

24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, USS San Antonio Transit Panama Canal



PANAMA CANAL – On Aug. 1, 2026, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, operating as Littoral Combat Force-24 aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS San Antonio (LPD 17), completed a transit through the Panama Canal while operating under United States Southern Command.

Marking the first time a Marine Expeditionary Unit has navigated the canal since 2008, this large-scale maneuver is a demonstration of the Marine Corps' capacity for rapid global mobility, maritime dominance, and seamless power projection.

Since its completion, the Panama Canal has served as a vital strategic pathway for the United States and its allies. The canal allows naval vessels to rapidly shift between the

Atlantic and Pacific theaters, saving weeks of travel around South America. Navigating this critical maritime shortcut ensures the U.S. military can maintain a flexible, responsive posture – surging ships and troops to meet emerging crises across hemispheres without delay.

“This historic transit is a powerful testament to the flexibility and readiness of Littoral Combat Force-24,” said Col. Ryan Lynch, the commanding officer of LCF-24. “Our ability to seamlessly navigate this critical waterway alongside our Navy partners aboard the USS San Antonio demonstrates our capability to rapidly project power and respond to crises anywhere in the Southern Command area of responsibility. We are ready to operate straight from the sea, at a moment’s notice.”

The transit serves as a validation of the Littoral Combat Force concept and the modern Marine Air-Ground Task Force. It proves LCF-24’s ability to navigate narrow waterways and project assets ashore without relying on established military basing, underscoring the Marine Corps’ enduring role as the nation’s premier force-in-readiness, perfectly calibrated for contested littoral regions.

The foundation of this capability is the unbreakable teamwork between the Navy and the Marine Corps. The interoperability displayed by the Marines of LCF-24 and the Sailors of the USS San Antonio highlights a fully integrated naval force supporting Combatant Commander objectives.

By moving fluidly through the canal, the Blue-Green team proves its unrestricted access to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility, which spans Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Whether tasked with humanitarian disaster relief, bolstering regional partnerships, or deterring aggression, this force can reach anywhere in the region to deliver tailored, decisive effects.

The 24th MEU's transit of the Panama Canal proves that the Navy-Marine Corps team remains prepared to respond as America's 9-1-1 force in any clime and place.