

Exercise Northern Viking 2026 Marks 75 Years of U.S.- Iceland Defense Cooperation



KEFLAVIK, Iceland – U.S. Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Soldiers have arrived in Keflavik, Iceland, joining forces with the Icelandic Coast Guard and other NATO Allies to officially kick off U.S. Sixth Fleet's Northern Viking 2026 (NV26) exercise during an opening ceremony on August 18, 2026.

Participating nations in NV26 include Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Norway, Poland, and the United States, alongside specialized assets and personnel from Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) and NATO Joint Force Command Norfolk.

"Our defence cooperation with the United States has thrived for 75 years because it has never stood still; it has

developed to meet evolving challenges of our time,” said Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Iceland’s Minister for Foreign Affairs. “The best way to celebrate this anniversary is not merely by commemorating our partnership, but by actually practicing it – together and alongside our Allies. Northern Viking is precisely that, a demonstration that the commitments we have made to one another are dynamic, practical and built on trust – underpinned by shared interests.”

This year’s iteration of the biennial exercise marks a milestone 75th anniversary of the 1951 Bilateral Defense Agreement between Iceland and the United States. Running from August 22 to September 3, NV26 will challenge joint and coalition forces with a series of highly realistic training scenarios. Key training opportunities will focus on anti-submarine warfare, mine countermeasure, expeditionary construction, search and rescue, humanitarian medical response, and disaster response.

“Seventy-five years of bilateral defense cooperation is a testament to the unbreakable bond between the United States and Iceland,” said Vice Adm. J. T. Anderson, Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet. “Northern Viking 2026 is a demonstration of our commitment to the collective defense of the North Atlantic. Together with our Allies, we continue to create an environment that allows interoperability among NATO maritime forces so that European Allies can take over primary responsibility for deterrence and defense in the European Theater.”

Exercise Northern Viking 2026 is designed to strengthen interoperability and force readiness between the United States, Iceland, and other allied nations. The exercise enables critical multi-domain command and control of joint and coalition forces defending Iceland and safeguarding the sea lines of communication within the Greenland, Iceland, and United Kingdom (GIUK) gap. As a vital global shipping corridor, keeping the GIUK gap secure is imperative for transatlantic trade, commerce, and security between North

America and Europe.

“Together, we’re honing our war fighting skills and ensuring our ability to secure this critical region and to project decisive combat power wherever and whenever necessary,” said Gen Alexis G. Grynkeiwich, Supreme Allied Commander Europe and commander U.S. European Command. “We will deliver precision effects and will practice defense against rapidly proliferating unmanned systems. Throughout this exercise, and others, we will leverage the power of data in AI enabled decision support tools, will integrate data streams in real time, and ensure our command and control structures can make decisions at the speed of future conflict.

The 1951 Defense Agreement was the foundation of a unique security framework designating the United States as responsible for Iceland’s defense in the absence of Iceland’s own standing military. This treaty established a highly specialized and enduring defense presence in the region. Over the last 75 years, this partnership has adapted from Cold War deterrence to modern multi-domain defense operations, ensuring that the transatlantic bridge remains open and secure.

First held in 1982, Northern Viking is a biennial joint and coalition live exercise centered around the provisions of the 1951 Defense Agreement between Iceland and the United States. It remains a key venue for testing defense plans, reinforcing allied cohesion, and refining tactics in the North Atlantic.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied, interagency and partner forces, to advance U.S. national interests and promote security and stability in Europe and Africa.

For more information from U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet, visit www.c6f.navy.mil.

By U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs, Aug. 18, 2026