

BUNK BEDS, SOUTH PARK AND BLOODY BIG MIS SILES...

LIFE ON BOARD A WARSHIP

ZOO climbs aboard HMS Liverpool – the first British ship to be fired upon in 30 years – to see what life is like at sea...

When it all kicked off in Libya last year, Britain dispatched warships and submarines from the Royal Navy – one of which was the HMS Liverpool. And the crew were kept busy, as she became the first British warship to be fired upon since the Falklands War. With that in mind, we took a look inside to see what life is like on a fully-armed and active Royal Navy Type 42 Destroyer.

HMS LIVERPOOL IN LIBYA
THE KEY STATS
147 Number of days on patrol
81 Hours spent at Action Stations
9 Number of boardings of other ships conducted
113 High-explosive rounds fired
98 Starshell rounds fired



THE SHIP

When ZOO were told we were being taken on a tour of the HMS Liverpool, we were excited. That soon turned into bowel-flapping nervousness when we realised we'd be boarding the ship via a rope ladder. Luckily, we made it on board without taking an unscheduled dip – and were faced with quite a sight. She is a Type 42, which is a Guided Missile Destroyer, equipped to tackle pretty much anything on the land, in the sea or in the air. There's the imposing 4.5-inch gun turret at the front,

which launches the high-explosive shells most used in the conflict last year. That's backed up with the Twin Sea Dart anti-air missile launcher, the ammunition for which costs £250,000 a shot. There's more guns across the deck and it also houses a Lynx helicopter. "On board, we had control of the airspace across Libya," says Steve Gott, Chief Logistics Officer of the HMS Liverpool. "All the jets and tankers buzzing around were under the control of our Ops Room. We were a useful asset to have."

THE BATTLE

A Royal Navy ship hadn't come under fire since 1982 before the HMS Liverpool was fired on last year, when pro-Gaddafi Libyans attacked with a BM-21 rocket launcher, which can fire up to 80 rockets in two rounds.

"The BM-21 acts like a pepperpot, spraying rockets around its target," says Steve Gott. "We were fired on by artillery, which would've penetrated the hull and probably caused death. Missiles landed 400-700 yards away – you could hear it and feel it under the sea line."

The Liverpool hit back with starshell illumination rounds, which act like a big firework above the target. It makes the enemy aware their position is exposed and often has the same effect as neutralising the target with high explosives.

"Naval warfare can be slow," says Gott. "But the Liverpool became the ship of choice and we tended to be sent wherever things were kicking off. Which was good for us!" And good



for the Navy, too. Lieutenant Commander Steve Hayton reveals NATO deemed Liverpool "the crowning glory" of its operations off Libya. "It's amazing a 30-year-old Destroyer can be such a vital tool."

THE CREW

It would be fair to say that the length of the Libyan conflict took the HMS Liverpool crew by surprise. They were dispatched with the intention of spending just three weeks on the African coastline, but ended up staying

for seven months, only returning in November last year.

"When we were out there, we tended to do 20 days on patrol and three days 'stand down', to restock and relax," says Gott. "However, on one occasion, we did 39 days on the bounce – which was quite testing."

Despite that, day-to-day life on the HMS Liverpool isn't much different to back home – except for the fear of being fired on and your dinner slipping off the table if the seas are choppy. There are six-hour shift rotations for the 260-plus crew, alternating between manning their stations across the four main departments: Warfare, Logistics,

Weapons Engineering and Marine Engineering.

"We get TV provided, like Sky News, *EastEnders*, *The Simpsons* and *South Park*," says Gott. So the crew could easily find themselves under fire one moment and laughing at Homer Simpson the next.

There's also a gym on board and you can even bring on your laptop to watch films or bust out a season on *Football Manager*. But many of the crew seem to enjoy spending their free time catching up on a bit of sleep in the extremely intimate sleeping quarters. Bunk beds are tiny and stacked three people high.

So how do the lads sleeping in those bunks feel about the action they saw last year? "I've since got a bit more respect for myself," says Leading Seaman Nichol. "You talk to someone who's been to Afghanistan and they say how much they've done – but now we've been to Libya and done our job properly. We've been fired on 10 times and responded more than that. There's personal pride and you can actually say you've achieved something. So it shuts them up!"



LIVERPOOL: "NATO'S CROWNING GLORY!"



ZOO'S A MUST-READ, EVEN AT SEA!



SLEEPING QUARTERS: CRAMPED!

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