

Royal Navy helps clean up after Hurricane Gustav

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Royal Navy warship HMS Iron Duke and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel Wave Ruler have been helping the people of the Cayman Islands following the destruction caused by Hurricane Gustav which passed through the region at the weekend.



The Cayman Islands escaped relatively unscathed after Hurricane Gustav passed by at the weekend

As well as conducting patrols around Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, Iron Duke's Lynx helicopter was made available to conduct damage assessment the morning after Hurricane Gustav hit the islands. Throughout the period, the ships were primed to provide humanitarian relief if required.

The Lynx launched with the Iron Duke's Second-in-Command, Lieutenant Commander Dean Bassett, on board. On arrival at Cayman Brac, the District Commissioner also embarked and an aerial assessment of the damage to Little Cayman and Cayman Brac was made. This proved invaluable and enabled recovery plans to be made, based upon the photographic evidence gathered during the flight.

The next morning Iron Duke's Captain, Commander Mark Newland, flew ashore to meet with the Cayman Islands Governor, Stuart Jack. A further flight over the two sister islands allowed the Governor to see the progress being made through the recovery efforts. The Governor was especially grateful to the Royal Navy in the form of HMS Iron Duke and RFA Wave Ruler for being in the right position to render assistance had Gustav been a more significant hurricane.

Cdr Newland said:

"It is clear from my conversation with the Governor this morning that the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary have provided the Cayman Islands with the confidence that we are available to help in the event of a hurricane threatening the islands.

"I am just grateful that Gustav, powerful as it was, was not sufficient to cause much damage to the Cayman Islands. This is testament to the quality of their Disaster Relief Organisation."



Personnel from HMS Iron Duke provided advice to the people of the Cayman Islands following Hurricane Gustav

Iron Duke and Wave Ruler have now completed their tasks and have been released to continue with their programmes. However they remain ready should future hurricanes threaten the UK Overseas Territories in the Caribbean region during what is anticipated to be an active hurricane season.

The present HMS Iron Duke is the third ship to bear the name and the fifth Duke Class Type 23 frigate built for the Royal Navy. She was built by Yarrow Shipbuilders at Scotstoun on the Clyde and was launched on 2 March 1991. She was accepted into service by the Royal Navy on 23 July 1992 and commissioned on 20 May 1993.

The first warship was an Ironclad launched in 1870. She spent much of her time on the China Station and was the first capital ship to use the Suez Canal. The second Iron Duke, a super Dreadnought, joined the fleet in 1914 and was Admiral Jellicoe's flagship at the Battle of Jutland in 1916.