Exercise Obangame Express Closes 15th Iteration in Cameroon

By U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs, April 30, 2026

Exercise Obangame Express 2026 officially concluded during a ceremony in Douala, Cameroon, on April 30. *Photo credit: U.S. Navy*

Exercise Obangame Express 2026 officially concluded during a ceremony in Douala, Cameroon, host nation for the 15th iteration, on April 30. The ceremony marked the conclusion of three weeks of training for participants from 30 nations across Africa, Europe, South America and the U.S. reinforcing regional collaboration and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

“As this exercise concludes, our work is not over. Obangame Express is not simply an annual event; it is a catalyst for

continuous cooperation," said Capt. Andrew Cleeves, exercise director for Obangame Express 2026. "I challenge you to maintain the networks you have built, to keep the lines of communication open, and to make 'togetherness' a daily practice."

Obangame Express, the largest multinational maritime exercise in West and Central Africa, is an annual event facilitated by U.S. 6th Fleet and sponsored by U.S. Africa Command. Obangame means "togetherness" in the Fang language to symbolize the partnerships built and strengthened through the collaborative effort.

This year, participants worked together from Maritime Operations Centers located across the Gulf of Guinea and from ships at sea, focusing on countering illicit maritime activity and improving communication and information sharing between nations. With over 30 nations working together across the 5 Yaounde Code of Conduct zones in maritime operations centers and at sea, partners operated in real-time to conduct complex scenarios including piracy interdiction, illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing enforcement and search-and-rescue operations.

"With piracy, illegal fishing, various forms of trafficking and attacks faced on the maritime environment, our response must be commensurate with the challenges: concerted, structured, and sustainable," said Vice Adm. Jean Mendoua, chief of naval staff of the Cameroon navy. "Cameroon, faithful to its international commitments, will continue to play its full role in this collective dynamic."

In addition to at-sea training, subject matter experts from participating nations led classroom instruction on topics such as maritime law and interdiction, medical readiness, and command-and-control techniques. These exchanges are vital for building long-term cooperation and understanding among the partner nations.

“Every time you demonstrate the capability to counter piracy, you are safeguarding the flow of global commerce that fuels economic growth for the entire continent,” said Cleeves. “Maritime security is the bedrock of economic prosperity.”

Participating nations in OE26 include: Angola, Benin, Belgium, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Togo, Tunisia and the United States.

OE26 is one of three regional maritime “Express” series exercises led by U.S. 6th Fleet as part of a comprehensive strategy to provide collaborative opportunities to African forces and international partners to address maritime security concerns.

Commander, U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allies, international partners, and other U.S. government departments and agencies to advance U.S. national interests, security and stability in Europe and Africa.

Southern Command, 4th Fleet Complete FLEX in Key West

By Lt. j.g. Paul Archer

U.S. Marine Gen. Francis L. Donovan, commander of U.S. Southern Command and Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, along with senior executive services representatives and partner nation officials stand for a group photo during FLEX 2026 on April 29, 2026. *Photo credit: U.S. Air Force | Staff Sgt. Christopher Bermudez*

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet successfully concluded their annual Fleet Experimentation (FLEX) event from April 24-30. The exercise showcased the powerful integration of unmanned systems and artificial intelligence in the fight against transnational organized crime.

FLEX is a cornerstone of USNAVSOUTH's strategy to field advanced robotic and autonomous systems, addressing the challenge of patrolling vast maritime regions with a limited number of traditional naval assets. The campaign focuses on operationalizing AI alongside innovative air, surface, and subsurface platforms to accelerate the delivery of next-generation capabilities to the fleet.

“The time to work with international partners and industry leaders to secure the Western Hemisphere is now,” said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of USNAVSOUTH/4th Fleet. “Through FLEX, we leverage and operationalize new technological advancements to increase maritime domain awareness, counter illicit traffic, and defend our homeland.”

The at-sea portion of the exercise demonstrated a sophisticated kill chain where commercially developed unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and unmanned surface vehicles (USV) worked in concert with traditional manned platforms – MH-60 helicopters and the Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Wichita (LCS 13). These synchronized platforms successfully found, fixed, tracked and targeted a captured drug boat. This scenario culminated in a successful law enforcement interdiction and kinetic engagements destroying several captured drug boats, proving the concept’s real-world effectiveness.

Highlighting the event’s strategic importance was a group of distinguished visitors, including Undersecretary of War for Research and Engineering Emil Michael; Gen. Francis L. Donovan, commander of U.S. Southern Command; and Vice Adm. John Dougherty IV, commander of Naval Air Systems Command. Leaders from the U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, Joint Interagency Task Force South, partner-nation militaries and various industry partners also attended.

