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British Ship RFA Argus Dispatched to Support Caribbean's Covid-19 Response

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BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC – The British casualty ship RFA Argus, has set sail for the Caribbean ahead of this year’s hurricane season to assist with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic across the region.

Although the vessel’s deployment to the Caribbean had been scheduled for the hurricane season, she will now be able to play a part in ensuring the UK Government is ready to support the Overseas Territories during the pandemic.

As Royal Navy sailors and Royal Marines continue to stand ready to assist the United Kingdom in its efforts to defeat the pandemic at home, the support ship left Devonport on Thursday, to cross the Atlantic and head south for the Caribbean.

“RFA Argus’ ship’s company, consisting of both Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Navy personnel, will rise to this challenge. We understand that there are people in need in the UK Overseas Territories who require our support,” said commanding officer Captain Terence Barke

On board RFA Argus are Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Navy sailors and aviators from 815 Naval Air Squadron and 845 Naval Air Squadron.

A medical team could later join Argus in the Caribbean to support the UK Government’s contribution to responding to Covid-19 in Overseas Territories.

RFA Argus has a length of 175 metres for a displacement of 18,280 tonnes and a crew complement of 80 sailors.

RFA Argus’ primary role is to serve as a Primary Casualty Receiving Ship.

The vessel is fully equipped 100 bed hospital including a four bay operating theatre with a 10 bed Critical Care Unit, a 20 bed High Dependency Unit and a CT Scanner. Her secondary role is to provide aviation training facilities.

RFA Argus is fitted with self-defence weaponry and decoys to protect herself and her crew from harm.

Based on this and the fact that she may have operational units embarked, under the Geneva Convention she cannot be classified as a hospital ship and does not display the International Red Cross symbol.

Argus was formerly the container ship MV Contender Bezant. The ship was requisitioned in 1982 for service in the Falklands War and purchased outright in 1984 for use as an Aviation Training Ship.