

UK exposes covert Russian submarine operation in and around UK waters

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The British military has exposed a covert Russian submarine operation in and around UK waters, forcing the vessels to retreat back to Russia.

- UK reveals Russian submarine operation in and around British waters.
- British personnel, ships and aircraft deployed to send a message to President Putin and keep the UK and our allies secure.
- Operation was part of a Russian bluff while other specialist vessels conducted nefarious activity near critical underwater infrastructure.

British aircraft and warships identified a Russian attack submarine entering international waters in the High North several weeks ago, and tracked its activity around the clock.

Service personnel quickly established that the submarine was deployed as a distraction and the UK worked closely with allies – including Norway – to identify and monitor other Russian undersea naval units from the Main Directorate of Deep Sea Research (known as GUGI) conducting nefarious activity over critical undersea infrastructure elsewhere.

The UK and its allies began a campaign of overt action to ensure the Russian units knew that they were being monitored and were no longer covert as Putin had planned.

Both the GUGI units and the Akula class submarine have subsequently retreated home, having failed to complete their operation in secrecy.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said:

I am determined to protect the British people from paying the price for Putin's aggression in their household bills.

That is why we will not shy away from taking action and exposing Russia's destabilising activity that seeks to test our resolve.

Our Armed Forces are among the best in the world, and the British public should be in no doubt that this government will do whatever it takes to defend our national and economic security, wherever in the world that is needed.

Defence Secretary John Healey MP said:

I want to pay tribute to the UK personnel who spent many days tracking these Russian

submarines in extremely challenging and treacherous conditions. While the eyes of many – understandably – were on the Middle East, our British Armed Forces were simultaneously responding to rising Russian threats north of the UK.

As we act to defend our interests and Allies in the Middle East, we are tackling increasing threats to NATO in the High North, maintaining strong support for Ukraine and protecting our UK homeland.

To Putin, I say this: we see you, we see your activity over our underwater infrastructure. You should know that any attempt to damage it will not be tolerated and would have serious consequences.

Subsea fibre optic cables are essential for all digital communications, with over 99% of international data traffic, including voice calls and internet data, travelling through subsea cables. This underpins global banking, trade, and communications.

Conducted under the cover of events in the Middle East, the Russian attack submarine and multiple vessels from the Main Directorate of Deep Sea Research (known as GUGI) entered international waters in the High North.

The Royal Navy deployed a Type 23 frigate HMS St Albans, RFA Tidespring and Merlin helicopters to track the attack submarine as it operated near British territorial waters.

Working alongside RAF P8 aircraft, the submarine was tracked 24/7 in an operation carried out with allies.

As part of the operation, which saw British ships cover thousands of miles, the RAF and Navy deployed sonobuoys to track the Russian vessels.

While the Russian attack submarine has now headed back towards Russia, the UK has kept both naval vessels and aircraft ready to respond should Russian vessels return.

GUGI is Russia's long-running military programme to develop capabilities to be deployed from specialist surface vessels and submarines, that are intended to survey underwater infrastructure during peacetime, but then damage or destroy infrastructure during a conflict.

British defences were previously tested by GUGI when the Russian spy ship Yantar sailed near UK waters last year. The ship was tracked by a Royal Navy frigate and RAF P8s, with lasers being directed at British pilots.

The Yantar is one the key vessels used by Russia to threaten the UK and our allies. Over the last two years, the UK has seen a 30% increase in Russian vessels threatening UK waters.

This comes as the Royal Navy completes ten days of intensive monitoring operations of Russian warships and a submarine which entered UK waters in the English Channel and North Sea. HMS Somerset and HMS Mersey, supported by tanker RFA Tideforce and Wildcat helicopters, tracked the movements of a Russian destroyer, frigate, landing ship, and Kilo-class submarine. The Royal Navy ships used their powerful array of radars and sensors to track the Russian vessels.

The UK is stepping up on its commitment to protect our critical underwater infrastructure. This includes an additional £100 million to support our vital P8 submarine hunting aircraft.

Delivering on the recommendations in the Strategic Defence Review, the Atlantic Bastion programme is transforming the Royal Navy's submarine hunting capabilities – combining autonomous systems and advanced sensors with the Royal Navy's fleet of warships. The project has already received millions in investment to develop and test innovative technology.

This comes as the government is overseeing the biggest uplift in defence spending since the Cold War, reaching of 2.6% of GDP from 2027, and with £270 billion investment in defence across this Parliament.

The UK continues to closely monitor the situation and is working closely with allies to track and deter any activity that threatens British interests

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-exposes-covert-russian-submarine-operation-in-and-around-uk-waters>