

We will remember them

To all whom we have lost this month. Our sincere condolences to family and friends.

Our mission is to safeguard the welfare, interests, and memory of those who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces



The East Hampshire Veteran's Festival



The East Hampshire Veterans Festival was held on the 19th September 2026 at the Petersfield Festival Hall. Vice Admiral Sir David Steel KBE, DL was the guest speaker. He was a resident of Petersfield for many years. After serving in the Royal Navy he was appointed Governor of Gibraltar between June 2020 and June 2024.

The following organisations were represented on the day - Petersfield RBL, Liss RBL, Help for Heroes, Veterans Outreach Support, Victim Care Hub, Blind Veterans UK, Hounds for Heros, Operation Courage, HIOW Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Dementia Friendly Alton, Kitbags, Admiral Nurses, Bordon Army Cadets, RAFA, SSAFA, Blenheim Court Care Home, Salvation Army, Veterans Services QA Hospital, Supporting Wounded Veterans, Social Prescribers, The Naval Children's Society, Petersfield WI, Strange Old Things mobile museum, Military Vehicles Cornerstone.



The lone RAF Veteran of Petersfield remembering the Few who flew in the Battle of Britain



PAST EVENTS OF THE MONTH

October 1975. Large contingent of Cuban forces deploy to Angola. Cuban forces add up to two divisions plus.

12 October 1984. IRA bomb explodes at the Grand Hotel, Brighton. Aimed at PM Margaret Thatcher and the cabinet.

30 October 1987. French Navy intercepts large quantity of Libyan arms and ammunition including ground to air missiles on the ship Eksund destined for the IRA.

October 1993. Burundi civil war erupts between Hutu and Tutsi tribes. Thousands killed.



The Angolan War

Portugal had three colonies in Africa - Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea. The three colonies were considered to be overseas provinces of Portugal there and were no segregation laws at all and the population was categorised as “indigenas” (natives), “nao-indigenas” (white settlers, mixed race or “mesticos” and “assimilados” - those Africans who were considered as black Portuguese) and the third category known as “assimilacau uniformizadora” or equal assimilated people of all colours. Angola was a world producer of coffee and also had vast oilfields off shore in the province of Cabinda. Angola had a well established harbour at the capital, Luanda and others such as Lobito and Mocamedes that provided infrastructure for import and export. The main railway lines from the three main harbours provided corridors for moving goods and people. The railway line from Lobito also provided neighbouring Zambia with a vital import / export system.

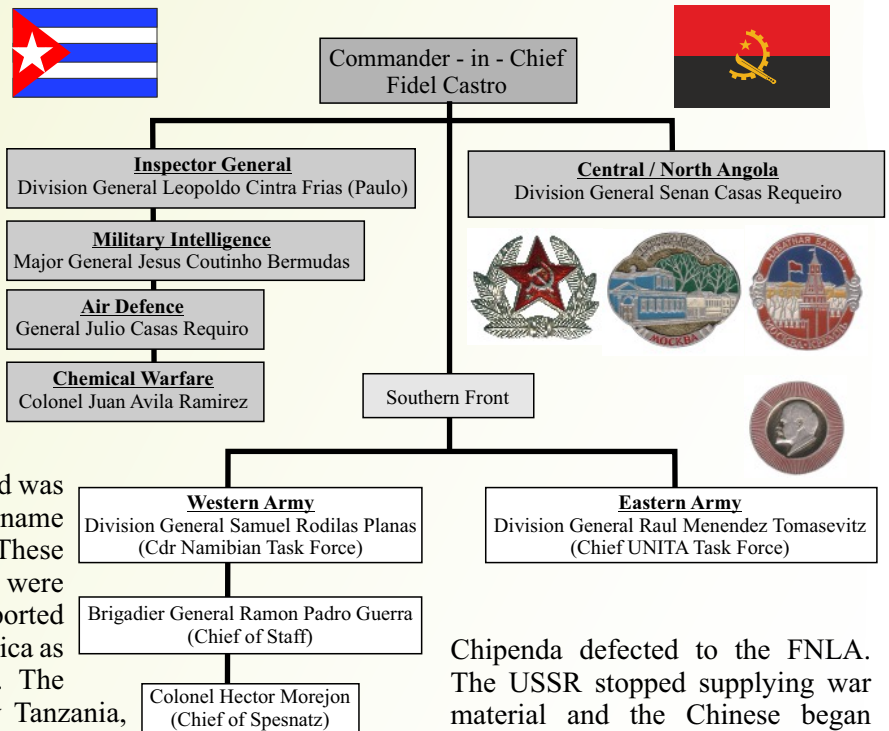
The first incidents occurred in the north when Holden Roberto and his Uniao dos Povos de Angola (UPA) (at a strength of 5000) who had been afforded sanctuary, camps, weapons and training in the Congo. At the time the Portuguese forces in Angola numbered 5000 African and 3000 white Portuguese.

