

UK Aligns Aircraft Carrier Deployment with France and Italy in Indo-Pacific Strategy

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The United Kingdom has confirmed it is working closely with France and Italy to coordinate aircraft carrier deployments in the Indo-Pacific region, underscoring a growing European commitment to joint defence operations and regional security.

Defence Minister Maria Eagle, responding to a parliamentary question from Conservative MP Ben Obese-Jecty, revealed that the UK's HMS Prince of Wales has been scheduled for deployment in alignment with France's Charles de Gaulle and Italy's Cavour. This trilateral coordination forms part of the European Carrier Group Interoperability Initiative (ECGII), a multilateral defence framework designed to enhance naval interoperability among European powers.

The ECGII aims to facilitate the generation of a combined European maritime strike capability that can support operations under multinational, European Union, or NATO command structures. The cooperation involves the synchronisation of not only carrier deployments but also air wings, escort vessels, and logistical support, enabling the participating nations to operate cohesively when deployed in multinational formats.

According to the initiative's founding declaration, each nation retains full sovereignty over its forces. The agreement explicitly states that nothing in the declaration undermines the right of any participant to conduct national or independently aligned military operations. It also reaffirms the strategic importance of the transatlantic defence relationship, noting that interoperability with the United States remains essential for the effectiveness of European naval forces.

While this arrangement does not establish a permanent or standing European carrier strike group, it signals a significant step toward deeper military coordination among key NATO allies. The UK's decision to sequence HMS Prince of Wales with European counterparts demonstrates a growing resolve among European states to project collective power in areas beyond their immediate borders, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, where geopolitical tensions continue to rise.

The move also highlights the UK's ongoing commitment to the Indo-Pacific tilt, a cornerstone of recent strategic defence reviews, and reflects broader European efforts to increase their strategic footprint in the region. The collaborative deployments are intended not only to strengthen operational effectiveness but also to send a clear signal of unity and readiness in the face of emerging global challenges.

This level of naval cooperation reinforces the adaptability of European forces and their willingness to act in concert in complex international theatres, while still preserving national independence and strategic autonomy.