USNS Comfort Departs Costa Rica After Fifth CP25 Mission Stop

LIMÓN, Costa Rica (July 28, 2025) Sailors assigned to the Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) assist a patient departing Comfort in Limón, Costa Rica during Continuing Promise 2025, July 28, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Thomas Boatright)

By USNAVSOUTH/4TH FLEET PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LIMÓN, Costa Rica – The Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) departed from Limón, Costa Rica, August 1, 2025, after spending eight days providing medical care, dental care, veterinary care, and multiple subject matter exchanges for Continuing Promise 2025 (CP25).

“As the Continuing Promise mission continues, we leave Costa

Rica not only with a sense of accomplishment in the work we've done, but with a profound appreciation for the enduring partnership we've forged," said Capt. Ryan Kendall, commodore, Destroyer Squadron 40 and CP25 mission commander. "We thank our Costa Rican counterparts for their warm welcome and dedication to this mission, as we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to build upon these strong ties in the years to come."

U.S. and Costa Rican medical providers encountered 2,200 patients at the Limón mobile medical site set up at Hernán Garrón Salazar Terminal. Additionally, team Comfort filled 3,323 pharmaceutical prescriptions, conducted 371 dental procedures, distributed 856 pairs of glasses and 706 sunglasses, and performed 65 surgeries aboard Comfort, including 12 pediatric surgeries.

"We were able to provide the best care to Costa Rica with the resources that we had, within the time that we had," said Capt. Todd Mondzelewski, an ophthalmologist assigned to Comfort. "We have been able to do a lot of surgeries and provide exceptional medical care for every country that we've been to, and I hope to be able to continue doing just that."

The team conducted subject matter expert exchanges (SMEE) including a trauma symposium, preventive medicine classes, basic life-saving techniques, and a tactical combat casualty care course. Over three days, 13 SMEE events occurred with 228 participants from the Costa Rican Red Cross, first responders, and Servicio Nacional de Guardacostas, Costa Rica's Coast Guard.

Besides patient and medical services, U.S. Army veterinarians from the 248th Medical Detachment Veterinary Service Support encountered 1,741 small animals, including 1,188 routine checkups, and performed 553 neuter and spay procedures in Limón.

“It was a great experience overall,” said Spc. Ali Peer, a veterinary technician assigned to the 248th Medical Detachment Veterinary Support Services. “We did more than 1,000 vaccinations and consultations on the animals and made a long-lasting impact in Costa Rica.”

Comfort’s time in Limón was more than just a chance to offer medical and veterinary services to Costa Rican citizens; it also allowed service members to reunite with their loved ones.

“I haven’t seen my dad in three years,” said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Veronica Hernandez Araya, assigned to Comfort. “I was nervous to see my dad in a military setting, but he was super happy to see me, hugged me, and told me he was proud of me, which made it all worth it.”

Throughout the Comfort’s time in Limón, the U.S. Navy Fleet Forces Band “Uncharted Waters” performed for 6 days at a variety of events for more than 3,560 Costa Ricans. U.S. service members also had the opportunity to participate in community relations events, including a park cleaning and restoration, a basketball game, a cricket game, and a kickball game against students from Colegio Tecnico Professional De Limón.

Lastly, Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11 dedicated 615 man-hours in repairing two school sites: Colegio de Limón and Colegio Tecnico Professional. The repairs included replacing a rotting wooden stage, installing roofing over walkways, and painting a 10,000 square foot roof to prevent roof corrosion.

Following Costa Rica, the Comfort will head to its sixth and final mission stop of CP25 in the capital of Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain.

CP25 marks the 16th mission to the region since 2007 and the eighth aboard Comfort. The mission will foster goodwill, strengthen existing partnerships with partner nations, and encourage the establishment of new partnerships among countries, non-federal entities, and international organizations.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

General Dynamics Bath Iron Works Awarded Contract for Additional DDG 51 Destroyer

Release From General Dynamics Bath Iron Works

BATH, Maine – General Dynamics Bath Iron Works, a business unit of General Dynamics (NYSE:GD), announced today that the U.S. Navy has exercised an option to add an additional DDG 51 destroyer to the multi-year contract awarded in 2023.

