Destroyer, P-8 Aircraft Team Up for Black Sea Exercise With Allies, Partners



Ukrainian navy ships participate in exercise Sea Breeze 2020 in the Black Sea. Sea Breeze, now in its 20th iteration, is an annual exercise held in the Black Sea co-hosted by Ukraine and the United States. U.S. NAVY

ARLINGTON, Va. – A U.S. Navy destroyer and maritime patrol aircraft have teamed up in the Black Sea to provide the U.S participation in the 2020 Sea Breeze annual international naval exercise.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter, a unit of the Forward-Deployed Naval Force based in Rota, Spain, entered the Black Sea on July 19 to participate in the 20th annual Exercise Sea Breeze, sponsored by the United States and Ukraine. The exercise runs July 20 through July 26.

The Porter, commanded by Cmdr. Craig M. Trent, is making its eighth ballistic-missile defense patrol and third excursion into the Black Sea. The ship has been joined by a P-8A Poseidon aircraft assigned to Patrol Squadron 47 (VP-47), based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, and deployed to Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily. VP-47 is commanded by Cmdr. Trever Plageman.

The Porter and the VP-47 aircraft are participating in exercises with ships from seven other nations: Bulgaria, Georgia, Norway, Romania, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine. Some of the ships are part of NATO Standing Maritime Group 2.

“Sea Breeze serves to build a rock-solid foundation of partnership in the Black Sea,” Vice Adm. Gene Black, commander, U.S. 6th Fleet, said during the opening day press

conference, according to a release. “Our ships, aircraft and personnel train together unified in our goal of maritime security and stability.”

In a July 22 teleconference with reporters, Trent said the Porter conducted a search-and-rescue exercise on July 21, an air-defense exercise July 22, and is scheduled for an antisubmarine exercise on July 23. He said the ship crews in the exercise were “very capable and professional … and very willing to work with us.”

Trent said his crew is observing strict health precautions amid the COVID-19 pandemic, preventing normal festive port calls and productive interactions with the crews of the participating foreign ships. He said that a minimal number of Sailors go ashore to assist the Porter to assist the ship in taking on fuel.

Plageman, also speaking in the teleconference, said that no submarines are serving as targets in the exercise. The ships and aircraft will be using an Expendable Mobile ASW Training Target System to simulate a target submarine.

Trent said the Russian navy has been present in the vicinity of the exercise but that there have been no confrontations and the Russian units have acted in a “safe and professional” manner.