CTF 68 Builds Maritime Advantage with NATO Allies During Exercise Freezing Winds 2025



UPINNIEMI, Finland (Nov. 25, 2025) U.S. Navy explosive ordnance disposal technicians from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile 8, Commander Task Group 68.1, and Finnish Navy sailors conduct a live-fire exercise as a part of Freezing Winds 25 in Upinniemi, Finland, Nov. 25, 2025. (U.S. Navy Photo by MC2 Juan J. Ruiz-Lazcano)

By Commander, Task Force 68 Public Affairs

BALTIC SEA – U.S. Navy expeditionary forces assigned to Commander, Naval Expeditionary Combat Forces Europe-Africa/Commander, Task Force 68 (CTF 68) recently concluded operations in support of Exercise Freezing Winds 2025, a

Finnish-led multinational training event designed to bolster collective readiness, interoperability, and security across the North Baltic Sea.

Operating in concert with NATO Allies and U.S. Marines from Marine Rotational Force – Europe, CTF 68 contributed command and control, explosive ordnance disposal, and maritime logistics support across multiple domains. The exercise served as a proving ground for joint force operations in cold-weather environments and underscored the U.S. Navy's commitment to enhancing allied maritime security throughout the Baltic region.

"Operating alongside our NATO Allies and U.S. Marines in the challenging conditions of the Baltic Sea sharpens our readiness and reinforces our shared commitment to collective defense," said Capt. Jeremy Wheat, commodore of Task Force 68. "This exercise strengthens our ability to respond as a unified force, no matter the environment or mission."

A key focus during Freezing Winds was improving freedom of movement in contested environments, which was made possible in part by the efforts of explosive ordnance disposal technicians from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 8, assigned to Task Group 68.1. Their role involved simulated route clearance, underwater searches, and demolition operations near critical infrastructure and maritime logistics nodes. All of which were part of scenarios designed to test real-world response to sea mines and unexploded ordnance in congested littorals.

"Our role during Freezing Winds was to ensure freedom of movement by mitigating explosive threats along resupply corridors and maritime infrastructure, especially in areas affected by simulated mining and unexploded ordnance," said Lt. Luke Robertson, platoon officer-in-charge from TG 68.1. "Training with NATO Allies in these conditions enhances our ability to operate forward and respond to real-world threats

in complex environments.”

To support these clearance efforts and maintain the tempo of operations, logistics teams from Navy Cargo Handling Battalion (NCHB) 5, assigned to Task Group 68.5, provided the connective tissue needed to move fuel, cargo, and personnel across the battlespace. Supporting the combined force, TG 68.5 conducted cargo handling, aerial port coordination, and fuel delivery under freezing conditions proving the battalion’s capacity to sustain forward-deployed operations in the High North.

“Our mission was to provide combat service support by moving fuel, cargo, and munitions anywhere they’re needed from high-latitude airfields to expeditionary seaports,” said Lt. Michael Flickinger, TG 68.5 site officer-in-charge. “The environment was challenging, but working side-by-side with Finnish and U.S. Marine logistics teams allowed us to validate scalable, mobile support concepts.”

Exercise Freezing Winds 2025 also contributed to NATO’s broader effort to boost defense readiness across the Baltic Sea, a vital region for global commerce and energy transit. The inclusion of expeditionary units from CTF 68 added a crucial logistics and access-focused dimension to high-end naval and amphibious training.

“The ability of our expeditionary units to integrate into Allied operations, as demonstrated in Freezing Winds, is what makes CTF 68 so unique,” Wheat added. “We bring scalable, responsive capability that extends the reach and impact of the entire naval force.”

Wheat said that in an era marked by renewed focus on strategic deterrence in the High North, exercises like Freezing Winds enabled CTF 68 to contribute directly to integrated defense posture and the Alliance’s maritime advantage.

Exercise Freezing Winds 2025 demonstrated the value of persistent, forward-deployed presence and reinforced the

importance of logistics, access, and integration as enablers of joint and allied maritime advantage. “Through exercises like Freezing Winds, CTF 68 continues to maintain a persistent, forward-deployed presence delivering scalable expeditionary capabilities that advance Alliance readiness and regional stability,” said Wheat.

Commander, Task Force 68 commands all Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces in Europe and Africa and provides critical capabilities including logistics, explosive ordnance disposal, maritime engineering, port operations, and expeditionary security in support of U.S. 6th Fleet and NATO objectives.