“FLEX provides a unique opportunity for stakeholders to operationalize new technologies that directly support our warfighters in countering illicit activities and threats,” said Dr. Christopher Heagney, the Naval Air Systems Command Fleet / Force advisor to USNAVSOUTH/4th Fleet. “From initial concept in December, to fielding operational systems by April, we showed how quickly the acquisition community and Fleets are delivering increased capability and lethality at a lower cost and risk to the Warfighter. This is the result of strengthening partnerships between Congress, defense

laboratories and programs, industry, and academia.”

This year’s FLEX in Key West serves as a prelude to further experimental operations later this year in Comalapa, El Salvador, deepening international partnerships and advancing the integration of unmanned platforms into a hybrid fleet.

FLEX 2026 featured a comprehensive collaboration across the Department of War. Participants included operational commands like U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet and Joint Interagency Task Force South, alongside premier research and development entities from the Navy, Army and Air Force, as well as the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office.

The success of FLEX and the development of the hybrid fleet are critically dependent on robust collaboration between the Congress, Department of War, and trailblazers in industry and academia. These partnerships are the engine of innovation, accelerating the development and fielding of cutting-edge unmanned systems and AI. By bridging the gap between commercial ingenuity and military requirements, these collaborations ensure the fleet can rapidly adapt and integrate the most advanced technologies, maintaining a decisive advantage at sea.

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 to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Completes Planned Incremental Availability at Norfolk

From U.S. Fleet Forces Command

U.S. Navy Sailors hang the national ensign aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), Apr. 6, 2026. Eisenhower was moored at Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a Planned Incremental Availability maintenance period, which it has now completed. Photo credit: *U.S. Navy | Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Melina Rossi*

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) has completed sea trials, marking the successful early completion of its Planned Incremental Availability at Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

A PIA is a scheduled period for an aircraft carrier to undergo extensive maintenance, repairs and modernization to meet

future operational demands, spanning a wide array of overhauls and inspections. Regularly scheduled maintenance maximizes the lifespan of Navy warships and ensures mission readiness.

“Mighty IKE” becomes NNSY’s second timely carrier delivery back to the fleet following USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) completing its PIA in November 2024.

“The primary drivers behind IKE’s successful availability are the NNSY, Ship’s Force, and contractor teams who ensure the ship is materially ready to fight,” said Project Superintendent, Cmdr. Jason Downs. “The entirety of the project team mustered more than 4,000 people daily, all with one common vision—deliver IKE, fully mission capable, back to the fleet before our commitment date. The highly skilled tradespeople and sharp engineering acumen are the heroes in the IKE FY25 PIA story.”

The project team proved resourceful in accomplishing work pier side while NNSY’s carrier dry dock continued its multiyear renovation as part of the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program. NNSY firsts during this availability included installing a main seawater valve for a waterborne carrier, as well as performing nozzle block inspections of main engine high pressure turbines to scope repair to similar components in the fleet. For the first time at any of the nation’s four public shipyards, underwater carrier shafting inspections were performed to help gauge future dry dock work on IKE. “Lastly, we executed first-time catapult trough non-destructive test inspections and structural repairs, efforts that were pivotal to extending the life of this significant aircraft launch system,” added Downs.

During the PIA, the project team worked to prioritize new work and effectively manage workload with available workforce capacity, efforts that contributed to a timely delivery. By aligning resources with readiness priorities, more ships and submarines are available as needed for fleet tasking. “This

team thoughtfully budgeted workload and workforce to execute more than 25,000 resource days of new work," said Downs. "This team also meticulously managed to execute the required new work under budget, saving 2,000 resource days."

"IKE represents the SECOND consecutive early finish of an aircraft carrier availability at Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Our NNSY project teams are now setting the corporate standard for aircraft carrier maintenance," said Shipyard Commander Rear Admiral Kavon Hakimzadeh. "Thank you to everyone who drove to focus and finish this significant availability, meeting our commitment and enabling IKE to continue supporting our national defense."

"Based on the current global security landscape, IKE's early delivery is a critical national security imperative," said Downs. "An aircraft carrier is one of the most powerful instruments of national will, and having one delayed in the shipyard creates a significant strategic gap at a time when US military presence is in high demand across multiple theaters."

A Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, Dwight D. Eisenhower serves as flagship for Carrier Strike Group 2. As one of the largest, most historic and multifaceted shipyards in the nation, Norfolk Naval Shipyard's mission is to repair, modernize and inactivate Navy warships and training platforms to maximize readiness and availability for fleet tasking.

Blue Ridge Returns to Yokosuka After Spring Patrol

By Lt. Jaliya Wilson, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, April 27, 2026

U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) returns to Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan following a patrol in the Indo-Pacific region, April 23, 2026. *Photo credit: U.S. Navy | Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Damian Cook*

U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) returned to Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, April 23, marking the completion of the spring patrol in the Indo-Pacific region.

Blue Ridge departed for patrol March 8 and traveled 6,613 nautical miles, making port visits to Okinawa, Japan; Changi, Singapore; Manila, Philippines; and Laem Chabang, Thailand. 7th Fleet leadership also disembarked to conduct staff talks with military counterparts in Jakarta, Indonesia, and the commander hosted Philippine Navy, Royal Australian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force leadership aboard Blue Ridge while underway.

“Each engagement with our partners and allies advances our fleet interoperability, readiness and lethality,” said Vice Adm. Pat Hannifin, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet. “Blue Ridge

provides a unique capability to command and control forces from the sea, enhancing our military-to-military partnerships across the theater. We appreciate the hospitality of each of these port cities and their respective nations' commitments to ensuring maritime security throughout the Indo-Pacific."

During the port visits, 7th Fleet and Blue Ridge leadership met with foreign dignitaries, as well as local leaders, to discuss ways of improving operational readiness, advancing future military capabilities and enhancing relationships in the region.

7th Fleet, embarked aboard Blue Ridge, commands the world's largest forward-deployed fleet. Its primary mission is providing operational command and control for forces in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans while promoting regional stability and maritime security through engagements with allies and partners.

"This patrol was a huge success," said Capt. Louis F. Catalina IV, commanding officer of Blue Ridge. "The hard work and commitment to excellence by our Sailors allowed us to meet every mission throughout a dynamic schedule. Their professionalism enabled the completion of 10 sea and anchor evolutions, four port visits, two big top receptions, and safe navigation alongside our Japanese, Australian, and Philippine allies during two group sail events. I am extremely proud to lead and serve alongside the Sailors who make up this talented team."

U.S. 7th Fleet, the Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Navy Commissions Submarine USS Idaho

By Navy Chief Petty Officer Darren Moore, Submarine Readiness Squadron 32

Sailors assigned to the Virginia-class fast attack submarine USS Idaho (SSN 799) man the rails during a commissioning ceremony at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn. on April 25, 2026. *Photo credit: U.S. Navy | John Narewski*

The U.S. Navy commissioned the submarine USS Idaho in a traditional ceremony at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut, April 25.

The ceremony marked the culmination of a multiyear construction process and officially brought the USS Idaho into the fleet. It is the fifth Navy vessel named for the Gem State. The most recent predecessor, USS Idaho, was a battleship commissioned in 1919 that earned seven battle stars for its service during World War II, including action at Iwo

Jima and Okinawa, Japan.

Sen. James Risch of Idaho delivered the principal address as the ceremony's keynote speaker.

Hung Cao, acting Navy secretary, also delivered remarks, emphasizing the strategic importance of the new submarine.

"We are a maritime nation, bordering on both the Atlantic and the Pacific . Our commerce depends on safe and secure sea lanes of communication," Cao said. "President Trump's commission to our military is simple: to achieve peace through strength. The USS Idaho joins the fleet ready to answer the call to action, in any ocean, at any time."

Navy Cmdr. Chad J. Guillerault, commanding officer of the Idaho, addressed the attendees, speaking on behalf of the crew and the submarine's rich heritage.

"The Idaho connection is more than a name, it is a legacy – a legacy built before us that is being reborn today," Guillerault declared. "I am incredibly proud to be the commissioning captain of a vessel so steeped in tradition … and most importantly, honored to be the captain of a crew so mighty that they have outshone all those before them."

The ship's sponsor, Teresa Stackley, gave the traditional order to "man our ship and bring her to life," at which point the crew ceremonially ran aboard to man the submarine.

"This moment is for you, Cmdr. Guillerault, and your crew," Stackley said. "Please note that when you sail, my heart sails with you."

The Idaho is the 26th Virginia-class submarine and the eighth of the advanced Block IV configuration. The ship was christened on March 16, 2024, at the shipyard in Groton.

