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NEWEST SHIP DELIVERS NEW HOMES FOR TROOPS

The MOD's newest support ship has brought an early Christmas present for troops serving in Iraq.

Anvil Point, the last ship ever to be built in Belfast's famous Harland and Wolfe shipping yard, docked at Umm Qasr this week to deliver new accommodation to replace the tented camp at Shaibah Logistical Base. The modular units have been transported from Kosovo, where many of the troops now in Iraq may have used them before, and have proved very popular. The delivery is all part of the continued commitment to improve the living conditions for all the troops in Iraq and it is hoped that the new camp will be constructed in time for the festivities.

The ship, only three months old, has already travelled over half way round the world in her short life. Boasting over 22,500 tonnes, she is bigger than *Ark Royal* and boasts state of the art computer systems that can manage everything from window washers to fire fighting equipment and engine configurations all from a central console the bridge. She is operated on behalf of the MOD by the commercial company AWSR under an innovative Private Finance Initiative programme.

Chief Officer John Richardson said of the £47m ship, 'She is a fine ship and doing the job she was designed to do. She was built to budget and designed to high MOD specifications and can even cope with a breach of the cargo deck and a severe flood.'

Extra requirements insisted upon by the MOD include an impressive crane which will enable her to unload her cargo without assistance all around the world.

The crew, who are all members of the Royal Navy Reserve under the Sponsored Reserves system, worked closely with 51 Port Task Group Detachment, from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment to get the ship turned around in the shortest possible time. Captain Richard Clarke the officer commanding the detachment said, 'My team are very experienced and can unload the cargo and get her loaded again and ready to sail within 36 hours.' He continued, 'The team of 17 will work around the clock until she has sailed and then rest. It helps that I have a multicultural team of Fijian, Gambian, Welsh and English troops who don't seem to suffer from the heat and can cope with the hard work. In our off time we also have a fine rugby team.'

The next time that soldiers will see the *Anvil Point* is when she arrives carrying equipment for the roulement of 20 Brigade later on in the year. This will be a welcome sight for 19 Bde who will be preparing for their trip home.