The first incident against the Portuguese Angolan Government took place on 14th March 1961 when UPA guerrillas crossed over the northern border and attacked and killed approximately 700 white Portuguese civilians and between 3000 to 4000 Africans loyal to the Portuguese government using horrific methods including decapitation, disembowelment, rape and other brutal methods. These methods were freely admitted to by Holden Roberto in a public interview later on. Soon afterwards other organisations began to be established in an effort to fight the government in Angola. These included the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) led by Jonas Savimbi and was a break-away from the FNLA. FNLA was the new name for the old organisation known as UPA. These organisations had their own military wings who were trained and equipped by the USSR or Soviet supported Warsaw Pact countries, pro Soviet countries in Africa as well as China with its African supported countries. The African countries that lent support were mainly Tanzania, Zambia and the Congo. The MPLA used typical passive resistance tactics to begin with but soon went onto an armed insurgency strategy operating from Zambia. Neighbouring countries provided bases, logistics and training.

UNITA received Chinese support and operated from Zambia until it sabotaged the railway line to Mocamedes disrupting vital economic trade routes for Zambia and the Zambian government then expelled UNITA forcing it into decline. In 1968 the Portuguese armed forces in Angola launched a major offensive against the MPLA in the east of Angola which escalated the fighting. By 1972 the Portuguese had disrupted the MPLA supply routes and the MPLA was almost defeated as a result. At this time an element of the MPLA under leadership of Daniel



CUBAN COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE: ANGOLA 1980S



Chipenda defected to the FNLA. The USSR stopped supplying war material and the Chinese began supplying the FNLA. By 1974 Portugal experienced a coup in the

homeland and the MPLA took advantage of this. The January 1975 Algarve Agreement to amalgamate the terrorist movements with the local Portuguese army but this was unsuccessful and by November 1975 all Portuguese troops were withdrawn from the country. The void allowed for several Cuban army units to deploy in support of the MPLA and they were increased to approximately 60 000, threatening South Africa over the following years. This had a specific implication for South Africa as SWAPO enjoyed complete support from the new Angolan government and was able to deploy from safe areas along the southern Angolan border into South West Africa (Namibia). DW

Cuban and Russian Forces in Angola



Hybrid Navy: The Royal Navy in the Next Decade (s?)

Some readers may recall a previous article “We Want Eight and We Won't Wait” which explained how the Royal Navy has declined from being the largest and mightiest in the world at the beginning of the 20th century to 1/3 the size it was even at the end of the Cold War. Once the largest in Europe, we are now trailing the French, although fortunately they are now a close ally rather than our sparring partner of yore.

Fortunately, it appears that the penny may have dropped and reinvestment in the UK's armed forces has commenced, albeit not at a pace either the nation or the NATO alliance needs. There are, of course, problems as the number and output of shipyards and other centres of industry have declined; there is a shortage of skilled civilian labour and naval recruiting has become a challenge as Generation Z (and no doubt subsequent Generations A and B – don't ask me why it started at Z!) are more reluctant to commit to a life at sea. There is also the ongoing battle for government funding in a political system where domestic and welfare spending dominates the minds of the electorate.

