

CNO Travels to Colombia, Australia, Singapore, and Japan



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From Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs

YOKOSUKA, Japan – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday and his wife, Linda, visited Colombia, Australia, Singapore, and Japan, to meet with partner navies, government and military leaders, and Sailors, July 16-27.

The overseas trip began in Cartagena, Colombia, and was followed by visits to Sydney, Australia; Singapore; Tokyo and Yokosuka, Japan.

Gilday visited Colombia, where the Colombian Navy hosted UNITAS 2023, the world's longest-running multinational maritime exercise, which featured 26 warships/vessels, three submarines, 25 aircraft, and approximately 7,000 people from 20 partner nations. This year's exercise marked the first time unmanned systems were operationalized at scale, integrating an unmanned and AI-supported family of systems to provide persistent Maritime Domain Awareness capability in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility.

In Cartagena, Gilday toured the UNITAS maritime operations center, where he observed deployed unmanned systems and artificial intelligence tools, as well as preparations for a live-fire sinking exercise.

"Colombia is a maritime nation like the United States, and shares common goals in keeping the seas free and open," said Gilday. "One of the most important aspects of this year's UNITAS is the introduction of unmanned platforms in the air, at sea, and under the sea." He added, "Unmanned platforms are synchronizing with manned platforms and providing us additional sensors in the maritime environment so that countries like Colombia and other neighbors have better insight into illegal activity."

Separately, CNO met with the Commander of the Colombian Navy Adm. Francisco Hernando Cubides Granados, who presented Gilday with the Order of Naval Merit "Almirante Padilla" for his work and leadership as the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations.

"I'm incredibly honored to receive the Colombian Order of Naval Merit from my friend and ally Adm. Cubides," said Gilday. "Colombia has been an incredible host during UNITAS 2023, and I am proud of our long-standing friendship and partnership."

CNO and Linda then traveled to Sydney for the commissioning of the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra

(LCS 30).

The commissioning aligned with the opening ceremonies for Talisman Sabre 2023, a bilateral exercise with multinational participation that focuses on crisis-action planning and contingency responses. CNO attended the opening ceremony for the exercise held aboard HMAS Canberra (L02), where he met with senior leaders from the Australian government and military.

“Trained, ready forces help us preserve peace and prevent conflict,” said Gilday. “Realistic exercises like Talisman Sabre allow our forces to work with partner nations to increase interoperability and strengthen relationships to ensure we are ready in the event of conflict or crisis.”

Australia hosted the commissioning of USS Canberra, which is one of the first U.S. Navy warships to be commissioned in an allied country. The commissioning took place at Royal Australian Fleet Base East in Sydney, July 22.

“Today we commission USS Canberra into service as a combat unit that will integrate with the Australian fleet and with the combined maritime force of allies and partners who stand united across the entire Indo-Pacific,” said CNO. “The Sailors of the USS Canberra are the men and women who underwrite our Navy’s commitments: to safeguard our country, to defend our allies and partners, and to honor the nation of Australia, who has embarked with us on our voyage through the seas of history to defend freedom and democracy around the world.”

Afterward, CNO and Linda traveled to Singapore, where CNO met with Singapore’s Minister for Defense Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Chief of Defense Vice Adm. Aaron Beng, and Chief of Navy Rear Adm. Sean Wat. Throughout the meetings, the leaders discussed their shared commitment to promoting safety and stability in the region.

The visit concluded with Dr. Eng Hen presenting CNO with the

Pingat Jasa Gemilang, Singapore's Meritorious Service Medal, for his work in advancing the relationship between the two navies during his tenure.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to meet with Singaporean government and military leadership, and I am humbled to receive this award," said Gilday. "Our partnership with Singapore is rooted in our shared common values and commitment to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific."

After their stop in Singapore, CNO and Linda traveled to Tokyo, where they participated in an honor guard reception and wreath laying ceremony at Ichigaya.

CNO also met with government officials and military leaders to include Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Minister for Defense Yasukazu Hamada, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Adm. Ryo Sakai.

On behalf of the Japanese emperor, Hamada conferred the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun upon CNO for his contributions in strengthening the national defense relationship between the United States and Japan.

Established in 1875 by Emperor Meiji, the Order of the Rising Sun recognizes individuals who have accomplished distinguished achievements in international relations, the promotion of Japanese culture, and the preservation of the environment. After World War II, the Japanese government began presenting the award to individuals who demonstrated exemplary military service or contributed to national defense.

"I am overwhelmed and honored to be bestowed the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun today," said Gilday. "I'm grateful for this strategic partnership, deep friendship, and mutual commitment to peace and security." He added, "I have no doubt that the strong bond between our two nations will only continue to grow."

After his engagements in Tokyo, Gilday traveled to Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, where he met with and presented awards to Sailors aboard the guided-missile destroyers USS Higgins (DDG 76) and USS Milius (DDG 69). Aboard Milius, he presented the crew with the Spokane Award. The Spokane Award is presented annually to the most combat ready ship in the Pacific Fleet area of responsibility.

While aboard Higgins, Linda spoke with Sailors about the Women In the Navy (WIN) initiative and exchanged dialogue about mentorship, leadership and service.

“The United States Navy is committed to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific,” said CNO. “Every day, our Sailors are standing the watch, operating forward, strengthening our strategic partnerships, and increasing interoperability.

“I am continually impressed and proud of the incredible talent and dedication from our Sailors and their families,” he added.

The visit to Japan marked the conclusion of Gilday’s last international trip as the CNO. Gilday became the 32nd Chief of Naval Operations Aug. 22, 2019, and is scheduled to relinquish office in mid-August.