

G'day Shipmates,

Was interested in who may unseat one of our European 'friends and N.A.T.O. ally' in France, President Macron; the candidates and their stance bewildered somewhat. Talk of Gaullists and Bonapartists don't seem to fit into what I think is a socialist nation. Why Bonaparte's legacy holds such appeal is a mystery, knowing he denuded what was a good rural economy; 200,000 Frenchmen killed in his 1812 army. He set off on his Russian campaign with 615,000 French plus allied soldiers; on return to France survivors numbered 100,000, ill-equipped and starving.



It's Okay - I've seen Putin - all sorted !

Mobility for that force provided by horses, of course, which became catastrophic when they became the only source of food and the army lost its mobility by eating them.

I cannot help wondering why France so dislikes anything done in the way of alliances by the U.K. or says so at N.A.T.O. meetings. I feel certain we have no desire to run N.A.T.O., unlike President Macron who has no wish to accept the U.S.A. as its massive contributor in men and material; it would be a very hollow organisation without their \$s.

Britain and France were once strong partners in the 1860 wars with China when we both wished to stamp our authority on that place and people - any piddling excuse being good enough to mount a foray against them. Storming the ports on Fai Ho river estuary, the armies then went up river to Peking where the French ransacked and looted the Summer Palace. The British, also needing to be put in the picture and leave their mark, burned down what remained.

The Chinese had to be put in their place. We may think they have long memories, and make no mistake, they are not charitable ones to the pair of us.

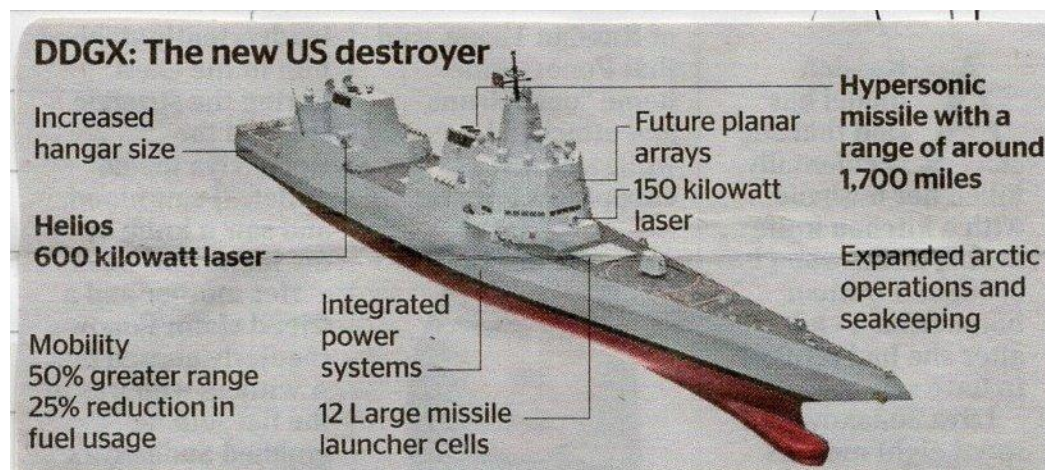
Very noticeable in yesterday's paper, a string of R.A.F. and Naval assets about to get onto the illegal migrants crossing the Channel. The way it reads seems to be a prime period for further misunderstanding between two countries that could get nasty. I despair of politicians who, on fat salaries, have not the faintest idea of how to defuse such situations without casting dire threats about; ones we are unable to execute any way, being poor as church mice nationally. - oops - there's a glum start to thoughts loitering in my grey matter.

NEW TACK; The world's navies must be waiting with high interest to see more details about the U.S. Navy's next class of destroyer, reportedly known as D.D.G.X. They are to replace all *Arleigh Burkes*. 69 in number, also *Ticonderogas*, 22 in number by about 2032; that is a staggering number of destroyers. The aim is to get hypersonic missiles at sea as a counter to the claimed Chinese and Russian threats.

Mach 5 is the speed claimed for rockets being developed by joint U.S. navy and army research centres. Two types of laser gun under development are claimed capable of shooting down missiles of that sort of speed. This high-tech cutting-edge programme is in the hands of manager Katherine Connolly. That gives one confidence in its execution; she has, because of 'diversity', to be reasonably young, not an old government Washington clone.

