ESG, MAGTF Departs for Exercise Trident Juncture 18

MAYPORT, Fla. – Ships of an expeditionary strike group have departed ports in the U.S. East Coast and will embark a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) in North Carolina bound for participation in Exercise Trident Juncture 18 in Northern Europe, Expeditionary Strike Group Two (ESG-2) said in an Oct. 5 release.

The Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima and the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS New York departed Naval Station Mayport and the Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Gunston Hall sailed from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia.

Nearly 2,000 Marines with a MAGTF built around the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit command element from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, will also embark the ships. The MAGTF is comprised of battalion landing team, a composite aviation squadron and a combat logistics battalion.

Exercise Trident Juncture 18 will take place in Norway, Sweden and Finland beginning this month, with expected participation of more than 40,000 troops from more than 30 NATO member and partner nations. It will be one of NATO's largest exercises in recent history.

"It's important for U.S. amphibious forces to conduct operations in the European area of responsibility and for us to work with multinational amphibious forces," said Rear Adm. Brad Skillman, commander, ESG-2. "Exercises like Trident Juncture 18 provide and reinforce security measures; maritime and amphibious capability development and presence; synchronized operational planning; and better options for political-military decision-making."

The majority of U.S. personnel participating will be a part of ESG 2 and the Marine Corps' II Marine Expeditionary Group. En route to Norway, U.S. forces will conduct training in Iceland, host a Marine assault landing rehearsal, cold-weather training, a Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO pre-sail conference, and a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, which took place during World War II.

In Norway, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps will participate primarily in the live training portion of Trident Juncture 18. This includes maneuvers on land, at sea, and in the air.