As the newest submarine to join the fleet, the Idaho brings cutting-edge warfighting capability to the nation's undersea

forces. Virginia-class submarines feature enhanced stealth, sophisticated surveillance capabilities and special warfare enhancements to meet the Navy’s multimission requirements.

These submarines are 7,800 tons, 377 feet in length and have a beam of 34 feet. They are powered by a nuclear reactor plant that will not require refueling during the planned life of the ship, reducing lifecycle costs and increasing operational availability.

The commissioning of the USS Idaho reinforces the Navy’s commitment to maritime superiority and national security. For 250 years, American naval power has projected strength across the globe. That mission continues and intensifies with the addition of the nation’s most advanced undersea assets.

SECNAV Phelan Makes Inaugural Visit to NPS

Secretary of the Navy John C. Phelan speaks with students about their research projects during a visit to the Naval Postgraduate School, May 29. *Photo credit: U.S. Marine Corps | Cpl. Chloe N. McAfee*

The Honorable John Phelan, 79th Secretary of the Navy, visited the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California, May 29.

“We were very pleased to host Secretary Phelan and show him all that NPS has to offer in support of his priorities,” said retired U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau, NPS president. “A more lethal and ready naval force includes cognitive readiness, and NPS graduates effective, innovative, technologically competent leaders necessary to ensure U.S. seapower.”

Phelan met with NPS senior leaders and faculty, and toured the campus engaging with the school’s mid-career military students to hear about their studies and applied research whose recent operational experience informs their work.

“The Naval Postgraduate School is one of the world’s preeminent institutions of military education.” said Phelan. “I want our best warfighters coming to NPS to develop their intellectual edge and turn their insights into real-world solutions for our Navy and Marine Corps.”

Several NPS students had an opportunity to present their research to Phelan showcasing their innovative work in ship systems engineering, acquisition reform, artificial intelligence, ocean sensing, autonomy, space and additive manufacturing.

“I am looking for ways to adapt and adopt industry innovation at greater speeds to modernize our Navy,” Phelan said to the students. “We need to equip our leaders with the knowledge and skills to help evolve technology solutions at the pace of modern combat, and I see this happening now at NPS.”

Modernization was another key theme of Phelan’s visit, and from information technology to labs, the NPS modernization plan aims to completely overhaul aging buildings and outfit them with technology upgrades. Phelan also toured the recently completed Bullard Hall, home to NPS’ System Engineering and Space Systems programs.

Reflecting on his visit, Phelan said, “It was a real pleasure meeting NPS students and faculty yesterday and seeing how they’re working with industry to bring innovation, capability and cost control to our warfighting domains. We need to do things faster, smarter and cheaper, and NPS has the ability to play a major role in that mission.”

Established in 1909, NPS provides defense-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval service. Located in Monterey, California, NPS offers master’s and doctoral programs for U.S. military and

civilians, federal agencies, allied militaries and partner nations.

USS Hershel “Woody” Williams Returns to Norfolk from Forward Deployment

The Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary mobile base USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4) returns to Naval Station Norfolk, April 10, 2025. Photo credit: *U.S. Navy | Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Derek Cole*

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK, Va. – The U.S Navy expeditionary sea base USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4) returns to Naval Station Norfolk, April 10, 2025, after operating forward deployed for almost five years, supporting U.S. Navy and allied efforts in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa / U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations.

Hershel “Woody” Williams returns to Norfolk’s waters with a hybrid-manned crew of 44 Military Sealift Command (MSC) civil service mariners who operated, navigated, and maintained the vessel and 85 U.S Navy Sailors, Blue and Gold crews, who alternated manning the vessel and allowing for continuous strategic deterrence patrols.

“This is a unique opportunity to welcome home a hard-working ship from its historic tenure forward-deployed, and to welcome home its crew – its heart, soul and lifeblood – in classic Navy fashion,” said Rear Adm. Dave Walt, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 2, who was on hand to welcome home the Hershel “Woody” Williams crew.

“This crew has punched above its weight and impressed leadership with its hard work, resourcefulness, and dedication.”

The evolution marks the completion of 59 months as a Forward Deployed Naval Force (FDNF) vessel homeported in Souda Bay, Crete, Greece, a journey that began in 2020. Hershel “Woody” Williams will spend a week at Naval Station Norfolk, offloading fuel before shifting to the East Coast Repair and Fabrication Shipyard in Newport News, Va., where the ship will be in lay berth awaiting its next tasking.

Built as a highly flexible mobile platform, capable of operating across a broad range of military sea-based operations, Hershel “Woody” Williams had several noteworthy highlights throughout this deployment.

