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Royal Navy Blocks Simulated Threat in Indo-Pacific Drill

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Britain's Carrier Strike Group, currently deployed in the Indo-Pacific, recently conducted a high-stakes exercise simulating a hostile vessel attempting to breach its formation, demonstrating the Royal Navy's growing commitment to global maritime readiness and allied cooperation amid rising geopolitical tensions.

As part of its 2025 Indo-Pacific deployment, Carrier Strike Group 25 (CSG25) tested its defensive tactics during a barrier operation involving British and allied warships. The goal of the exercise was to intercept and block an intruding warship aiming to approach the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales. Lieutenant Commander Grayson, who leads operations aboard the carrier, described the drill as a key test of the group's ability to respond quickly and assertively under pressure.

In the simulated scenario, Royal Navy frigate HMS Richmond and the Royal New Zealand Navy's HMNZS Te Kaha executed forceful manoeuvres to prevent the intruding ship from advancing, practising real-time coordination in a high-threat environment. "Some really good, aggressive driving from Te Kaha and from Richmond, which is good to see," Grayson remarked. Exercises like these are vital to ensure that escort ships can act instinctively when responding to a threat.

The broader purpose of Operation Highmast is to project British maritime power in key international waters, reinforce strategic alliances, and uphold freedom of navigation in contested zones, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. The group's route includes passage through the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean into the Pacific, reflecting a clear intent to maintain a visible and capable presence far beyond Europe's borders.

CSG25 features a powerful combination of British and allied naval assets. The group includes surface combatants and support ships from nations such as Canada, Spain, and Norway. These allied vessels not only enhance the group's layered defence but also embed foreign personnel into the UK-led command structure, expanding operational interoperability.

A standout element of the deployment is the carrier air wing, which launched with 12 F-35B Lightning II fighter jets and is expected to increase to 24, the largest number of these fifth-generation aircraft ever deployed at sea. These jets, operated jointly by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Navy, are complemented by helicopters providing anti-submarine warfare capabilities and early warning coverage.

Beyond traditional warfare, CSG25 also emphasises cybersecurity and resilience against non-traditional threats. A UK-based cyber team remains in constant coordination with the group to repel frequent attempts at digital intrusion, particularly as the task force moves through high-risk regions.

The group is also participating in a series of multinational training drills, including Neptune Strike and Talisman Sabre, focused on carrier operations, submarine tracking, drone defence, and integrated air defence. These exercises demonstrate the United Kingdom's resolve to stand alongside key allies and offer a credible, enduring contribution to Indo-Pacific security.

While some governments may downplay the need for robust maritime defence, the Royal Navy's efforts in Operation Highmast affirm Britain's role as a global naval power. By investing in combat-readiness, allied integration, and forward-deployed deterrence, the United Kingdom continues to uphold its national interests and international commitments in a world that remains as uncertain as ever.