



# NEWS RELEASE

From: COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FLEET  
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## FIRST CONTACT WITH ATLANTIC ROWERS

HMS Mersey, the Royal Navy's newest Offshore Patrol Vessel, has spotted a 29 ft rowing boat competing in the Shepherd Ocean Four Trans Atlantic Race from New York to Falmouth. This is the first contact since 09 July when their satellite link failed. Mersey launched a boat to confirm all was well – and discovered Team Hesco consisting of four Royal Engineers.

Major Pete Rowlands, Captain Mark Waterson, Staff Sergeant Ben Fouracre and LCpl Charlie Martell are rowing to raise over £140,000 for the Meningitis Trust following the death of one of the crew's sons from the illness.

They left from New York on 10 June 2006 and survived force nine winds from Tropical Storm Alberto. They were driven backwards by many days of headwinds despite hours spent at the oars. With only 150 miles to the Finish Line in Falmouth the crew remain in good spirits as they will be the first British crew to make the crossing mainland-to-mainland.

Pete Rowlands asked Mersey to publicise their imminent return to Falmouth and thank everyone who has supported them. The latest team news is available from their website : [www.teamhesco.com](http://www.teamhesco.com) . Details of HMS Mersey are available from the Royal Navy website: [www.royal-navy.mod.uk](http://www.royal-navy.mod.uk)

### **Photo caption:**

HMS Mersey stands by transatlantic rowers Pete Rowlands, Mark Waterson, Ben Fouracre and Charlie Martell of the Royal Engineers, 150 miles offshore in the South West approaches.

### **Notes for Editors:**

HMS Mersey main task is patrolling the fishery limits, which extend 200 miles from the British coast.

She carries this out whatever the weather or time of year. Her secondary task is to conduct operations

as directed by the Commander-in-Chief Fleet – these can include counter-drug operations, search and rescue and protection of offshore installations.

She was commissioned in 2003, displaces 1677 tons and has a speed in excess of 20 knots.

Major Pete Rowlands & LCpl Charlie Martell – are from 131 Squadron (TA) Engineers

Captain Mark Waterson – is from 33 Engineer Regiment

Staff Sergeant Ben Fouracre – is from 59 Independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers

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