In 2020, Hershel “Woody” Williams became the first U.S. Navy warship assigned to AFRICOM due to the ship’s ability to support maritime security and humanitarian operations.

In 2021, during AFRICOM’s largest, premier, joint, annual exercise, known as African Lion, Hershel “Woody” Williams

participated in a key leader engagement with Morocco Armed Forces, hosted by Morocco, Tunisia, and Senegal.

“These engagements are critical as they allow Navy leaders to interact with partner nations to foster trust and build long-term partnerships,” said MSC’s ESB Project Officer William Revak.

In 2022, Williams joined forces with partners and allies for Obangame Express 22, the largest multinational maritime exercise in Western Africa, to improve communication and information sharing and to increase partner nation capability to further advance maritime security and stability, said MSC’s Program Manager, Prepositioning Ships, Lora Caldwell. Additionally, the ESB-4 platform was used to conduct visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) drills with French soldiers.

“VBSS training with partner nations contributes greatly to a more stable and secure global maritime environment,” Caldwell said.

In 2023, Hershel “Woody” Williams conducted humanitarian and disaster relief operations, delivering 113 pallets of disaster relief supplies, totaling nearly 40,000 pounds, to The Ministry of Interior Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency in Mersin, Türkiye for those citizens impacted by the Feb. 6, earthquakes.

In 2024, the Gold-military crew and MSC’s civilian mariners conducted community relation events in Tema, Ghana to continue building their mutual commitment to security and stability in the region which helps to enhance the Navy’s operational readiness. The Hershel “Woody” Williams crew also conducted a theater security cooperation mission during the ship’s visit to Luanda, Angola. Likewise, they managed regional cooperation operations (logistical and personnel support) while in Port

Victoria, Seychelles. While there, the ship hosted U.S. Ambassador Henry Jardine and Brig. Gen. Michael Rosette, chief of the Seychelles Defense Forces.

“We will continue to share information with the United States of America in the fight against illegal activities within the Indian Ocean,” Rosette stated in Seychelles Nation, dated Sept. 4, 2024.

Throughout Williams 59-month deployment, MSC’s CVIMARS and the Navy’s Blue and Gold crews were instrumental in further enhancing Navy readiness, strengthening partnerships, and improving the combined capabilities of the U.S. Navy and partner nations’ responses to public crisis, Caldwell said.

ESBs primarily support aviation mine countermeasures and expeditionary forces missions. Additional ship features include a large flight deck and hanger with four aviation operating spots capable of handling MH-535E equivalent helicopters and MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, berthing and messing accommodations, workspaces and ordnance storage for embarked forces.

ESB 4 is named in honor of Chief Warrant Officer Hershel “Woody” Williams, a decorated U.S. Marine who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II.

USS Emory S. Land returns to

Guam

From Seaman Apprentice Mario Reyes Villatoro, April 9, 2025

NAVAL BASE GUAM – The submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) returned to its homeport in Apra Harbor, Guam, April 9, 2025. Emory S. Land's arrival marked the completion of its expeditionary submarine tender deployment, which began May 17, 2024.

Emory S. Land conducted 17 port calls in the Indo-Pacific region over 11 months, strengthening relations with many allies and partners such as Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Singapore. During its deployment, Emory S. Land played a pivotal role supporting Pillar 1 of the AUKUS security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In the first half of deployment, Emory S. Land conducted a Submarine Tendered Maintenance Period, or STMP, with the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Hawaii (SSN 776) in HMAS Stirling, Western Australia, Australia, from Aug. 22 to Sept. 10, 2024. Royal Australian Navy Sailors who had been attached to the submarine tender since January 2024 took the lead on conducting repairs aboard Hawaii. The STMP was the first time Australians had ever performed maintenance on a nuclear-powered submarine in Australia. Emory S. Land Sailors also worked in conjunction with the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Support Unit-West, which provides repair and maintenance services to the Australian fleet.

"It is an honor and pleasure to return home to Guam. The entire crew, military personnel and civil service mariners, have performed exceptionally well over the last 11 months and have lived up to the ship's motto "Tireless Worker of the Sea," and are ready to come home and enjoy quality time back

at home with family and friends," said Capt. Kenneth Holland, the ship's commanding officer. "This whole deployment has been an incredible journey, to be able to form closer ties with our allies and interact with the locals by hosting tours of our ship and taking part in community relation events. It's all been a wonderful experience."

Emory S. Land departed from its final port of the deployment, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, on April 2nd, 2025. While in port, Emory S. Land provided logistical support to the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Minnesota (SSN 783).