"We are proud to be selected to build this ship for the U.S. Navy and to continue our legacy of contributing to the nation's defense," said Charles F. Krugh, president of Bath Iron Works. "I appreciate the efforts of our team to improve the construction process and build to the plan. We are clawing

back schedule so we can deliver more Bath-built ships to our Navy. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our Congressional delegation who added this ship to the Fiscal Year 2025 Defense Appropriations Bill."

Bath Iron Works currently has under construction the Flight IIA Arleigh Burke-class destroyers Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) and Patrick Gallagher (DDG 127) as well as the Flight III configuration destroyers Louis H. Wilson Jr. (DDG 126), William Charette (DDG 130), Quentin Walsh (DDG 132), John E. Kilmer (DDG 134) and Richard G. Lugar (DDG 136).

Navy F-35C Jet Crashes Near NAS Lemoore

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – A U.S. Navy F-35C Lightning II strike fighter crashed on July 30 near Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, the air station said in a Facebook post.

"NAS Lemoore can confirm an aviation incident on the Operations side of the installation," the announcement said. "At 1830, an F-35C attached to the VFA-125 Rough Raiders went down not far from NAS Lemoore. We can confirm the pilot successfully ejected and is safe. There are no additional affected personnel."

VFA-125 is the fleet replacement squadron for the F-35C, training aviators and maintenance personnel for Navy and Marine Corps squadrons that operate the F-35C.

The jet is the fourth tactical jet that the Navy has lost this calendar year.

Admiral Caudle Confirmed as Chief of Naval Operations

ARLINGTON, Va. – Admiral Daryl Caudle was confirmed July 31 by the U.S. Senate as the 34th chief of naval operations (CNO). Caudle was serving as commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command

when he was nominated by the president.

Adm. Daryl Caudle is a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina and a 1985 graduate of North Carolina State University (magna cum laude) with a degree in chemical engineering. He was then commissioned after attending Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. Caudle holds advanced degrees from the Naval Postgraduate School, Master of Science (distinction) in Physics; from Old Dominion University, and Master of Science in Engineering Management. He also attended the School of Advanced Studies, University of Phoenix, where he obtained a Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership with a specialization in Information Systems and Technology.

His doctoral dissertation research was conducted on military decision making uncertainty regarding the use of force in cyberspace. He is also a licensed professional engineer.

He assumed command of U.S. Fleet Forces Command; U.S. Naval Forces Northern Command; U.S. Naval Forces Strategic Command; and U.S. Strategic Command Joint Force Maritime Component Commander on December 7, 2021.

Prior to this assignment, he served as commander, Submarine Forces; commander, Submarine Force Atlantic; commander, Task Force (CTF) 114, CTF 88, and CTF 46; and commander, Allied Submarine Command.

His other flag assignments include deputy chief for security cooperation, Office of the Defense Representative, Pakistan; deputy commander, Joint Functional Component Command-Global Strike; deputy commander, U.S. 6th Fleet; director of operations U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa; commander, Submarine Group Eight; commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet; and vice director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy on the Joint Staff (J-5) in Washington, D.C.

His early sea tours included assignments as division officer, USS George Washington Carver (SSBN 656G); engineer, USS

Stonewall Jackson (SSN 634B); engineer, USS Sand Lance (SSN 660); and executive officer of USS Montpelier (SSN 765).

Caudle's first command assignment was as commanding officer of USS Jefferson City (SSN 759). As deputy commander, Submarine Squadron 11, he served as commanding officer of USS Topeka (SSN 754) and USS Helena (SSN 725) due to emergent losses of the normally assigned commanding officers. He also commanded Submarine Squadron 3.

His tours ashore include assignments as assistant force nuclear power officer, Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet; officer-in-charge of Moored Training Ship (MTS 635); deputy commander of Submarine Squadron 11; assistant deputy director for information and cyberspace policy on the Joint Staff (J-5) in Washington, D.C.; and as chief of staff Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

His personal decorations include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal (four awards), Legion of Merit (four Awards), Meritorious Service Medal (Three Awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (five Awards), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (four Awards).

Vice Admiral Dougherty Takes Command of NAVAIR

From Naval Air Systems Command, Aug 1, 2025

NAS PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Vice Adm. John “Doc” Dougherty, IV assumed command of the Naval Air Systems Command Aug. 1. Dougherty relieved Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, who retired after 38 years of distinguished naval service.

Under Chebi’s leadership, NAVAIR achieved and sustained the highest readiness levels in the history of naval aviation, identified over $3 billion in savings to reinvest in naval aviation priorities, and delivered capabilities that are changing the way the naval aviation trains and fights.

