrons HC-723, HS-748, HS-816 or HS-817.

Canada

Canadian support was offered immediately following the terrorist attacks, and on 7 October Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced Operation Apollo, Canada's contribution to the coalition.

More than 3,000 members of the Canadian forces are already committed or have been alerted for possible deployment, including

Below, an Australian boarding party from the frigate HMAS *Anzac* (150) intercepts a ship suspected of smuggling to the terrorists. Covering them from above is *Anzac's* *Skyhawk*. Opposite, a Canadian *Sea King* lifts a search and rescue swimmer from the water during recovery training in the Indian Ocean.

aviation elements:

One destroyer, capable of operating two CH-124A or B *Heltas Sea Kings*; three frigates, each capable of embarking one *Heltas Sea King*; and one replenishment ship, HMCS *Preserver* (510), able to carry three *Heltas Sea Kings*.

Canadian Air Force support includes three CC-130 *Hercules* (ready to deploy), two CP-140 *Aurora* maritime aircraft (ready to deploy) and one CC-150 *Polaris* (Airbus A310) airlifter from 8 Wing Trenton.

In addition, aviation assets are assigned to Operation Support, providing emergency response and humanitarian assistance to Canada's allies.

France

The French offered immediate assistance from warships already in the Indian Ocean, followed on 1 December by notice of their reinforcement by Operation Héraclès, the intended deployment of Task Force 473.

Over 3,000 personnel are involved, including aviation elements:

Nuclear-powered carrier *Charles de Gaulle* (R 91), embarking 16 *Super Etendard* strike and reconnaissance aircraft, 10 *Rafale M* interceptors, two E-2C Group 2 *Hawkeyes* and one or more escadrilles (similar to dets) of at least two AS 565MA *Panther* helos, though additional helos can be temporarily accommodated. Embarked flottilles (comparable to squadrons) include 11F and 17F (*Super Etendards*), 12F (*Rafales*) and 4F (*Hawkeyes*).



LSPH Damian Pawlenko, RAN



PH2 Jimmy Lee

Charles de Gaulle's screen includes two destroyers—each capable of embarking two WG-13 *Lynx* helos—and one destroyer and one frigate, each operating a *Panther*.

In addition, ships already deployed in the Indian Ocean at the beginning of the crisis included survey ship *Bougainville* (L 9077), normally embarking two SA 321G *Super Frelon* helos; three frigates, each capable of operating a *Panther*; and two replenishment ships, each capable of operating one SA 310B *Alouette III* or *Lynx* Mk 4 helo. *Atlantique II* maritime aircraft from either 21F or 23F are standing by.

Germany

German condemnation of the terrorist attacks was immediate, followed on 19 September by a declaration from the Bundestag (parliament) of “unqualified solidarity” with the United States. The day after a request made by President Bush to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on 7 November, Herr Schröder announced the Federal Cabinet’s decision to commit a task group, which sailed on 2 January 2002.

A total of 3,900 personnel have been alerted for possible deployment, including aviation elements:

Between one and three frigates, each capable of embarking two MK 88 *Sea Lynxes*. Additional support by two Marinefliegergeschwadern (similar to carrier air wings): wing 3 flying *Atlantic Is* and wing 5 flying MK 41 *Sea Kings*.

Italy

Italy denounced the terrorist atrocities from the first day. On 7 November Defense Minister Antonio Martino announced the composition of its task force.

A total of 2,700 personnel are assigned, including aviation elements:

Carrier *Guisepppe Garibaldi* (C 551), which can

operate either 16 AV-8B *Harrier IIs* or 18 SH-3D *Sea King* or EH-101 *Merlin* helos. *Guisepppe Garibaldi's* screen comprises two frigates, each capable of operating one AB-212 helo, and replenishment ship *Etna* (A 5326), which can support one *Sea King* or *Merlin*. In addition, between 6 and 8 *Tornado* IDSs have been notified of possible deployment. *Sea Kings* are assigned from either the 1st or 3rd Squadrons, and AB 212s from the 2nd, 4th or 5th Squadrons.

Japan

On 29 October the Japanese government gave final approval for the deployment of their Maritime Self Defense Force, the first time it has directly supported combat since WW II (Japanese forces supporting peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East have arrived after cease-fires).

Approximately 750 personnel are assigned, including aviation elements:

Destroyer *Kurama* (DDH 144), capable of operating three SH-60J *Seahawks*. Two additional destroyers, each embarking one *Seahawk*, are under consideration for deployment. Minesweeper tender *Uraga* (MST 463) can operate one MH-53E *Sea Dragon*, and support ships *Hamana* (AOE 424) and *Towada* (AOE 422) have helo capabilities.

As attacks continue to be waged against terrorist targets, the exact composition of forces will ebb and flow to meet the need. Throughout this time of conflict, the presence of U.S. Naval Aviation will continue to be made stronger by the support of our allies.



Mark L. Evans is a historian with the Naval Aviation History and Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center.