

USS Oscar Austin One of Two U.S. Navy DDGs Homeport Shifting to Rota, Spain



From Commander, Naval Surface Force, Atlantic, 14 August 2024

NORFOLK, Va. – USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79) is scheduled to change its homeport from Naval Station Norfolk, Va. to Rota Naval Base, Spain, in the fall of 2024.

Oscar Austin is the first of two additional Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers to join the current Forward Deployed Naval Force-Europe (FDFN-E) force – adding additional capabilities to the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) areas of responsibility. The addition of these two ships will be phased, with the second arriving in 2026. The second ship will be named closer to its arrival.

“Shifting Oscar Austin’s homeport to Rota is the next step in

bolstering U.S. and NATO maritime presence and combat power in Europe as well as increasing the capacity to execute the One Atlantic concept,” said Adm. Daryl Caudle, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command. “The One Atlantic concept improves the ability to share, leverage, and fully utilize naval forces in response to threats and strategic competitors while conducting multi-mission operations across the Atlantic by multiple Combatant Commanders.”

The move will increase the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed operational footprint in EUCOM to five destroyers in Rota. The increased presence reinforces the U.S. Navy’s commitment to its enduring relationship with maritime allies in Spain, and it enhances operations to support maritime security alongside allies and partners in Europe and Africa, strengthening the trans-Atlantic link. The addition will enable additional coordination between U.S. and Spanish navies on ship maintenance and training.

Operating naval forces from Spain maximizes flexibility and ensures access to strategic global crossroads. The addition of Oscar Austin to Rota will allow for more operational flexibility within the European theater. The arrival of the ship will provide a mitigation of operational tempo for other FDNF-E Sailors assigned to ships in Rota, improving quality of life and decreasing operational stressors.

On May 8, 2023, the U.S. Ambassador to Spain, Julissa Reynoso, signed in Madrid on behalf of President Biden the enhancement of the Defense Cooperation Agreement with the Kingdom of Spain to increase the U.S. Navy’s presence at Rota Naval Base, Spain, from four Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers to six.

The initial decision to base destroyers out of Spain is part of the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach announced by President Obama in 2009. Since its announcement, the U.S. has broadened its Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) capabilities in

theater including increasing FDNF-E from four to six and the finalization of the second Aegis Ashore site in Poland.

Oscar Austin is the first Flight IIA Arleigh Burke-class, guided-missile destroyer and proudly bears the name of Pfc. Oscar P. Austin, United States Marine Corps. USS Oscar Austin was commissioned on August 19, 2000, in Norfolk, Va. Oscar Austin is ballistic missile defense, anti-submarine, and anti-surface warfare capable. The ship can embark two MH-60R Seahawk helicopters to assist in anti-submarine and other warfare areas. Destroyers can work with Carrier Strike Groups, Surface Action Groups, Expeditionary Strike Groups or independently.

USS Ronald Reagan Arrives in Bremerton



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) transits Puget Sound towards its new homeport at Naval Base Kitsap, Washington, following a three month underway, Aug. 13, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MCI Heather C. Wamsley)

14 August 2024

NAVAL BASE KITSAP, Wash. - Ronald Reagan departed Yokosuka, Japan, May 16, where it's been forward deployed since 2015, and served as the U.S. Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, operating in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR), maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As Ronald Reagan returned to the United States, it participated in exercise Valiant Shield 2024, a port visit in Guam, and transitioned to the 3rd Fleet AOR where it conducted a hull swap.

"I am incredibly proud of our crew and the work they've accomplished in our time as the Navy's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier," said Capt. Daryle Cardone, commanding

officer of USS Ronald Reagan. "They were asked to perform at the highest level and exceeded those expectations. Now we are looking forward to making upgrades to the ship, and even more well-deserved time stateside for the crew."

While the ship pulled in, hundreds of Ronald Reagan Sailors manned the rails in their service dress white uniforms as friends and family members awaited the arrival on the pier.