“I’m incredibly proud of the NAVAIR team’s dedication to delivering the capabilities the fleet needs, when they need them,” said Chebi. “I have full confidence Doc will lead this exceptional workforce to deliver next-level capabilities and readiness for our warfighters.”

Dougherty brings a powerful combination of acquisition and technical experience to his new role, having served as commander of the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division and NAVAIR Chief Engineer.

In his first message to the workforce, Dougherty outlined NAVAIR's "playbook" for delivering readiness and capability—emphasizing a "fleet first" approach to advancing operational readiness and effectiveness, prioritizing speed, executing with precision, tracking performance and owning results and building trust to align efforts and enable data-informed decisions at the lowest levels.

A Harrisburg, Pennsylvania native, Dougherty graduated from United States Naval Academy in 1995 and holds both a Master of Business Administration and Master of Systems Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School. Dougherty's extensive background includes operational tours flying the F/A-18C Hornet with over 1,200 flight hours and 300 carrier landings, followed by senior acquisition roles managing critical programs including Precision Strike Weapons, F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, and the Navy's Next Generation Air Dominance Program.

"It's a privilege to lead this talented team as we continue advancing naval aviation capabilities and readiness," Dougherty said. "Our success is measured by the fleet's success, and that mindset will continue to drive our priorities moving forward."

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton Returns Home Following 134-day Western

Pacific Patrol

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton (WMSL 752) transits the San Francisco Bay after crossing under the Bay Bridge during the ship's return to its Alameda, California, July 30, 2025. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and can hold a crew of up to 170. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Austin Wiley)
From U.S. Coast Guard Oceania District, July 31, 2025

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton (WMSL 752) and crew returned to their Base Alameda home port, Wednesday, following a 134-day patrol in the Indo-Pacific.

Stratton's crew engaged in professional exchanges, cultural events, and joint exercises with Japan, Republic of Korea and the Philippines, including at-sea search-and-rescue and interdiction exercises.

Expanded U.S. Coast Guard presence in the Indo-Pacific

facilitates professional exchanges that strengthen our mutual capacity and interoperability with allies and partners, creating opportunities to expand maritime domain awareness in support of a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific through unrestricted access to the maritime commons.

In Puerta Princesa, Philippines, Stratton **c**onducted joint operations with the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team West and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Special Operations Forces and hosted the U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines, MaryKay Carlson, and PCG Commandant Adm. Ronnie Gil Gavan.

In Busan, Republic of Korea, Stratton participated in a search and rescue (SAR) tabletop exercise with ten countries for international mission collaboration. Stratton also conducted a trilateral partner nation engagement with the PCG and Japan Coast Guard in Kagoshima, Japan, during which the crew led ship's tours, tabletop discussions and an at-sea SAR exercise, marking the first time the PCG operated with the U.S. Coast Guard outside their Exclusive Economic Zone.

While anchored in Koror, Palau, Stratton hosted the President of Palau and U.S. Ambassador to Palau, Joel Ehrendreich. The event highlighted the importance of the U.S partnership as Stratton was the first in its class to visit Palau.

Supporting a White House initiative for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Stratton hosted six observers from India Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard, and Australian Border Force, for the first-ever Quad at-sea ship observer mission to improve interoperability in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. Coast Guard navigates with our Quad partners to leverage and network respective maritime security capabilities toward cooperation on key maritime issues of mutual concern and significant value to Indo-Pacific stability.

Additionally, Stratton’s crew embarked three law enforcement officers from the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Sea Patrol, who provided a combined presence and conducted two successful maritime law enforcement boardings of commercial fishing vessels operating in the RMI EEZ. While no violations were initially reported from the boarding, potential issues with the catch emerged later and constituted further inspection from RMI.

Stratton’s deployment contributed to regional cooperation and enhanced global maritime governance through integrated deterrence and strengthened partnerships.

“The crew is excited to return home after a long but incredibly important deployment,” says Capt. Dorothy Hernaez, Stratton’s commanding officer. “Stratton and her crew showcased that the U.S. Coast Guard is a global Coast Guard. Through presence and partner engagement in the Indo-Pacific, Stratton advanced regional stability that in turn provides for homeland security, peace, and prosperity.”

