

to rescue her dog from a quicksand and started sinking herself, the helicopter then landed and rescued her but started sinking itself but fortunately was able to lift off (the dog made its own escape). The Coastguard also provides a rescue service but the primary difference is that their helicopters are equipped with winches so the demarcation is that if a casualty is on a beach or in the sea the coastguard will respond.

Although the paramedics are supplied through the NHS, the remaining £1.7m required is paid for from fund raising and about £125,000 is needed per month in addition to funds from supporting organisations – for example a uniform costs £2,500 and a helmet £1,200. Key activities are the IOWAA lottery which generates £34,000 per week and recycling of clothes and shoes from the yellow containers seen around the county and 'BagItUp' – up to 75% is able to be resold - which provides £30,000 a month. Legacies, Gift Aid, collecting boxes, fetes, sky diving and merchandise all play their part in keeping this essential ambulance service flying.

SHAKIN' THE "BIG STICK"

At the end of March a rather large United States Navy ship visited the south coast. For five days, the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) was moored in Stokes Bay in the Solent. This was due to the 100,000 tonne "Nimitz" class carrier being too big to enter Portsmouth harbour. The U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt or "Big Stick" as it is referred to by its 5,226 crewmembers, last visited Portsmouth in 2009. England was the first port of call, since "TR" left Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, in March at the start of an eight-month round-the-world deployment. The carrier has the capability to carry up to 90 aircraft and on display on the rather crowded deck were well in excess of 30 F/A-18A/C Hornets, some carrying VMFA-251 (Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251) "The Thunderbolts" markings, based at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina and others belonging to VFA-211, the "Flying Checkmates" and VFA-136 "The Knighthawks". Also out on deck were A-6 Intruders, E-2 Hawkeyes, S-3 Viking aircraft and a handful of SH-60F Seahawk helicopters.



In 1991 during Operation Desert Storm over 4,200 sorties (more than any other carrier) were launched from "TR" and dropped more than 4,800,000 pounds (2,177,243.4 kg) of ordnance were dropped before the cease-fire.



I couldn't let the "Big Stick" depart without me seeing it, so I decided to drive down early on the final day of the carrier's visit, leaving home at 5am and was on the beach between Gosport and Lee-on-the-Solent for 6am. Luckily for me, David Read was also on the beach with a camera equipped with a far better long lens than mine and he agreed to send me the photos he had taken. These excellent pictures accompany this article, thank you, David.



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