"I'm so happy to finally see my family after this deployment," said Operations Specialist 1st Class Hilaire Kouamo, while being surrounded by his wife and kids. "I love them so much and I'm happy to be back."

During the underway, Ronald Reagan participated in the first-ever multinational exercise Valiant Shield 2024 with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's joint forces and Japan Self-Defense Forces. This exercise spanned from June 7 to June 18 and included complex multi-axis and multi-domain operations, further strengthening the relationship and interoperability of the U.S. and its allies.

Ronald Reagan also made a scheduled port visit to Guam, where Sailors volunteered with local communities, and explored the island's sights, history, and culture.

Following the underway, Nimitz-class aircraft carrier George Washington (CVN 73) met Ronald Reagan in San Diego for a hull swap. As part of the transition, the embarked Air Wing and Staffs, including Task Force 70 (CTF 70), Carrier Air Wing 5 (CVW 5), and Destroyer Squadron 15 (DESRON 15) transferred to George Washington along with approximately 350 Sailors; 13 percent of the USS Ronald Reagan crew. These sailors cross decked to George Washington bringing with them their vast operations experience for its time as the new forward-deployed aircraft carrier while Ronald Reagan shifts to a new operational environment.

"Even though Ronald Reagan's time in 7th fleet is over, we are

still in the fight,” said Cardone. “The success of our previous deployments is a testament of the crew’s warfighting capability and displays our adaptability in an ever-changing theater. Everything we accomplished while forward-deployed carries over as we continue to improve the ship and prepare the crew for Ronald Reagan’s next chapter.”

As an integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific in addition to providing realistic and relevant training necessary to flawlessly execute our Navy’s timeless roles of sea control and power projection. U.S. 3rd Fleet works in close coordination with other numbered fleets to provide commanders with capable, ready forces to deploy forward and win in day-to-day competition, in crisis, and in conflict.

Naval Base Kitsap is the Navy’s third largest fleet concentration area in the United States, and arguably the most complex. They are home to more than 70 tenant commands, including Commander, Navy Region Northwest; Commander, Submarine Group 9; Commander, Carrier Strike Group 3; Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest; Naval Undersea Warfare Center Keyport; and Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility. Spanning more than 12,000 acres across the Kitsap Peninsula, they support a diverse range of strategic missions, including all types of submarines, Nimitz-class aircraft carriers, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Manchester Fuel Depot. NBK is also the home of several Research, Development, Testing & Evaluation commands that ensure the Navy’s technological advantage. NBK and its supported commands produce substantial economic benefits to our surrounding communities.

U.S. Navy Launches New Attack Submarine



One of the U.S. Navy's newest attack submarines, the future USS Idaho (SSN 799), launched from General Dynamics Electric Boat's shipyard into the Thames River, Aug. 6.

By Team Submarines Public Affairs, Aug. 13, 2024

GROTON, Connecticut — One of the U.S. Navy's newest attack submarines, the future USS Idaho (SSN 799), launched from General Dynamics Electric Boat's shipyard into the Thames River Aug. 6.

The launch, also known as "float off," marks a construction milestone in the life of a ship, when it moves from the shipbuilder's facilities and into the water for the first time to begin final outfitting, testing, and crew certification.

"Today's launch is testament to the strong collaboration the Navy has with its shipbuilding partners," said Captain Mike

Hollenbach, Virginia Class Submarine program manager. "Idaho will be a valuable national asset and source of pride for our Sailors, the shipbuilders and all Americans for years to come."

Submarine sponsor Terry Stackley christened the boat on March 16, 2024 with water she collected from several lakes in Idaho. The submarine began construction in 2017 and will be the 26th Virginia-class fast attack submarine to deliver to the fleet and the fifth U.S. Navy ship named for the state. The last ship named Idaho was battleship BB 42, commissioned in 1919.