To make best use of available funding and manpower constraints, considerable thought is being given as to how crewed warships, autonomous systems and digitally connected operations could reshape UK maritime power by the mid-2030s. This has become known as the 'Hybrid Navy' concept which has been influenced by lessons from Ukrainian operations in the Black Sea. Over the next decade, the Service is likely to move from experimenting with uncrewed systems to fielding mixed formations in which crewed ships, submarines and aircraft operate alongside autonomous systems.

As a concept, this is not new. From the age of Elizabethan fireships to mines and torpedoes, to modern smart munitions, navies and armies have used ingenuity to gain



English fireships attacking the Spanish Armada

advantage over the enemy by fighting remotely. The shift towards hybrid is not about replacing sailors with robots. Its main purpose is to increase mass, persistence, survivability and lethality while keeping crewed platforms focused on command and control, decision-making, high-end combat tasks and strategic presence. By the mid-2030s the Royal Navy is still likely to be smaller in traditional hull numbers than during the Cold War but with a mix of

crewed and uncrewed platforms. These will collectively combat Russian submarine and surface activity in the North Atlantic and High North, plus counter threats to seabed infrastructure which demand greater persistence than a

purely crewed fleet can provide. Ukraine has shown that uncrewed surface, air and underwater systems can cause disproportionate damage to larger traditional fleets. Although we need to be cautious in comparing the Black Sea with the larger and more capricious North Atlantic, the navy needs more sensors, weapons and decoys without relying only on expensive crewed surface combatants. Autonomous and remotely operated systems can expand reach and combat capability without requiring a proportional increase in sailors.



Ukrainian Magura armed drone boat

A hybrid force will strengthen the UK's NATO-first posture by improving anti-submarine, air and missile defence, and maritime strike options in the Euro-Atlantic within a more affordable budget and crewing limitations. It is best understood as a networked force with crewed platforms such as aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates, submarines, amphibious ships and support vessels acting as both traditional warships and command nodes. Around them, uncrewed air, surface and underwater systems will extend tactical reach, surveillance, communication, deception, strike, mine counter measures and anti-submarine defence.

Future priorities include Atlantic Bastion, being layered underwater surveillance, and critical infrastructure protection across the North Atlantic. This will be led by a new class of 8 Type 26 anti-submarine frigates, augmented by a further 5 ordered by Norway plus other NATO ASW escorts, nuclear attack submarines and maritime patrol aircraft. These will be augmented by new autonomous underwater sensor and towed array vessels (Type 92) and remotely operated submarines (Type 93).

Jet powered drone launches from HMS Prince of Wales



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A hybrid carrier air wing will combine existing crewed F-35B Lightning II strike fighters with un-crewed aircraft. The latter could be used to provide air-to-air refuelling (AAR), airborne early warning (AEW), decoys and aerial vehicles to deploy long-range weapons.

Crewed frigates and destroyers will be augmented with un-crewed sensor, decoy and weapon-carrying vessels to

increase fleet mass. The plan to replace 6 Type 45 destroyers with at least the same number of crewed Type 83 air defence destroyers appears to have been shelved in favour of a similar number of Common Combat Vessels (CCVs), controlling a mix of uncrewed platforms including: Type 91 arsenal ship (missile platform); Type 92 for underwater sensors and towed array; Type 93 underwater drone for surveillance and combat missions; Type 94 surface sensor platform. The mix of uncrewed consorts can be adjusted to meet the evolving threat.

Mine warfare has already moved away from crewed minehunters to autonomous mine countermeasures systems as currently deployed in anticipation of active operations in



HMS Stirling Castle with autonomous mine hunter

the Strait of Hormuz. Although currently operating from RFA Lyme Bay (a civilian crewed Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary)), it is hoped to procure 2 further support vessels to join HMS Stirling

Castle as dedicated support vessels.

All new vessels – crewed and uncrewed – will be designed to enable upgrading so that new sensors, weapons and software can be fitted quickly rather than waiting for long refit cycles. The vulnerability of remotely operated systems to jamming, cyber-attack and deception is recognised, and resilience of datalinks, satellite communications and combat-cloud infrastructure are major considerations.

The main risk is that the Hybrid Navy becomes a slogan before it becomes reality. Autonomy must be developed, proved and trusted; communications must survive in contested environments, and commanders must know when to delegate, supervise or override AI machine-enabled actions. There are also industrial risks: the UK must accelerate procurement while avoiding evolution of a fragmented fleet of incompatible prototypes.