Hernaez assumed command of the Stratton during a change of command ceremony held in Honolulu on July 22, as the cutter transited toward its home port.

Commissioned in 2012, Stratton is one of ten Legend-class national security cutters and one of four homeported in Alameda. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, and can hold a crew of up to 170. National security cutters routinely conduct operations throughout the Pacific, where their unmatched combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

The namesake of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton is Capt. Dorothy Stratton, who led the service's all-female reserve force during World War II. Dorothy Stratton was the first female commissioned officer in the Coast Guard and commanded more than 10,000 personnel. The ship's motto is "We Can't Afford Not To."

Historic TH-57 Helicopter Landing Aboard USS Lexington Marks End of an Era

A TH-57C Sea Ranger and a TH-73A Thrasher attached to Helicopter Training Squadron (HT) 28 land on the flight deck of decommissioned aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV 16), Museum on the Bay, in Corpus Christi, Texas, July 30, 2025.

This landing commemorates the legacy of the TH-57 training helicopter while showcasing the future of naval aviation with the TH-73. (U.S. Navy photo by Morgan Galvin)
From Morgan Galvin of the Chief of Naval Air Training

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas, July 30, 2025

Helicopter Squadron 28 (HT-28) conducted a landing of a TH-57C Sea Ranger helicopter aboard decommissioned aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV 16) Museum on the Bay, July 30, 2025. The landing honored the legacy of the TH-57C and celebrated the Navy's transition to the TH-73A Thrasher, the next-generation training helicopter poised to advance the future of rotary-wing aviation.

Based out of Naval Air Station Whiting Field in Milton, Florida, HT-28 is one of the Navy's advanced helicopter training squadrons, responsible for training hundreds of student naval aviators each year in rotary-wing flight operations. The squadron's expertise and dedication ensure that naval helicopter pilots are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of operational fleet service around the world.

While in service, the TH-57C trained more than 30,000 naval aviators and will continue to serve as a living tribute to decades of naval aviation excellence aboard USS Lexington Museum.

"The successful landing and transfer of the TH-57C to the USS Lexington Museum honor a remarkable legacy of naval aviation training, especially here in South Texas," said Rear Adm. Rich Brophy, Chief of Naval Air Training. "The Sea Ranger has prepared generations of pilots for the fleet, and we are proud to preserve its history for future aviators and visitors. At the same time, we welcome the enhanced capabilities the TH-73A brings to our training community."

The USS Lexington now proudly houses the TH-57C, where it will

inspire and educate the public on the history and evolution of naval rotary-wing aviation.

As the Navy celebrates its 250th anniversary this year, this historic event symbolizes the service’s continued commitment to honoring its past while embracing innovation to train tomorrow’s warfighters.

Navy Demonstrates Multi-Day Solar UAS Flight

NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER AIRCRAFT DIVISION, Patuxent River, Md. – The Navy, in partnership with Skydweller Aero, recently

achieved continuous solar-powered unmanned flight during a nonstop three-day test from Stennis, Mississippi. Led by the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), the test of Skydweller UAS marks a significant advancement in both long-endurance solar-powered UAS technology and its potential to enhance maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).
Release From NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER AIRCRAFT DIVISION

NAS PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy, in partnership with Skydweller Aero, recently achieved continuous solar-powered unmanned flight during a nonstop three-day test from Stennis, Mississippi.

Led by the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), the test of Skydweller UAS marks a significant advancement in both long-endurance solar-powered UAS technology and its potential to enhance maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).

“This demonstration is a prime example of how NAWCAD partners with industry to deliver what the fleet needs,” said NAWCAD Commander Rear Adm. Todd Evans. “It also reflects the technical depth of our workforce and our ability to translate ideas into capability.”

The 73-hour flight proved Skydweller’s ability to maintain continuous solar-powered operation and demonstrated the feasibility of achieving a positive energy balance to power the aircraft during extended flights. It also validated the system’s communication links, autonomous real-time decision making and ability to adapt to turbulent weather.

“Integrating Skydweller into the Navy’s ISR architecture creates a layered and resilient network that maximizes the capabilities of all our assets,” says NAWCAD’s Special Purpose UAS lead Bill Macchione. “This collaborative approach ensures we have the right platform for the right mission, optimizing

our resources and enhancing our overall maritime domain awareness.”