Virginia-class fast-attack submarines provide the Navy with the capabilities required to maintain the nation's undersea supremacy well into the 21st century. Virginia submarines have enhanced stealth, sophisticated surveillance capabilities, and special warfare enhancements that enable them to meet the Navy's multi-mission requirements. Additionally, through the extensive use of modular construction, open architecture and commercial off-the-shelf components, the Virginia class is designed to remain state-of-the-practice for its entire operational life through the rapid introduction of new systems and payloads.

Austin Orders Additional Naval Assets to Middle East Amid Rising Tensions



Aug. 12, 2024 | By Matthew Olay, DOD News

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III has ordered additional naval assets to the Middle East to reinforce the United States' commitment to Israel's defense amid escalating regional tensions, Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder told the media during a briefing today.

Austin dispatched the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group – which is equipped with stealth F-35C Lightning II combat jets – as well as the ballistic missile submarine USS Georgia to the Central Command region, Ryder said.

The order came following a phone call Sunday between Austin and Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant.

” reiterated the United States' commitment to taking every possible step to defend Israel and noted the strengthening of U.S. military force posture and capabilities throughout the Middle East in light of hostile regional tensions,” Ryder said.

Ryder added that the additional naval assets will add to the capabilities being provided by the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group, which has already been operating in the region.

“These U.S. military posture adjustments are designed to improve U.S. force protection, to increase support for the defense of Israel and to ensure the United States is prepared to respond to various contingencies,” Ryder said.

When asked if the Defense Department had any specific information regarding an imminent attack in the region, Ryder said he wouldn’t speculate on such a topic.

“I think the point here,” Ryder responded, “is that we recognize the tensions in the region. We’re doing everything we can to deter aggression, deter conflict prevent this from becoming a wider war – while at the same time ensuring that we have the capabilities in the region to be able to protect our own forces also defend Israel, should it be attacked.”

During the Sunday phone call, Austin and Gallant also discussed Israel’s operations in Gaza, including the importance of mitigating harm to civilians, progressing toward a ceasefire, securing the release of hostages, and deterring aggression by other countries throughout the region, Ryder said.

Ryder also addressed an attack on U.S. and coalition service members by an uncrewed aerial system in Syria this past Friday.

“Military officials are still assessing the damage, though they credited swift and effective preemptive measures in limiting the drones,” Ryder said, adding that although nobody was seriously hurt in the attack, several U.S. and coalition personnel were treated for minor injuries, including smoke inhalation.

Austal USA Christens the Future USNS Point Loma



Mobile, Alabama – With the smash of a champagne bottle on the bow of the ship, Elizabeth Asher christened the future USNS Point Loma (EPF 15) at a ceremony Aug. 10 at Austal USA’s Mobile ship manufacturing facility. Asher is the sponsor of Point Loma, one of 16 expeditionary fast transports (EPF) the U.S. Navy has contracted Austal USA to build.

Asher holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history from the University of Maryland at College Park. A proud Navy wife since 1991, she lived in Point Loma with her husband, Naval Academy graduate and retired Navy doctor Dean Asher, while he served on U.S. Navy attack submarine USS La Jolla (SSN 701). Their son, Jacob Asher, is a naval aviator in training

stationed in Milton, Florida.

Speakers at today's event included: Nikolas Guertin, assistant secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition; Vice Admiral Scott Gray, USN, commander, Navy Installations Command; Michelle Kruger, Austal USA president; and Stan Kordana, vice president of program execution, General Dynamics Mission Systems.

"Austal USA was excited to see Mrs. Asher christen the second Flight II EPF for our great Navy today. These Flight II Expeditionary Fast Transports combine the best of the EPF's transport mission with a new enhanced medical capability that will bring lifesaving support to our forward deployed sailors and Marines and will be a sign of America's humanitarian presence and support throughout the world's global commons," said Kruger. "These ships are built by an incredible team of men and women who remain steadfast in their commitment to being the absolute best in the industry by providing the most cost-effective and capable ships to our great Navy."