Personnel and culture will prove just as important as technology. The navy will need sailors, marines and civilians who can operate software-enabled systems, manage autonomous swarms, interpret machine-generated



Proteus autonomous helicopter

well, the Hybrid Navy could give the UK a more credible and persistent maritime deterrent in the Euro-Atlantic, while

preserving global reach through carrier strike, littoral response (amphibious) groups and forward presence. It



Type 91 missile platform (arsenal ship)

Royal Navy to

complicate enemy planning by dispersing sensors and weapons across many platforms rather than concentrating risk in a few crewed ships.

The decisive question for the next decade is not whether uncrewed systems will happen, but whether the Royal Navy can integrate them fast enough, safely enough and at sufficient scale to change the balance of maritime power. The most successful version of the Hybrid Navy will be one in which crewed and uncrewed forces are designed, trained and commanded as a single combat system.

There are of course many sceptics. The Hybrid Navy appears to be focussed on the North Atlantic which, although currently UK's number one priority, may not always be the focus for future combat operations. In particular, the enduring role of protecting trade routes and operating in various global choke points may favour more traditional crewed surface warships. Visions of a CCV accompanied by a Type 91 and Type 94 transiting the Suez Canal to provide air defence for merchant vessels in the Red Sea raises an eyebrow. Furthermore, maintaining and refuelling such a combo in theatre, particularly away from the UK or an established Forward Operating Base could be challenging. A possible advantage, however, is that a single CCV could deploy with additional Type 91s to increase the firepower of a single CCV task group.



Type 93 submarine drone

Small autonomous vessels are being trialled in various parts of UK and recreational sailors in Portsmouth, the Solent, Plymouth and the

Hamoaze may have borne witness to such trials. Some may also have read that Chinese cameras used by Royal Marines have been feeding data back to China and that an autonomous RHIB operating in Portsmouth Harbour managed to damage a yacht. All part of the learning curve and it is to the credit of the system that security and other flaws have been identified at the trial stage. Whether such technology is mature enough or the level of investment sufficient remains to be seen but, with the Type 45 destroyers due for replacement from the mid-2030s, decisions need to be made now. The nation cannot afford another debacle such as currently experienced by the delayed replacement of the Type 23 frigates, causing the number of operational escorts to fall well below requirement.



K3 Scout surveillance drone

At the smaller end of the scale, convincing progress is being made with autonomous aircraft, small surface vessels and submarines for mine counter measures, surveillance, and weapons. The CCV - possibly based on the yet to be delivered Type 31 general purpose frigate - with autonomous missile and sensor platforms has yet to be fully evaluated. The T91 arsenal ship is likely to be the size of a small frigate (maybe up to 2,000 tonnes) which will place a burden on our already stretched shipbuilding capacity. Is such a combo likely to be any cheaper, as or more effective than new crewed air defence destroyers such as the Type 83? More importantly, will we get either in time or in sufficient numbers?

Cdr Rob Scott RN (Retd) Droxford & District RBL

HAMPSHIRE

FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE

**THE
ROYAL MARINES ASSOCIATION
CONCERT BAND**

**THE WORLD FAMOUS
TREORCHY MALE CHOIR**

O2 Guildhall, Southampton
Saturday 7 November 2026, 7.30pm

Tickets from:
[ticketmaster.co.uk](https://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)

SCAN FOR TICKETS

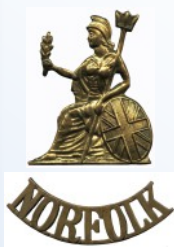
**ROYAL
BRITISH
LEGION**

A charity fundraising event for RMA - The Royal Marines Charity and the Poppy Appeal

Please note that RBL members can receive a discount on tickets by using the code **RBLMEM** when purchasing. Kate Parkinson



Victoria Cross Recipients: Remembering the Bravest



George Gristock was born on 14 January 1905 in Pretoria, South Africa. He emigrated to the UK before the start of the Second World War. George joined the 2nd Bn Royal Norfolk Regt and was a company sergeant major with the battalion when it was deployed to Belgium with the British Expeditionary Force at the beginning of World War Two.