Chance of me seeing one launched seems remote, tempus fugit being the current enemy of long term planning.

The good news for the U.S. Navy is their capability with rapid serial build programmes, started with Liberty ships.



Arleigh Burkes rolled down the slipways of several yards as regular as clockwork; those vessels being the yardstick by which 'any destroyer in the world' is judged; the only anti-ballistic missile capable

vessel currently at sea with their Aegis radar. The new item has a projected cost of one billion \$ U.S. a copy.

I am not amazed by that as our own latest D class - those Portsmouth Wall decorations that fail to sail in warm water = were reportedly one billion sterling per copy, though the magazines are judged inadequate; had the mags. been larger I guess they would sail with them half empty.

News of the new U.S.N. Type has galvanised our M.O.D. into action (on paper). A new class of super destroyer of 16,000 tons, properly armed, capable of defending carrier groups to be designated Type 55 (suggested name Dominator Class) which the M.O.D. says will have revolutionary capability?, that must mean a proper mix of A.A. and ship-to-land attack missiles to counter any peer type the enemy may have in build.

I do not gamble but I understand form, that tells me this mythical vessel will never see reality simply because the department charged with its birth is 'totally unfit for purpose', incapable of its execution.

The late First Sea Lord Radkin knew this and spoke of it when elevated to Chief of the General Staff, but was powerless against that fiefdom of established civil servants. The navy has a desire for what they call Type 83; these numbers confuse me, I can only think they are meant to, not being very bright in the first place; it is a cruiser-sized vessel. The proposals get larger with meagre basic armaments staying much the same; a current new build Russian frigate with hypersonic missiles quite capable of its elimination.

Engine room problems in the current R.N. 'D Class' Type 45 destroyers beggars belief; the first to be rectified returns to the fleet in 2026, with the rest of the flotilla - 4 ships- complete by 2033. Such a time scale is ridiculous, with no one needing to wonder why U.K. ship building is with the Dodo.

Canada and Australia purchased only hull plans for Type 26 Global frigates. Proposals shown by both will deliver a vessel armed for the world we see now. Economy with man-o-war arms fitted is tantamount to abuse, misuse of crew.

It is reported those old D Class destroyers will join the fleet with an extra 24 Sea Ceptor A.A. missiles. I was amazed to learn the space will be gained from a GYM being replaced! I am scared these upgrades may eventually require elimination of the massage parlour or, horror of horrors, the Gay Bar. If the crap hits the fan they will not know what hit them.

Hospital interlude

If there was a bright side to growing old, knowing one could do it gracefully was comforting. Alas, another glaring example of my inability to 'pick the good seed from the chaff'. It happened for me recently with little grace, more like being hit by the Flying Scotsman with its 'hurtle valve' wide open on a down grade. Jo had told one Shipmate on the phone I had a knee problem; it was one affliction I did not have, it was plausible though as currently I have most major maladies gently maturing in mankind. I was first in the operating theatre two days in succession - not swinging the lamp about that - requested local anaesthetics but lucked out on that.

Gas has a strange effect on me and was away with the fairies for a pair of nights, engaged in rugby scrums with various numbers of nurses. Two periods of extreme violent pain had me wishing I had an On/Off switch in my ball bag; would have been sore tempted to switch off several hours into the second night; makes me sound like a wimp quitter but then I was at the point of extreme exhaustion. I am aware it is most immodest to talk of oneself, me I, me I.

A couple of shipmates have enquired what happened, the foregoing a thumbnail sketch attempt to explain. I did feel life had gone full circle when leaving Ganges with a rail warrant, many moons ago, and the instruction; "You are now going down to Pembroke".

On my back in A & E Medway Maritime Hospital a couple of weeks ago a nurse said, "Now you are going down to Pembroke". The ward being named after the old barracks down the road - wry smile.

First morning in theatre all bling is removed, watch, necklace, nose ring etc. My full top denture was removed also; on ward recovery denture was handed back - in six pieces. No molars on top means normal eating is a major trial. A diet of 'slop' or 'raw pallet' are the



options. Of course no one wants to know - hurrah for 'care at the point of need'.

I feel that's enough for any old piece of stuff so will bid you all a hearty 'farewell'.

Be seeing you soon.