The future USNS Point Loma is named after the San Diego seaside community with a long-standing naval presence. Point Loma, bordered by the Pacific Ocean, San Diego Bay and the San Diego River, is home to Naval Base Point Loma. Comprised of six installations, the base provides support to 70 U.S. Pacific Fleet afloat and ashore-based tenant commands. EPF 15 is the second naval vessel to represent this naval community.

EPF Flight II provides a Role 2E (enhanced) medical capability which includes, among other capabilities, basic secondary health care built around primary surgery; intensive care unit; ward beds; and limited x-ray, laboratory and dental support. The EPF's catamaran design provides inherent stability to allow surgeons to perform underway medical procedures in the ship's operating suite. Enhanced capabilities to support V-22 flight operations and launch and recover 11 meter Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats complement the ship's medical facilities.

These Flight II upgrades along with EPF's speed, maneuverability and shallow water access are key enablers for mission support of future Distributed Maritime Operations and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations around the world. Flight II retains the capability of the Flight I to support other missions including core logistics.

EPF 15 is the second EPF Flight II ship built by Austal USA. The Navy is currently embarking an Expeditionary Medical Unit (EMU) aboard the first EPF Flight II ship delivered by Austal USA, USNS Cody (T-EPF 14), at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story. The EMU is a cutting-edge medical support system with personnel from EMU-1 designed to provide Role 2 (R2) level healthcare services both afloat and ashore.

August 9 U.S. Central Command Update

From U.S. Central Command

Aug. 9, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – In the past 24 hours, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed one Iranian-backed Houthi missile launcher and one uncrewed surface vessel in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

Additionally, USCENTCOM forces successfully destroyed two Houthi uncrewed aerial vehicles over the Red Sea.

These weapons presented a clear and imminent threat to U.S. and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. This reckless and dangerous behavior by Iranian-backed Houthis

continues to threaten regional stability and security.

Aug. 8, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – In the past 24 hours, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed two Iranian-backed Houthi anti-ship cruise missiles and one Houthi ground control station in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

Additionally, USCENTCOM forces successfully destroyed one Houthi uncrewed surface vessel in the Red Sea.

These weapons presented a clear and imminent threat to U.S. and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. This reckless and dangerous behavior by Iranian-backed Houthis continues to threaten regional stability and security.

U.S., Italian Navies Conduct First Indo-Pacific Multi- Large Deck Event



Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and Cavour Carrier Strike Group sail in formation. The United States Navy and the Italian Navy held the first-ever bilateral Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE) in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jerome D. Johnson)

From USS Abraham Lincoln Public Affairs, August 10, 2024

PACIFIC OCEAN – The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and the Cavour Carrier Strike Group concluded the first-ever bilateral Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE) held in the Indo-Pacific by the U.S. Navy and Italian Navy, Aug. 9.

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and the Cavour Carrier Strike Group concluded the first-ever bilateral Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE) held in the Indo-Pacific by the U.S. Navy and Italian Navy, Aug. 9.

MLDE provides the ships and aircrafts of the two naval forces, comprised of more than 7,500 U.S. and Italian Sailors and Marines, an opportunity to engage in joint operations including enhanced maritime communication operations, air

warfare operations and cross-deck flight operations to strengthen maritime integrated-at-sea operations and combat readiness.

“This was a great opportunity to operate with our close NATO Ally, Italy, in the Indo-Pacific. Our efforts are critical in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific region,” said Rear Adm. Adan Cruz, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3. “Interoperability does not just happen, it is practiced and rehearsed across our teams to build the relations and connections necessary to successfully conduct an MLDE.”

During the event, Adm. Cruz hosted Rear Adm. Giancarlo Ciappina, commander, Cavour Carrier Strike Group, aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), flagship of CSG 3 for a visit focused on building interoperability.

“The activity with CSG 3 at sea is an excellent opportunity to enhance our capabilities in Multi Carrier Operations, demonstrating the interoperability of the NATO Alliance worldwide, strengthening our ability to work together and improving our common resilience,” said Ciappina, commander, Cavour Carrier Strike Group. “Conducting this type of activity is one of the strategic objectives of our operational deployment, ensuring security at sea and promoting economic prosperity through a free and open Indo Pacific.”

