



NAVY COMMAND

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SI:

I write to update you on the latest news from HMS Enterprise as the ship enters the final stages of her 9-month deployment East of Suez. Since I last contacted you the ship has made steady progress on the main survey areas in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea having conducted 24-day periods on the survey ground between crew rotations. We have now completed around two thirds of the work we expected to achieve and are hopeful that we'll be able to complete the majority of our assigned tasking prior to returning to the UK in May.

Despite being in the Gulf the weather has been far from ideal for survey operations. The average wind speed for the last month was around 30 - 35kts which, combined with 2 to 3 metre seas, has provided us with some really challenging conditions both for our survey systems and also for the personnel onboard as they struggle to go about their day-to-day work on a ship that's rolling heavily! Ironically the wind and sea conditions in this survey area have proved to be far worse than the South West Approaches survey we completed last year!

After the ship spent Christmas in Djibouti she returned straight back to the survey ground to conduct further military data gathering before proceeding to Safaga in Egypt. As the first Royal Navy warship to visit Safaga for several years the visit formed part of our wider regional engagement commitments and provided an excellent opportunity to show the flag and improve diplomatic relations. It also provided the Ship's Company the opportunity to make the short journey north to Hurgada where a group of divers made the most of the clear waters of the Red Sea.

On returning to the survey ground the ship discovered a 250m deep 'canyon' running along the sea floor in the Red Sea. This canyon is likely to be the result of ancient rivers which scoured through the rock strata before the Red Sea flooded millennia ago. This captured the imagination of the UK press as the Independent, Daily Mail and other local newspapers all ran articles regarding our discovery.

For interest these articles can be found at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/navy-discovers-250-metre-deep-grand-canyon-beneath-the-waves-of-the-red-sea-8508642.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2283723/Grand-Canyon-sea-mapped-Royal-Navy-ship-state-art-technology.html>



Our work hasn't been limited to multi-beam echo sounder operations as we have spent a considerable amount of time with our 'undulating oceanographic recorder' streamed. With this device we have been able to collect an impressive range of oceanographic data including chlorophyll, bioluminescence, sound velocity, transmittance and Gelbstoffe data; all of which is critical in understanding the oceans in which we routinely operate.

Having just conducted a further period alongside in order to undertake crew rotation the ship will now proceed back to sea for another 30 day period of military data gathering - this will be her final period of survey operations before starting the long journey home to the UK. The focus will then shift to maintenance as we look to prepare for our docking period later in the year. This will be the ships only docking period in the next 5 years and so we need to ensure that we emerge from dry dock materially ready for another few years of data gathering!

Unfortunately as we're deployed until May it will not be possible to arrange a visit onboard in the immediate future; however, once we return to the UK later in year I will look to identify an opportunity for you to come and visit us. Perhaps you might like to come and visit us whilst we are docked down so that you can see a very different side to the ship (quite literally!) from the Dock Bottom? Whilst we are deployed, due to our crew rotation system, we always have personnel in the UK and as always should you require personnel from HMS ENTEPRISE to support any events you may be undertaking please let me know and we will do all that we can to assist.

In the meantime please pass on my regards to all at the Survey Ships Association and I will look to keep you updated with the latest activities of HMS ENTEPRISE over the coming months.

P J KELLY
Lieutenant Royal Navy
Navigating Officer 2