

## UK Carrier Strike Group Arrives in Australia as Uncrewed Drones Support Naval Operations

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The United Kingdom's Carrier Strike Group, led by the Royal Navy's aircraft carrier HMS *Prince of Wales*, has arrived off the coast of Australia to participate in Exercise Talisman Sabre 25. The deployment signals Britain's increasing commitment to the Indo-Pacific region and features the first sustained operational use of Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) at sea to support naval logistics.

Now in the final phase of its eight-month mission known as Operation Highmast, the Carrier Strike Group has entered Australian waters to join the large-scale multinational exercise hosted by Australia and the United States. The British force includes HMS *Prince of Wales*, the Type 23 frigate HMS *Richmond*, the Type 45 destroyer HMS *Dauntless*, and the support ship RFA *Tidespring*. They are operating alongside forces from allied nations, including Canada, Norway, and Spain.

On 9 July, British F-35B Lightning II stealth fighter jets took off from the carrier in what has become the largest maritime deployment of the aircraft to date. These jets are operated by the Royal Air Force's 617 Squadron and the newly reactivated 809 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), demonstrating the UK's ability to project fifth-generation air power from sea.

In a significant development, the Royal Navy has deployed nine Malloy T-150 UAVs, which are operated by 700X Naval Air Squadron. These drones, which resemble large multi-rotor octo-copters, have been used to carry supplies such as mail, spare parts, and rations between vessels. Their use is freeing up manned helicopters for higher-priority missions and marks a modern shift in naval logistics.

The British deployment is part of wider joint operations that include live-fire exercises, amphibious landings, air-to-ground coordination, and maritime security scenarios. These drills aim to strengthen interoperability among allied forces and enhance regional defence readiness.

This mission underlines the UK's broader Indo-Pacific tilt, reinforcing strategic partnerships and upholding freedom of navigation in

international waters. Defence officials have stated that the operation reflects Britain's intent to remain a reliable security partner in the region.

The deployment also marks a first for the Royal Navy: the combined sea-based operation of two fully integrated F-35B squadrons and the operational debut of heavy-lift UAVs. Together, these advancements demonstrate the evolving nature of Britain's maritime capabilities and its commitment to maintaining a modern, flexible, and globally deployable Carrier Strike Group.