Participating ships in the MLDE included Nimitz-Class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121), Italian aircraft carrier ITS Cavour and Italian Frigate ITS Alpino (F 594).

Participating aircraft included MH-60S and MH-60R Sea Hawks, F/A-18E & F Super Hornets, E/A-18G Growlers, F-35C Lightning II, and E-2D Hawkeye, all assigned to Carrier Air Wing 9; and Italian F-35B Lightning II assigned to Cavour Carrier Strike

Group.

Prior to the commencement of the MLDE, Cruz and Ciappina conducted a conditions check via virtual teleconference to ensure all participants were ready in the evening, Aug. 8. The exercise started with liaison officers transferring around the Strike Group to ensure communication flow across the vessels and visit with crews. Following the liaison officer exchange, the ships coordinated flight operations and ship maneuvers to practice coordinated operations, Aug. 9.

“I wish to truly thank Adm. Cruz and all of the CSG 3 crews for the outstanding professionalism they showed us and for their willingness and commitment in putting our forces together in such an effective and profitable cooperation,” concluded Ciappina.

Coordinated maritime engagements and operations are part of the U.S. Navy’s routine presence in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. naval forces, with our network of partners and alliances, are indispensable to ensuring maritime security and the flow of unimpeded lawful commerce in the region.

“It is an honor to work with our NATO Allies in the Indo-Pacific,” said Cruz. “I am grateful to Rear Adm. Ciappina and his entire crew for the superb professionalism and coordination in bringing this event to life.”

The last time CSG 3 participated in an MLDE dates back to January 2022 in the South China Sea with the Carl Vinson Strike Group, but this marks the first MLDE with the Italian Navy in the Indo Pacific.

CSG-3 is deployed to the Indo-Pacific to maintain regional security and stability, keep sea lanes open, and to train to increase combined readiness. Along with our network of allies and partners, U.S. naval forces are indispensable to ensuring

freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded lawful commerce.

CSG-3 consists of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9, and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, which includes Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS O’Kane (DDG 77), USS Stockdale (DDG 106), USS Spruance (DDG 111), USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) and USS Frank E. Peterson Jr. (DDG 121).

CVW-9 consists of an F-35C squadron, the “Black Knights” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314; three F/A-18E/F Super Hornet squadrons, the “Tophatters” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 14; “Black Aces” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 41, the “Vigilantes” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 151; “Wizards” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 133, operating the EA-18G Growler; “Wallbangers” of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 117, operating the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye; “Chargers” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 14 operating the MH-60S Sea Hawk; and “Raptors” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 71, operating the MH-60R Sea Hawk.

Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is currently conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

NAVWAR’s New Commander: Rear Adm. Okano Takes Charge as

Rear Adm. Small Retires



Rear Admiral Seiko Okano, left, relieves Rear Admiral Doug Small as commander, Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) during a change of command ceremony. *U.S. Navy | Ramon Go*

By Lily Chen, NAVWAR Public Affairs, Aug. 9, 2024

Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) conducted a change of command and retirement ceremony at its headquarters in San Diego, Aug. 9, where Rear Admiral Seiko Okano relieved Rear Admiral Doug Small as commander of NAVWAR with family, friends, colleagues and industry partners in attendance.

Vice Admiral John Wade, commander of the 3rd Fleet, was presiding officer of the ceremony. "I've known Rear Admiral Okano for many years now. This is the fourth change of command where she's followed in Rear Admiral Small's footsteps," he said. "There is no better person to sustain and increase the

momentum he's made with NAVWAR. I look forward to serving with you and the NAVWAR team as we continue bring capability forward."

A native of Evanston, Illinois, Okano is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy where she earned a bachelor's in aerospace engineering. From there, she earned a master's in space systems engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, where she was also selected for transfer to the engineering duty officer community in 2001. Her operational tours include gunnery and fire control officer, and electrical division officer on USS Belleau Wood (LHA-3) which she deployed to Somalia; and Amphibious Force 7th Fleet flag aide in Okinawa, Japan. During Operation Iraqi Freedom she served on Joint Crew Composite Squadron One in Tikrit, Iraq to assist with defeating radio-controlled improvised explosive devices.

