2nd Fleet Conducts Convoy Exercise in Atlantic



A convoy made up of the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf (foreground), the vehicle carrier MV Resolve (center) and the MSC cargo ship USNS Benavidez steam in formation. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Waters

NORFOLK, Va. – U.S. 2nd Fleet, on behalf of U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR) and with Military Sealift Command (MSC), is conducting convoy operations across the Atlantic, employing the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf alongside USNS Benavidez, MV Resolve and MV Patriot, the 2nd Fleet said in a release.

Sealift remains the primary method for transporting military equipment, supplies and materiel around the world. With the return of peer competition and access to sea lanes no longer guaranteed, the Navy and MSC train together to ensure successful delivery and sustainment of combat power.

"In a real-world conflict, much of the military equipment must still go by sealift, which makes convoy operations a critical skill set to maintain and practice," said Capt. Hans E. Lynch, commodore of MSC Atlantic. "In the last five years, there has been an increased emphasis on including Merchant Marine shipping in large-scale exercises to enhance tactical proficiency. Exercises that incorporate convoy operations are an extension of that ongoing tactical training."

This exercise is simulating an opposed transit, testing the fleets' abilities to safely cross the Atlantic and new ways of conducting a convoy in today's environment. Convoy operations were critical during World War I and World War II as the primary method for moving troops and military equipment, supplies and materiel to Europe. After WWII, convoys became less prevalent in the Atlantic theater, although still

practiced in other areas of operation.

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>
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“The Atlantic is a battlespace that cannot be ignored,” said Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, commander of the 2nd Fleet. “We need to be prepared to operate at the high end alongside our allies, partners and adversaries alike as soon as we’re underway.”

During its operations in the Atlantic, Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, along with P-8s from VP-4 and a U.S. submarine, cleared the maritime battlespace prior to the transit of the Vella Gulf-escorted MSC convoy.

“This exercise allows us to sharpen our ability to move critical resources across the Atlantic, from the United States to Europe,” said Adm. James G. Foggo III, commander of NAVEUR.

Foggo added: “The transatlantic bridge is just as important today for moving troops and military equipment, supplies and materiel from the United States to Europe as it has been at any point in history.”

The 2nd and 6th fleets work together to ensure the security of sea lanes of communication in the Atlantic. If called upon, the Pentagon’s sealift transportation fleet expects to move about 90% of required assets from the U.S. to the conflict theater. The safest and quickest way to get needed materials to the front lines is via maritime convoy.

“We, as a Navy, are inherently linked with the broader maritime industry, and this exercise provides a great opportunity to train like we fight,” said Capt. Andrew

Fitzpatrick, the Vella Gulf’s commander. “Practicing convoy operations flexes a blue-water, high-end skill for the first time in many years, enabling us all to operate on, above and below the sea in a contested environment.”

MSC operates about 110 noncombatant, civilian-crewed ships that replenish Navy ships, conduct specialized missions, strategically preposition combat cargo at sea around the world and move military cargo and supplies used by deployed U.S. forces and coalition partners.

C2F tests operational authorities over assigned ships, aircraft and landing forces on the East Coast and the Atlantic Ocean. When directed, C2F conducts exercises and operations within the U.S. European Command area of responsibility as an expeditionary fleet.