"I was glad we returned to Darwin and got to enjoy Australia again, and it was a great to spearhead support for the nuclear submarine in Darwin for the first time in 27 years," said Chief Gunner's Mate Brett Peterman. "I can't wait to enjoy some rest and relaxation, and to spend time with the family, before getting back into supporting Guam deployed submarines."

During its deployment, Emory S. Land visited Darwin, Cairns, Sydney, Eden, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth in Australia; Sasebo and Okinawa in Japan; Palau, Busan, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, and Subic Bay, Philippines. In each port, Emory S. Land Sailors conducted community relations events by assisting local school programs, participating in beach cleanups, sorting food at foodbanks, and much more.

"It was a unique opportunity to conduct so many community relations events across the region. Reflecting on our tour, I believe the real impact is learning about the difference we've made with our allies around the world during each event," said Religious Program Specialist Seaman Hunter Stewart. "The local community members were always grateful for our team."

Guam is home to the U.S. Navy's only submarine tenders, USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) and USS Frank Cable (AS 40), as well as four Los Angeles-class attack and one Virginia-class attack

submarines. The submarine tenders provide maintenance, hotel services and logistical support to submarines and surface ships in the U.S. 5th and 7th Fleet areas of operation. The submarines and tenders are maintained as part of the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed submarine force and are readily capable of meeting global operational requirements.

USS Shiloh Returns to Home Port After Oceania Maritime Security Initiative 2025

USS Shiloh (CG 67) patrolled, and conducted several boarding and intelligence gathering operations in the South Pacific region in support of Oceania Maritime Security Initiative 2025. *Photo credit: U.S. Navy | Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet.*
From U.S. 3rd Fleet, April 7, 2025

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh (CG 67) returned to its home port, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, April 4, 2025.

Shiloh, in partnership with an embarked Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) from USCG Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team, conducted several boarding and intelligence gathering operations in the South Pacific in support of Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI) 2025. OMSI is a Secretary of Defense program that leverages Department of Defense assets transiting the region to increase the USCG’s maritime domain awareness, ultimately supporting maritime law enforcement in Oceania.

From February 2025 to April 2025, Shiloh patrolled the South Pacific, strengthening relationship with partner nations and ensured maritime stability and security in the region. These actions were carried out through the enforcement of provisions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC) and bilateral law enforcement agreements it has with specific countries in the region.

Captain Bryan E. Geisert is the commanding officer aboard Shiloh.

“I am proud of what our crew accomplished and the strong partnership with our Coast Guard Shipmates’. It is a critical and unique opportunity to assist in ensuring marine resources are protected through the enforcement of international laws to enhance regional stability.” said Capt. Geisert.

Shiloh is operating in the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of responsibility in support of the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region. Shiloh is assigned to Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, a combat-ready force that protects and defends the collective maritime interest of its allies and partners in the region.

Navy to Extend Service Life of DDG 51s

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Oct. 31 that the Department of the Navy plans to operate 12 Arleigh Burke class (DDG 51) Flight I Destroyers beyond their 35-year expected service life.

The decision, based upon a hull-by-hull evaluation of ship material condition, combat capability, technical feasibility and lifecycle maintenance requirements, will result in an additional 48 ship-years of cumulative ship service life in the 2028 to 2035 timeframe. The Navy has proposed DDG service life extension funding in the FY26 budget request and will update the shipbuilding plan accordingly.

“Extending these highly capable, well-maintained destroyers will further bolster our numbers as new construction warships join the fleet,” Del Toro said. “It also speaks to their enduring role in projecting power globally, and most recently in the Red Sea, their proven ability to defend themselves, as well as our allies, partners and friends from missile and drone attacks.”

At the secretary’s request, the Navy conducted a thorough evaluation of each DDG-51 Flight I ship (DDG 51-71) over the past ten months, and determined the 12 destroyers could and should remain operational beyond their expected service life. The final determination of each ship’s service life is based on maximizing the service life of each ship before it required another extensive and costly docking availability.

The service life extensions meet the intent of Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti and the CNO’s Navigation Plan, which directs the Navy to “get more ready players on the field.”

“Today’s budget constrained environment requires the Navy to make prioritized investments to keep more ready players on the field,” Franchetti said. “The Navy is actively pulling the right levers to maintain and grow its battle force inventory to support the United States’s global interests in peace and to win decisively in conflict.”

The Arleigh Burke Class Destroyer is critical to the Navy’s mission and has proven itself most capable in contested environments, like the Red Sea.