Okano has also had several tours in acquisition, starting with Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center, San Diego; Missile Defense Agency, Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System; Military Satellite Communications Wing, Space and Missile Systems Center; and Naval Surface Warfare Center, Port Hueneme, California. Her previous assignment was as program executive officer for Integrated Warfare Systems in Washington, D.C.

"This is an opportunity of a lifetime to lead this exceptional organization, one that stands the watch day and night for our Navy's Information Warfare capabilities and fights every day to 'own the domain,'" said Okano. "We are living in a time where information dominance is critical to national security. In this dynamic environment, our mission is clear: to deliver and sustain superior Information Warfare capabilities, enabling our Navy to fight and win in the information age."

As NAVWAR Commander, Okano will oversee 11,000 civilian and military personnel who design, develop and deploy advanced communications and information capabilities for the Department

of the Navy. She is also taking over as head of Project Overmatch, a high-level initiative to deliver rapid integration systems and field a new naval operating architecture.

According to a recent economic impact report released by the San Diego Military Advisory Council and the University of San Diego Knauss School of Business, NAVWAR's total gross regional product in fiscal year 2022 was between \$3.14 to \$3.38 billion. With both direct hiring and contracting work, over 18,000 jobs have been created. NAVWAR was also named the top cyber employer in the San Diego region by the Cyber Center of Excellence, with nearly 3,500 jobs dedicated to the rapidly growing field of cybersecurity.

"Central to our mission is the incredible team of professionals who make up NAVWAR. Your expertise, dedication, and commitment are the backbone of our operations," said Okano. "We will continue to strengthen our partnerships across the Navy, with other branches of the armed forces, with our allies, and with the private sector. By working together, we can harness the full power of our collective capabilities and stay ahead of emerging threats."

After a nearly 40-year career in the Navy, Small has officially retired from military service. Throughout his four years at NAVWAR, a continued priority of his has been empowering the workforce. With reverse mentoring groups, Ask Me Anything's and kaffeeklatsches, Small has always been keen on hearing from employees and engaging in open dialogue to enact positive change in the command. Under his leadership, NAVWAR was named the No. 1 place to work in the Navy in the 2023 Best Places to Work in federal government rankings, a reflection of his emphasis on employee engagement. He also stood up the Project Overmatch team after direct orders from the Chief of Naval Operations, bringing experts together from across the Navy to support this top priority.

“The maritime domain is growing in importance, and by extension so is our Navy. To ensure peace and prosperity and deter conflict, we need to be a position of strength. Part of that vital work is to ensure that our systems are integrated. That has been Rear Admiral Small’s body of work throughout his career,” said Wade. “I want to thank him for his leadership, management and technical expertise over the years, all growing in increasing complexity and depth.”

Wade presented Small with the Distinguished Service Medal in recognition of his exceptional meritorious service to the United States as NAVWAR commander, where his groundbreaking leadership led to the delivery of more capable leading-technology systems. The award was conferred on behalf of the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Navy. Wade also awarded the NAVWAR workforce with a Meritorious Unit Commendation from the Secretary of the Navy, in recognition of their distinguished service to accelerating critical warfighting capability to the Fleet at an unprecedented rate.

“I want to say thank you to the entire NAVWAR workforce. We’ve been through a lot together, and it’s been my honor to have served as your commander,” said Small. “Be proud of the amazing work you do here and keep holding onto the mission together. You will be in good hands with Rear Admiral Okano, and I can’t wait to see what else you all will accomplish.”