Skydweller’s strength lies in its ability to provide continuous, wide-area surveillance over extended periods, enabling more advanced systems to focus on missions that require such specialized capabilities as rapid response and advanced sensor packages.

NAWCAD began experimentation with Skydweller’s solar-powered UAS capabilities in 2020 to address U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) operational challenges, including drug trafficking and border security. This technology provides continuous surveillance over vast areas, enabling the U.S. and its allies to enhance maritime security and disrupt illicit activities. NAWCAD will conduct further testing with Skydweller later this summer in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility.

NAWCAD’s military, civilian, and contract personnel operate test ranges, laboratories, and aircraft in support of test, evaluation, research, development, and sustainment for all Navy and Marine Corps aviation platforms. Based in Patuxent River, Maryland, NAWCAD also has major sites in St. Inigoes, Maryland; Lakehurst, New Jersey; and Orlando, Florida.

Marine Rotational Force-Darwin Demonstrates Rapid Response

From HQMC Communications Directorate, July 30, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Marines postured around the globe serve as America's rapid crisis response force, ready to meet the Nation's needs at a moment's notice. On July 26 Marine Corps readiness was on display, when U.S. Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 363, operating under Marine Rotational Force–Darwin, deployed four MV-22B Ospreys more than 1,950 nautical miles from Darwin, Australia, to Clark Air Base, Philippines.

Within 24 hours of notification, Marines planned, organized and were in the air headed to their assigned objective, demonstrating the agility and speed of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force. Two U.S. Air Force KC-46 Pegasus aircraft from the 6th Air Refueling Squadron enabled the long-range movement by offloading 59,100 pounds of fuel midair. The MV-22B's unique ability to bridge the gap between rotary-wing and fixed-wing capabilities allows the Joint Force to move personnel and supplies quickly across vast distances and diverse terrains, which is essential to crisis response.

This mission underscores the value proposition of a forward deployed Marine Corps in support of our Nation's interests. Marine Rotational Force–Darwin rapidly transitioned from Exercise Talisman Sabre 26 to real-world crisis operations, integrating joint-enabled capabilities to ensure that when the Nation calls, Marines answer without hesitation.

U.S. Navy Seeks Industry Feedback for Modular Attack

Surface Craft Program

By Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants Public Affairs, July 31, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Navy released a solicitation seeking industry input in support of the Modular Attack Surface Craft (MASC) program, July 28. The solicitation, open until August 11, invites industry partners to submit white papers or slide decks outlining their capabilities and proposed solutions for the MASC program.

The program will utilize an innovative acquisition approach – leveraging Other Transaction Agreements, a flexible and streamlined acquisition tool – to emphasize rapid deployment and cost-effectiveness through commercial off-the-shelf technology and incremental development phases. Utilizing existing commercial designs and production capabilities will enable the Navy to rapidly deploy a formidable and cost-effective USV force.

“The MASC program represents a significant step forward in the Navy’s pursuit of a robust and adaptable unmanned surface fleet,” said Capt. Matthew Lewis, program manager of the Unmanned Maritime Systems program office. “This innovative approach to acquisition, coupled with a modular design philosophy, will provide the fleet with cost-effective and highly capable platforms to address the challenges of the 21st-century maritime environment.”

MASC combines essential capabilities from the Navy’s Medium and Large Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV) programs, merging them into a flexible, modular platform designed for multi-mission operations. This will enhance the Navy’s distributed lethality and battlespace awareness through embarked warfighting capabilities including anti-surface warfare, strike warfare and information operations in addition to future embarked

mission areas.

“By uniting advanced modular design with rapid, cost-effective acquisition strategies, MASC will transform our surface fleet’s capabilities—enabling distributed lethality and enhanced battlespace awareness across multiple mission domains,” said Melissa Kirkendall, acting Program Executive Officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC). “We encourage industry partners to engage with this transformative initiative and collaborate with us to shape the future of unmanned maritime operations.”

The development of MASC answers the call to adapt to evolving geopolitical and technological challenges. MASC will bolster the Navy’s ability to operate in contested environments, ensuring a more distributed and resilient force posture and significantly enhancing the Navy’s combat effectiveness.

PEO USC designs, develops, builds, maintains, and modernizes the Navy’s unmanned maritime systems; mine warfare systems; special warfare systems; expeditionary warfare systems; small boats/craft; and small surface combatants.