ROYAL NAVY TRAINING MISSION TO IRAQ ENDS

Britain’s Armed Forces officially end operation in Iraq in the coming days, with the conclusion of a Royal Navy mission to train Iraqi sailors.

It was announced on 22\textsuperscript{nd} May by the MoD Press Office that the UK/Iraq Training and Maritime Support Agreement has come to an end marking the conclusion of Operation TELIC – the name for UK operations in Iraq that began with the invasion and subsequent removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

UK combat forces, primarily based in the southern city of Basrah, withdrew from Iraq in July 2009 but since then, at the request of the Iraqi Government, the Royal Navy has continued to train the Iraqi Navy to defend its territorial waters and offshore oil infrastructure.

British forces have been involved in this important task since 2003. Royal Navy personnel have worked alongside US forces to train and mentor Iraqi sailors and marines at their main naval base in Umm Qasr.

A total of 1,800 Iraqi personnel have been trained on 50 different courses, including maritime, small arms, oil platform defence, and maintenance training. A ‘train the trainer’ focus has also given the Iraqi Navy has the ability to develop an independent and self sustaining force for the future.

As announced on 18\textsuperscript{th} May in a statement to the House of Commons, the UK has now successfully completed its contribution to training the Iraqi Navy, and Service personnel who have been deployed as part of UK/Iraq Agreement are now homeward-bound.

While this marks the end of Operation TELIC the UK will continue to support the NATO Training Mission in Iraq as the second-largest contributor, leading on officer training and education. Members of Iraqi Security Forces will also continue to be trained on flagship UK courses including at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Along with the Defence presence in the British Embassy in Baghdad this will form part of the UK’s strong, long-term defence relationship with Iraq helping to create a stable Iraq that can meet the security needs of its people and the region.
Secretary of State for Defence, Dr Liam Fox MP, said, “Royal Navy personnel have used their formidable skills and expertise to bring about a transformation in Iraq’s naval force. The Iraqi Navy has a key role to play in protecting Iraq’s territorial waters and the oil infrastructure that is so vital to Iraq’s economy, and I am proud of the role British forces have played in making it capable of doing that job.

“But this is also an opportunity to reflect on the wider contribution of Britain’s Armed Forces to Iraq since 2003. Thanks to the sacrifice, commitment, and professionalism of thousands of British Service men and women Southern Iraq is an area transformed from the dangerous and oppressed place it was under Saddam Hussein and in the aftermath of his removal. I pay tribute to all those who served, particularly the 179 British personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice, fighting for security and stability in Iraq.

“We now look forward to a strong, long-term Defence relationship with Iraq. The UK remains committed to a broad bilateral relationship with close links across a range of areas including the economy, commerce, defence, culture and education.”

Brigadier Max Marriner CBE, Commander British Forces Iraq, commented, “The Royal Navy’s contribution to re-building the Iraqi Navy and Marines capability has been a huge success and acts as the culmination of a much broader programme designed to build an effective and sustainable Iraqi security forces.

“The UK Armed Forces can look back with pride at what they have achieved in Iraq since 2003 – security has fundamentally improved and as a consequence the social and economic development of the South has dramatically changed for the better, as too have people’s lives. The Iraqi Navy guards the engine room of this transformation – the oil platforms within Iraqi territorial waters – and they achieved that capability through the constant and professional training received by our excellent RN trainers and educators. The Iraqi Navy are ready, so now is the time for the UK to dress back and let them complete the mission they were created for.

“Looking forward, the UK will continue to build on a strong Defence relationship with Iraq. There is a mutual respect between the Armed Forces of both countries and I am confident that this will prove to be long-lasting, productive and mutually beneficial.”
Brigadier Tim Chicken OBE, Director, Iraq Training Assistance Mission (Naval), added, “Although conducted out of the limelight, the work of British forces in Iraq since the end of the combat mission two years ago, spearheaded by the Royal Navy, has achieved significant results. We have led the development of the Iraqi Navy, seeing its growth from the most rudimentary of capability into one that stands at the cusp of taking complete responsibility for its territorial waters and critical offshore oil infrastructure.

“I am confident that our work with the Iraqi Navy has set the agenda for a fruitful, long-term defence relationship between our two countries and everyone here is very proud of the role they have played.”

The frigate HMS Iron Duke currently on oil infrastructure security patrols will remain in the Gulf supporting other national tasks. It is understood that Operational Support Detachment (Kuwait) will remain until all Op TELIC-related activity is complete including the back-loading of stores, before withdrawing to the UK by the end of July this year.