



The Bold Vision of the First Sea Lord: The Royal Navy Towards the War of the Future

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London - The Head of the Royal Navy, **General Sir Gwyn Jenkins**, has charted the course to radically transform the British Maritime Force, focusing on technological innovation, operational autonomy, and war readiness within the next four years.

“Uncrewed wherever possible”

In his first public speech as **First Sea Lord**, Jenkins presented a simple yet disruptive guiding principle: “**uncrewed wherever possible; crewed only where necessary**”. A formula destined to reshape naval operations, reducing the reliance on human crews and expanding the use of autonomous systems.

The project involves the development of **hybrid air wings** on the *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers, capable of integrating fighters, helicopters, and drones. By next year, the Royal Navy

aims to launch the first jet drone from an aircraft carrier, consolidating the UK's role as a pioneer in NATO for new forms of maritime warfare.

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Atlantic Bastion and Hybrid Fleets

Among the key points of Jenkins' vision is the creation of the **Atlantic Bastion** concept: uncrewed escort groups, integrated with the new submarines and Type 26 frigates, capable of operating autonomously in the North Atlantic. These units will be ready to detect, track, and engage potential threats, supporting crewed ships.

"This is not science fiction," Jenkins reiterated. "My goal is to have the first uncrewed naval escort alongside our units within two years."

An ambitious plan that fits into a long-term strategy: building a **hybrid Royal Navy**, composed of crewed and uncrewed platforms, digitally connected and capable of redefining maritime power across multiple domains – above, below, and from the sea.

Operational Readiness and the Role of the Royal Marines

Alongside technological innovation, Jenkins emphasized the centrality of traditional missions: ensuring nuclear deterrence, protecting maritime routes, and strengthening the security of the United Kingdom. He insisted on the need to **simplify internal processes** and put personnel in the best conditions to operate.

A significant point concerned the **Royal Marines**, protagonists of a transformation initiated almost ten years ago and today considered a model anticipating contemporary wars. Equipped with new weapons and technologies, the British Marines are increasingly oriented towards a **dispersed, connected but autonomous** deployment, embodying the concept of the *21st Century Commando*.

According to Jenkins, their importance will be crucial especially in the **High North**, a strategic region both for the confrontation with the growing Russian submarine fleet and for the challenges arising from climate change, which is igniting competition among states over routes, resources, and territories.

A Royal Navy Projected into the Future

The [message of the First Sea Lord is clear](#): to face emerging threats and maintain a leading role in NATO, the Royal Navy must reinvent itself quickly. A transformation that combines **technology, autonomy, and operational adaptation**, with the aim of delivering to the United Kingdom a naval force capable of fighting – and winning – in the seas of the 21st century.

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