On Sunday 19th May 1940 the 2nd Bn Royal Norfolk Regt received orders to withdraw to Froidmont near the River Escaut. On arrival the battalion dug in, in defensive positions. At the same time the German forces attacked the town of Tournai. On 21 May 1940 the battalion came under heavy mortar and machine gun fire. The Bn HQ was situated at Calonne. The acting commanding officer Major Charlton and the adjutant were both wounded and Major Lisle Ryder took over command.



Medals awarded to CSM G. Gristock
 Victoria Cross, 1939 - 45 Star, War
 Medal (1939-45), Army Long Service &
 Good Conduct Medal

The enemy attacked from their side of the canal and broke through on his company's right flank. Company Sergeant-Major Gristock organized a party of eight riflemen and went forward to cover the company's right flank. While under heavy fire, CSM Gristock and another soldier went forward and was severely wounded in both legs. Despite this he was able to gain a good fire position undetected and then attacked an enemy machine-gun position which was inflicting heavy casualties and killed the crew of four. He then dragged himself back to the right flank position but refused to be evacuated until contact with the battalion had been established. He later died of his wounds. The Times later reported, "By his gallant action the position of the company was secured, and many casualties prevented." CSM Gristock is buried at Bear Road Cemetery, Brighton, Sussex, England in the War Graves Section (Plot Z.G.L. Grave 28). Gristock's Victoria Cross is in the collection of the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum in Norwich Castle, England

Postal Address for Hampshire County Committee - Hampshire & IOW MEO (or Name), Royal British Legion,
199 Borough High St, London SE1 1AA

RBL Website: www.BritishLegion.org.uk, County Website:
<http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/hampshire>

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrb1/

Facebook Email address - Hampshire.web@rbl.community

Poppy Appeal - www.facebook.com.poppy.HamsphireRBL

ALL LEGION ENQUIRIES (including Welfare requests) should be directed to the national call centre - **0808 802 8080**

2026-27 HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COMMITTEE

Patron Lt Gen Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL Hampshire.meo@rbl.community

President Col A King Hampshire.president@rbl.community

Vice Presidents. B C N Soffe, R G Knight

Chair. R Moore Hampshire.chair@rbl.community

Vice Chair and Training Officer. J Davies Hampshire.CTO@rbl.community

Treasurer. G S Brown Hampshire.treasurer@rbl.community

County Secretary, Conference Secretary and Webmaster. A Mitchell Hampshire.secretary@rbl.community

Committee and Recruiting Officer. T Russell Hampshire.CRO@rbl.community

Committee and Youth Officer. Vacant

County Community Support Co-ordinator vacant

County Clubs Liaison vacant

Committee and Conference Chairman. B Mansi Ringwoodchairman@rbl.community

Committee, Poppy Appeal Coordinator S Hampshire + Conference. P Prior

leonsolent.secretary@rbl.community

Conference Committee. P Cunningham, P Perkins, M Brunson

Parade Marshal. D Graham Hampshire.parademarshal@rbl.community

Deputy Parade Marshal. A Cassidy

County Standard Bearer. P Pullin Hampshire.stdbearer@rbl.community

Deputy County Standard Bearer. A Wells

County Youth Standard Bearer. A Neal

County Padre Reverend. D Roche

County Golf Organiser. R J Bourne

Independent Examiners. G S Brown, J Davies, P Prior, A Mitchell, M Brunson

County Management Board Chair, V/Chair, Treasurer, Secretary

Annual Conference Delegate. R Moore

Poppy Appeal Manager North Hampshire. C Hayward chayward@britishlegion.org.uk

Poppy Appeal Manager South Hampshire. C Smith csmith4@britishlegion.org.uk

Membership Engagement Officer. K Parkinson Hampshire.meo@rbl.community

Membership Engagement Manager. K Jeffery kjeffrey@britishlegion.org.uk

Membership Council Representative. D Taylor dtaylor2@britishlegion.org.uk

Hampshire Link. Col D Wall MSM (Rhod), MMM (SA) HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com

Errors and Omissions Excepted

