22nd MEU (SOC) Concludes 10-Month Deployment

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MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – Marines and Sailors of the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) began returning home in waves June 1, 2026, after completing a nearly 10-month deployment in support of Operation SOUTHERN SPEAR and U.S. Southern Command's priorities of countering illicit threats, strengthening regional partnerships, and protecting the homeland.

The 22d MEU (SOC) is comprised of Battalion Landing Team 3/6, Combat Logistics Battalion 26, and Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 263 (Reinforced). The unit was embarked aboard the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group, which included USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), USS San Antonio (LPD 17), and USS Fort

Lauderdale (LPD 28). Initially slated for deployment to 5th and 6th Fleet, the ARG/MEU pivoted south shortly after departing Norfolk, answering SOUTHCOM's call for a flexible, sea-based formation capable of responding across the competition continuum.

During the ten-month deployment, the 22d MEU (SOC) executed five distinct MEU Mission Essential Tasks, demonstrating its operational flexibility. Embassy reinforcement missions in Haiti and Venezuela provided security during periods of regional instability; five Maritime Interception Operations disrupted illicit trafficking networks across the Caribbean Basin; integration with Special Operations Forces (SOF) during Operation Absolute Resolve showcased the MEU's ability to set the theater for sensitive joint missions; and foreign humanitarian assistance operations in Jamaica highlighted the MEU's capacity to rapidly project aid from the sea. Together, these accomplishments underscored the strategic value of a forward-postured naval expeditionary force.

"This deployment proved a fundamental truth about our naval expeditionary forces: nobody can do what a ARG/MEU can do organically, across all warfighting functions and all domains," said Col. Tom "Banshee" Trimble, commanding officer of the 22d MEU (SOC). "I am incredibly proud of this blue-green team. Watching them pivot from high-stakes power projection one day, to embassy reinforcement and a massive humanitarian relief effort the next was nothing short of eye-watering.

The deployment included several operational milestones for the IWOARG/22d MEU (SOC) team. During Operation Absolute Resolve, the ARG/MEU operated alongside joint and interagency partners to open and set the theater for special operations forces. Additionally, the MEU enhanced security at U.S. embassies in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Caracas, Venezuela. The unit played a key security role on Mar. 14, 2026, during the raising of the American flag at the U.S. embassy in Venezuela,

and months later executed a quick-reaction force and casualty-evacuation rehearsal in Caracas that included transporting the SOUTHCOM Commander via MV-22B Osprey.

“The Navy and Marine Corps team demonstrated its flexibility and operational reach,” said Capt. Chris Farricker, Commodore, Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group and commander, Amphibious Squadron Eight. “Together, the IWO JIMA ARG and 22D MEU (SOC) showcased the United States’ ability to maintain a persistent maritime presence and respond effectively from the sea to meet regional challenges, with zero reliance on foreign basing.”

The ARG/MEU spent more than 90 percent of its deployment in the Central Caribbean Basin, steaming over 130,000 nautical miles.

“Our ability to create our own training opportunities, both from the sea and ashore, was a critical factor in our sustained readiness,” said Col. Trimble. “Our Marines and Sailors built a logistical hub where none existed and improved Camp Santiago to the point that the BLT was able to employ nearly every weapon in its arsenal. That ensured we maintained our tactical edge through month ten.”

When natural disaster struck the region, the ARG/MEU rapidly transitioned to humanitarian assistance operations. From Oct. 31 to Nov. 13, 2025, in partnership with Joint Task Force–Bravo, the 22d MEU (SOC) delivered large-scale relief to Jamaica following Hurricane Melissa. Leveraging ARG shipping, organic aviation, and sea-based sustainment, the force reached isolated communities cut off by storm damage. Working alongside the Jamaica Defence Force and the U.S. State Department’s Disaster Assistance Response Team, the MEU delivered more than 780,000 pounds of supplies, dispensed 6,190 pounds of fuel at forward refueling points, and mapped 72 hasty landing zones using organic intelligence and reconnaissance assets.

Beyond crisis response, the 22d MEU (SOC) strengthened regional partnerships and reinforced deterrence across the Caribbean. Marines and Sailors conducted two military exchanges with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, focusing on infantry skills, Tactical Combat Casualty Care, and live-fire mortar employment. Regional interoperability expanded further through a major bilateral exercise in Ecuador and participation in Exercise Tres Kolos alongside French and Dutch forces in Martinique.

As the 22d MEU (SOC) returns home, it sets the stage for the incoming 24th MEU, deploying as the 24th Littoral Combat Force, to continue SOUTHCOM’s mission in the Caribbean. This deliberate transition ensures the region maintains a continuous, capable, and ready ARG/MEU presence in the Western Hemisphere.