

**OPERATION
NORTHERN TRIDENT 2009**

DEPARTURE

HMAS Ballarat – 20 April

HMAS Sydney – 23 April

RETURN

HMAS Sydney – 21 September

HMAS Ballarat – 9 October

Trip of a Lifetime

As the old song says – “I joined the Navy to see the world. And what did I see? I saw the sea!” – the promise of grand adventure and visits to all the world’s ports never eventuates for many sailors. When they do get to travel or deploy, a lot of sea and one or two, often passable ports, is all they get.



As the adventure began, and families were left behind – not for the first time – Ballarat sailed from Fleet Base East on Monday 20 April, followed three days later by Sydney – destination Darwin

By comparison, the companies of HMA ships Sydney and Ballarat embarked on what no one would deny was the ‘trip of a lifetime’ on 20 April this year when they set sail on a six-month around-the-world voyage, taking in 13 countries and many adventures – some planned and some not – along the way.

Operation Northern Trident 2009 is still under way as this issue of CONTACT goes to print, but the voyage so far has given both ships and their crews an excellent opportunity to enhance core skills while exercising with or visiting the navies of India, Italy, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, Panama and Mexico.

Family, friends and well-wishers lined the wharf at Fleet Base East on 20 April to see the crews off.

Acting Fleet Commander Commodore Simon Cullen said both ships had proven themselves to be capable teams, well led, and were ready to counter any challenges that awaited them. He reminded them of the responsibility they carried as ambassadors for Australia.

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While much of the voyage for Ballarat and Sydney was indeed fun, there was also plenty of work and training to be done. And, typically, training activities can spring up any time. Before making first landfall, orders came in – “the State of Beulah is under threat. Australia has agreed to assist the Beulahns. The ships of Northern Trident 2009 (NT09) must be re-tasked”.

Though the resulting actions of the Ballarat crew conveyed the seriousness of the situation, the scenario was entirely

fictional and, in reality, neither ship was diverted from its 13,000 nautical mile trip of a lifetime.

The training scenario did, however, consist of 48 hours of intensive warfare training devised by the Royal Australian Navy’s Sea Training Group – the ‘Green Team’ – to put Ballarat’s ship’s company through its paces and was an important part of a ‘unit readiness evaluation’ for Ballarat. It tested the ships ability to work effectively on a day-to-day basis while simultaneously managing threats and emergencies at sea. Though RAN ships routinely practice a variety of skills when underway, this training was of particular importance to Ballarat because, later in the voyage, in the UK, she was to undertake a benchmarking activity with the Royal Navy’s Flag Officer Sea Training team.

“We will take the lessons learned from this training off the northern coast of Australia to the world,” Commander Kevin Turner said.

“Ballarat will be the international measuring stick for the RAN’s training program and we are looking forward to the challenge.”

After a brief stopover in Darwin, the ships finally left Australia behind on 23 April, headed north and west for their first international port visit, at Kochi on India’s west coast.

On the way, two days out and just before dawn, the crews mustered on their respective flight decks and, as waves crashed against the hull, they bowed their heads to remember and reflect.

While ANZAC Day is most often commemorated with a march, there was something more special about this day.

“ANZAC Day isn’t just about the diggers of WWI, but a time to think about all the sailors, soldiers and airmen who went before us,” HMAS Sydney’s Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander Bill Waters said.



A HMAS Ballarat boarding team takes control of HMAS Sydney. Pic: Leading Seaman Nadia Monteith



Leading Seaman Nicholas McGuire, Able Seaman Glenys Jara, and Seaman Isaac Jones prepare to be lowered for a man-overboard exercise on HMAS Sydney. Pic: Leading Seaman Nadia Monteith