

WARSHIP IN PORT FOR AIR SHOW SPECTACULAR

22/JUL/2010

The City and Port of Sunderland are playing host to Royal Navy's Type 23 frigate, HMS Westminster, which berthed at Corporation Quay this morning.

Highlight of the visit will be a demonstration of her fighting capabilities as part of this weekend's Sunderland International Air Show, where spectators will see the modern Royal Navy in action, demonstrating its capability as a highly versatile maritime force.

Using fast and manoeuvrable rigid inflatable boats, with the ship's Merlin HM Mk 1 helicopter providing airborne support, Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel will mount a spectacular amphibious beach assault.

After Saturday's display, Westminster will make the short voyage to Northumbrian Quay, North Shields, before returning to the Wearside coast to take part in Sunday's event.

Westminster's commanding officer, Commander Tim Green, said: "The purpose of the visit is primarily to support the spectacular Sunderland International Air Show.

"HMS Westminster has recently emerged from a refit package, which sees her established as the most highly equipped and capable Type 23 frigate in the Royal Navy as she generates for operations.

"This is also a great opportunity for the ship's company to enjoy the legendary warm local welcome in Sunderland and North Shields before we embark on a period of intensive training in readiness for operational tasking."

Port of Sunderland Director, Matthew Hunt, added: "It is very pleasing for all at the port that our main commercial facility at Corporation Quay can be made available to host such an important visit for our city."

During Westminster's stay, Naval Regional Commander, Commodore Dickie Burn, will accompany the senior Royal Naval officer for the area, Rear Admiral Martin Alabaster, on a series of engagements, including calling on local dignitaries and attending on board official functions.

Tomorrow evening, Rear Admiral Alabaster will present Elizabeth Cross medals on board HMS Westminster in honour of Britain's war dead.

Although the warship will not be open to the public, her crew will welcome a number of invited guests and potential recruits.

HMS Westminster was launched by Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd on the Tyne in 1992 and entered commission in 1994. She is capable of engaging in a wide range of operations from a full conventional war-fighting role to disaster relief and policing operations, such as anti-piracy.