USS Georgia Operates with Force Reconnaissance Marines

and Special Operations Forces



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (July 31, 2024) U.S. Marines from the 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company, assigned to Task Force 61/2, conduct dive operations with Ohio-class guided-missile submarine USS Georgia (SSGN 729) while underway in the Mediterranean Sea July 31, 2024. (U.S. Navy Courtesy Photo)
By U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs, Aug. 5, 2024

NAPLES, Italy – The Ohio-class guided-missile submarine USS Georgia (SSGN 729), assigned to Commander, Task Force 69, concluded a series of interoperability training events with Force Reconnaissance Marines from the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion and special operations forces (SOF) in the Mediterranean Sea, August 5, 2024.

The series of events between joint partners and allied countries demonstrates the ability of Task Force 69 to seamlessly integrate amphibious and special warfare into

existing Navy missions in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations.

“As our submarine force continues to develop its diverse mission sets, we strengthen our ability to deter threats and ensure global access, security, and stability in the maritime domain,” said Capt. Benjamin Selph, Commander, Task Force 69. “Integration with joint and allied partners enhances our lethality as apex predators against hard targets in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations.”

The purpose of the training was to improve U.S. Marine Corps and SOF integration with conventional naval forces in order to develop and improve tactics, techniques and procedures. Early in the series, Marines from the 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company launched and recovered small craft aboard USS Georgia in order to develop capabilities to execute combined arms attacks, advanced personnel recovery, and expeditionary theater undersea warfare deployments.

“Several of our Marines worked alongside Sailors aboard USS Georgia to facilitate joint operational planning at a level not executed before between the U.S. Marine Corps and the submarine force,” said Major W. Connor Smithson, 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company commander. “Collaboration at this level only acts as a force multiplier to bring out the best of both forces’ capabilities.”

Later in the series, East Coast-based U.S. Naval Special Warfare Operators conducted Submarine-Special Operations Forces interoperability training with USS Georgia, which can host up to 66 SOF personnel, and included participation from the Royal Navy’s Special Boat Service, Norwegian Marinejegerkommandoen, and Italian Gruppo Operativo Incursori.

The training iterations with SOF sought to expand and reinforce SOF interoperability with combined partners and

provided a valuable opportunity to build combined SUBSOF communication and control architecture while also conducting critical undersea training and qualifications.

“The scale and importance of the accomplishments made by the teams onboard USS Georgia cannot be over-stated.” said Capt. Selph. “Integration with joint and allied SOF enhances our undersea forces’ ability to respond to any threat with increased speed and lethality.”

USS Georgia is homeported in Kings Bay, Georgia, and is on a routine deployment to the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations. While in U.S. Sixth Fleet, Commander, Task Force 69 is responsible for submarine warfare operations in Europe and Africa.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

U.S Navy to Christen Expeditionary Fast Transport Future USNS Point Loma

From the U.S. Navy Office of Information, 9 August 2024

Mobile, Ala. – The Navy will christen the future USNS Point Loma (EPF 15), the second of the Spearhead-class Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) Flight II configurations, during a 10:00

a.m. EDT ceremony on Saturday, August 10, in Mobile, Alabama.

The Honorable Nickolas Guertin, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition will deliver the principal address. Remarks will also be provided by Vice Adm. Scott Gray, Commander Navy Installations Command; Ms. Michelle Kruger, President of Austal USA; and Mr. Stan Kordana, Vice President of Program Execution, General Dynamics Mission Systems.

In a time-honored Navy tradition, ship sponsor Elizabeth Asher will christen the ship by the breaking of a bottle of sparkling wine across the ship's bow.

The ship is named in honor of the community of Point Loma and its decades long relationship with the Navy, beginning with the establishment of the Naval Coaling Station, La Playa, in 1901, and later the Naval Supply Center San Diego in 1943.

This is the second ship to honor the Point Loma community.

As a Flight II ship, EPF 15 is configured to deploy as a fast transport, or with Role 2 Enhanced medical capability, or both. The medical mission capability includes an embarked medical unit, two operating rooms, and the ability to support 147 medical patients and 38 civilian crew that operate and maintain the ship. Flight II EPFs will also have an 11M Rigid Inflatable Boat and MV-22 capability.