





# HMS ECHO

## AUTUMN 2018 NEWSLETTER





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After departing Limassol, Cyprus following a port visit at the end of March, ECHO conducted a search and rescue exercise alongside the Cypriot coast guard. Working in a small task group including a SAR helicopter, ECHO successfully located the missing sailors, played by floating dummies.

## Back to survey business in Malta.

During the delightful Mediterranean Summer months, ECHO was tasked to conduct survey operations in support of defence engagement with the Maltese government. This involved some interesting bathymetric survey work around the Maltese Anchorages; one of the busiest anchorages in the Mediterranean, as well as some enjoyable inshore work using the Ship's survey motor boat, SAPPHIRE. The backdrop of Valletta's Grand Harbour made for a spectacular setting for SAPPHIRE's survey teams. However, temperatures reaching 38°C in the boat made the long days arduous, and the occasional opportunity for an ice cream break was very welcome!

The survey operations were overlapped with a maintenance period alongside in Malta. This provided a rare opportunity for personnel to conduct some adventurous training which included kayaking, rock climbing, and mountain biking. At the end of the maintenance period the ship's company said farewell to Cdr Andrew Norgate RN and a warm welcome to Cdr Matthew Warren RN as ECHO's new Commanding Officer.





## Royal Visit

At the beginning of May, the ship received a visit from His Royal Highness Prince Charles, who embarked in Piraeus as part of a tour of Greece. The visit gave HRH an insight into the varied work ECHO has been doing in the Mediterranean as well as a chance to show off some of ECHO's survey capability. Most importantly Prince Charles met the ship's company and took a real interest in life on board.











Whilst on board Prince Charles awarded PO Warnes his first long service good conduct clasp for 25 years of service and WO1 Doody his second clasp for 35 years of service in the RN. Apt recognition for these fantastic achievements.



## Tunisia Women's Day

During her most recent visit to Tunisia, ECHO participated in a number of events promoting National Women's day. These included a gender discussion, a ship's tour and a debut appearance of ECHO's female football team. Great fun was had by all. The 60 minute match in the Tunisian heat saw the ladies narrowly defeated in a competitive game. Despite the score line the ladies enjoyed the match and are looking forward to their next fixture.



ECHO was treated to a fantastic watch handover period in Dubrovnik, Croatia in late August. This beautiful city was used as a location for the filming of Game of Thrones and ship's company fully embraced the theme with guided tours around the city. Dubrovnik offered many beautiful sights for the ship's company to enjoy amid the serious business of watch rotation and logistical resupply. The





views were still stunning on our way back to sea...

## Operation Sea Guardian

The main focus of ECHO's effort throughout September was dedicated to the NATO maritime security operation – Operation Sea Guardian. The aim - to deter and counter terrorism and help build situational awareness in the Mediterranean. For ECHO this meant a preparatory briefing visit into the Italian Naval Base, Taranto, to meet with our partners from the Italian Ship ESPERO and the Croatian Ship VUKOVAR .

The opportunity to avenge England's recent World Cup loss to Croatia was presented in a football tournament between the three ships. ECHO's team did not disappoint, as they gained an emphatic win against the Croatians, followed by a thrilling, close-fought 6-5 defeat to the Italians in the final.



After operational planning meetings were held, ECHO sailed from Taranto as part of a task group before spending a busy day and night of exercises, including close formation manoeuvring, simulated threats from fast attack craft, as well as communications exercises in preparation for the upcoming operation.





ECHO then headed to the Southern Mediterranean where she spent time conducting security patrols; this included reporting on merchant traffic in the area, speaking to merchant seafarers, and reporting suspicious activity.

A busy and worthwhile period at sea concluded back in the Gulf of Taranto where the ship met with the ESPERO and VUKOVAR, and concluded the operation with a media day based around a boarding scenario during which ECHO acted as the suspect merchant vessel, and was subsequently boarded by teams from both seaboard helicopter fast-roping.





## What's Next for ECHO?

The next few months for ECHO will remain busy and varied; as we go to press a survey of Gibraltar's harbour using Survey Motor Boat SAPPHIRE is getting underway. Looking a little further ahead, in addition to some surveying, ECHO has a number of defence engagement commitments. A period of deployed Operational Sea Training and a maintenance period are additional elements that will ensure the ship remains ready to fulfil commitments over the remainder of her deployment.

