

# Fact Sheet 9: Carrier Strike

## Queen Elizabeth-class carriers

Our carrier strike capability will be based around a single operational carrier, with a second planned to be kept at extended readiness.

This leaves open options to rotate them, to ensure a continuous UK carrier strike capability; or to regenerate more quickly a two carrier strike capability. Alternatively, we might sell one of the carriers, relying on cooperation with a close ally to provide continuous carrier strike capability.

## Operating aircraft from a secure and sovereign airbase

A Queen Elizabeth-class carrier, operating the most modern Joint Strike Fighter, will give the UK the ability to project military power more than 700 miles over land as well as sea, from anywhere in the world. It can move around 500 miles a day and can operate a mix of 40 aircraft to support a broad range of operations. It will allow the UK to operate aircraft from a secure and sovereign airbase which can move freely through the world's oceans.

## A more effective capability

We will change the programme to deliver a fully effective carrier that is interoperable with key allies such as the US and France. We will:

- fit catapult arrestor gear to enable the operation of conventional carrier aircraft and greater cooperation with US and French carriers and naval jets;
- buy the more cost-effective and capable carrier variant of the highly advanced Joint Strike Fighter instead of the Short Take Off and Vertical Landing (STOVL) variant. This has greater range, payload and versatility than the STOVL variant.

## Joint Strike Fighter

The Queen Elizabeth-class can carry a mix of fast jets and helicopters. Her most potent capability will be delivered by routinely embarking 12 Joint Strike Fighters jointly operated by Royal Navy and RAF pilots.

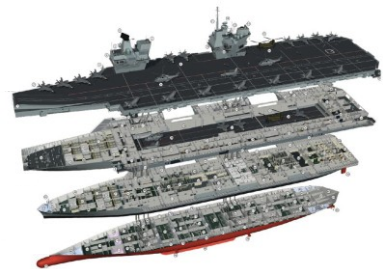
This state of the art aircraft has an exceptionally broad range of capabilities and an expected service life of several decades. It is specifically designed to operate independently in very challenging environments and can carry a variety of electronic sensors and weapons.

## Helicopters

We will plan concurrently to operate a mix of helicopters as well as Joint Strike Fighters from the carrier. This will include up to 12 Chinook or Merlin transport helicopters and eight Apache attack helicopters. The precise mix will depend on the mission.



Artist's impression of Carrier Strike



Cross section of the Queen Elizabeth carrier



Joint Strike Fighter