

USS Winston S. Churchill Participates in Lucky Mariner 2013



(The guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) and a coalition naval vessel escort commercial shippers during exercise Lucky Mariner 13.)

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U.S. 5TH FLEET AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY – Guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) escorted commercial shippers Dec. 11 during the combined merchant and naval exercise Lucky Mariner 2013 (LM13).

The annual exercise between U.S. Navy forces, Royal Navy forces, coalition observers, and Naval Cooperation for Guidance and Shipping (NCAGS), a component of U.S. Fleet Forces, helps merchant vessels in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR) better coordinate how to avoid, deter and manage maritime threats for sea commerce.

“This is our opportunity to ensure we can best fulfill the Navy function of protecting lines of trade and communication,” said Lt. Cmdr. Michael Piano, LM13 exercise coordinator.

The purpose of the Lucky Mariner Exercise series is to flex the mobilization and expeditionary nature of NCAGS while integrating with the Maritime Liaison Office, United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization,

U.S. Maritime Administration and the commercial shipping industry.

These partnerships help ensure a coordinated response in the event of a naval threat to the safety, freedom and navigation of merchants who deliver goods and energy resources throughout the world.

Winston S. Churchill joined Royal Navy frigate HMS Monmouth (F235), Military Sealift Command ammunition ship USNS Flint (T-AE 32) and merchant vessels M/V Arcturus Voyager and Maron Castor for a convoy-training exercise and active test of the principles behind LM13.

Winston S. Churchill served as the flagship for the exercise, hosting Destroyer Squadron 50 (COMDESRON) 50.

Cmdr. Chris Stone, commanding officer of Winston S. Churchill said the ship was honored to serve as the flagship during the exercise.

“We’re a multi-mission platform that’s ready to take on this mission,” said Stone.

“Ensuring we have the capability to protect commercial shipping is vital to the free flow of commerce in the U.S. 5th Fleet AOR.”

LM13 began Nov. 30th and included eight time zones, multiple countries, agencies and U.S. Army participation, according to Piano. Combined Task Forces (CTF) 50, 53, 55 and 57, all components of the U.S. 5th Fleet, also participated in LM13.

While the U.S. and Royal Navy are participating directly in the exercise, Piano notes that international members of the Combined Maritime Forces, a 27-nation coalition dedicated to stability and security of international waters, participated as observers.

“Protecting trade isn’t only a U.S. or British mission. International trade is best served with international cooperation,” said Piano.