

Russian Warships Shadowed in UK Waters

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Royal Navy warship HMS Trent and a Wildcat helicopter have shadowed Russian naval vessels in the English Channel during a five-day NATO operation, underscoring the growing presence of Moscow's fleet near British shores.

The Portsmouth-based patrol ship tracked the Russian destroyer Vice Admiral Kulakov as it moved past Great Yarmouth and continued westward towards Ushant. At the same time, a NATO partner nation followed two Russian tankers heading east. The vessels later met off

Ushant before turning back, with HMS Trent maintaining close watch as they re-entered the Channel.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed the operation was part of wider NATO activity in the North Atlantic, designed to safeguard undersea infrastructure and deter hostile movements. The UK's role, it said, was critical in protecting territorial waters and maritime trade routes.

Air support came from a Wildcat helicopter of 815 Naval Air Squadron, deploying advanced sensors to monitor Russian activity from above. NATO allies also contributed ships, patrol aircraft, and helicopters, highlighting a coordinated multinational response to the Russian transit.

Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard said Russian warships are appearing more frequently in the Channel, stressing that the Royal Navy “stands ready to monitor them, safeguarding our waters and undersea cables.” He praised the “unwavering dedication and professionalism” of sailors, while insisting the Government was committed to equipping the Armed Forces.

Senior defence figures, however, have repeatedly warned that overstretched resources leave the Royal Navy under pressure. HMS Trent has only just returned to British waters after four years in the Mediterranean and West Africa, followed by maintenance in Malta. The ship is expected to deploy to the Caribbean later this year, despite ongoing demands closer to home.

The operation marked a rare opportunity for a forward-deployed Offshore Patrol Vessel to conduct this type of mission in UK waters. Trent's commanding officer praised his crew's commitment but acknowledged the challenge of balancing overseas duties with increasing Russian naval movements near the UK.

Analysts say the presence of Russian warships so close to British coasts is a reminder of the strategic importance of the Channel, both as a trade artery and as a vulnerable link in the UK's energy and communications network. With undersea cables and infrastructure at risk, critics argue that the Armed Forces need sustained investment to meet rising threats.