

Defending International Order: U.S., British, Dutch Warships Converge in Black Sea

By [Rick Rozoff](#)

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U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa reported that the guided-missile destroyer USS Laboon, deployed to the Black Sea on June 11, engaged in passing and communications exercises with two warships assigned to the carrier strike group of the new HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier currently in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The latter ships are the British destroyer *HMS Defender* and the Royal Netherlands Navy’s *De Zeven Provinciën*-class frigate *HNLMS Evertsen*.

Laboon is the fifth American ship sent to the Black Sea so far this year and the fourth guided-missile warship (three destroyers and a cruiser), all four Aegis Combat System vessels equipped with Standard Missile-3 interceptor missiles.

Last week [Queen Elizabeth and its carrier strike group engaged in joint exercises in the Mediterranean with France’s nuclear aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and its carrier strike group](#) which included 15 ships and 57 aircraft from Britain, France, the U.S., Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. The British group represents the largest-ever deployment of F-35 combat aircraft and the largest fifth-generation fighter carrier air wing in the world.

In addition to *Defender* and *Evertsen*, the *Queen Elizabeth* strike group includes the British destroyer *HMS Diamond*, the U.S. destroyer *USS The Sullivans* and the British frigates *HMS Richmond* and *HMS Kent*.

Laboon is assigned to the carrier strike group of the *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower* nuclear aircraft carrier as are fellow destroyers *USS Mitscher*, *USS Mahan* and *USS Thomas Hudner* and cruiser *USS Monterey*. *Thomas Hudner* and *Monterey* were deployed to the Black Sea earlier this year.

In addition to the four guided-missile warships assigned to *Dwight D. Eisenhower* and the one to *Queen Elizabeth*, the U.S. maintains four more destroyers at the Naval Station Rota in Spain. So the U.S. currently has ten guided-missile ships in the Mediterranean and Black Seas capable of firing 55 Tomahawk cruise missiles apiece and Standard Missile-3

interceptors of the sort that earlier this month was used to [conduct “a ballistic missile intercept in outer space.”](#)

The recent exercise in the Black Sea with British, U.S. and Dutch warships was [described by its British commander in these anything but modest words:](#)

“This opportunity for ourselves and the *HNLMS Evertsen* to operate with the *USS Laboon* in the Black Sea has again demonstrated the agility and flexibility that exists between NATO allies to be able to work seamlessly together on Maritime Security operations in order to defend international order and promote global peace and stability”

Defending the international order in a region where only one adversary is targeted: Russia.

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Rick Rozoff, renowned author and geopolitical analyst, actively involved in opposing war, militarism and interventionism for over fifty years. He manages the [Anti-Bellum and For peace, against war website](#)

He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization.

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