

From: Commander P E Dennis MBE Royal Navy



NAVY COMMAND

HMS DARING
BFPO 270

Affiliates of HMS DARING

22 November 2016

Dear Calum,

As I write, HMS DARING is now in her third month of deployed operations within the Middle East as part of the UK's maritime contribution to security and counter-terrorism in the region. Accordingly, I wished to take this opportunity to write to you ahead of the Festive period and pass my warm regards to both you and your colleagues on behalf of DARING's Ship's Company. Suffice to say we have been extremely busy since we left Portsmouth and the team continue to work hard to deliver in the National interest within an uncertain, and often unpredictable, part of the globe.

The Ship has certainly performed admirably against a lengthy journey which has already seen us cross the length of the Mediterranean, taking in visits to Gibraltar, Malta and Crete, and latterly transit the Suez Canal. Time in the Mediterranean saw us contributing towards Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR – a NATO sponsored operation aimed at disrupting various illegal maritime activities in the region. Our subsequent passage through the Suez Canal was uneventful and DARING has since spent considerably longer periods than originally planned on operational tasking at sea.

And unpredictable it has certainly been. On 1 Oct a merchant vessel, the MV SWIFT, was attacked off the Yemeni coast in a southern area of the Red Sea using relatively sophisticated guided weapons systems. The SWIFT sustained significant damage and DARING was despatched to the area to provide a show of force and deter further attacks by the Houthi rebels operating in the west of the country. DARING has been operating in the vicinity of the area since that attack and has both provided a visible presence and offered assurance to merchant vessels through the Bab-el Mandeb strait – a strategic chokepoint only 20 miles wide and well within the range of Rebel coastal missile systems. To date we have accompanied over 650,000 tonnes of shipping through what is a crucial juncture for the continued flow of worldwide maritime trade.

When not engaged on such escort duties, DARING has been tasked in support of Combined Task Force 150, a collective of 31 Maritime Nations set-up to promote maritime security and disrupt potential smugglers with the aim of reducing the illegal trade in narcotics, weapons and human trafficking within the region. DARING has boarded several suspect vessels in that capacity and will be conducting further such work in the future as part of the UK's commitment to regional maritime security.

Looking ahead, DARING's time looks no less busy. We have a scheduled maintenance period in due course and further planned operational tasking within the Gulf region into the New Year. The Ship's Company is also due to take some well-earned leave over the Christmas and New Year periods. I must also report that I will handover Command of DARING to my successor, Commander Marcus Hember, during December. On that basis this letter is sadly valedictory and I would like to personally offer my thanks for your collective support during my time as the Commanding Officer of what must be the finest Ship in the Fleet. On a personal note, your



goodwill and support has been very important and your generous fundraising activities continue to do so much for the material comfort and morale of a Ship's Company who continue to work very hard on your behalf. That said, I consider it 'so long' rather than goodbye and I will continue to maintain a close interest in both DARING and her relationship with you as I transition into my new role.

Wishing you, and your families, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Yours aye

Phil