

Exercise PANAMAX 2026 Concludes in Mayport, Florida



MAYPORT, Fla. – U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet completed the Combined Force Maritime Component Command (CFMCC) portion of the annual exercise PANAMAX, Aug. 3-12. This portion of the exercise helped provide maritime-focused interoperability training for the U.S. and participating multinational staffs, and build participating nation capability to plan and execute operations.

Participants in the CFMCC portion of the exercise were challenged with various maritime scenarios to help hone their skills, forge strong cooperative partnerships, and demonstrate their collective capacity to respond to and deter threats to maritime regions and critical waterways. Working together promoted a shared understanding of threats and goals, while furthering the commitment to ensure lasting regional peace by leveraging combined strengths.

“The two weeks have been intensive,” said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, Commander, U.S. Fourth Fleet. “The high tempo required a total team effort; we came here as individuals, and we leave here as a team, forged together.”

Under the exercise scenario, participants from air, land, special forces and maritime components formed a multinational force to defend the Panama Canal under a United Nations Security Council resolution. The scenario played out with complex simulated operations in the canal and its regional waters in both the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

“This exercise is essential because it’s a crucible on which we forge our own individual strengths, and we address our weaknesses and our self-doubt,” said Sardiello. “We worked outside our comfort zones to develop as leaders and as officers.”

The CFMCC portion of the exercise was conducted at locations in the U.S. to include Joint Staff Exercise Directorate at Suffolk, Va., U.S. Southern Command, Doral, Fla., Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, Homestead Air Reserve Base, Homestead, Fla., Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Tucson, Ariz., and Naval Station Mayport, Fla. More than 150 U.S. and partner nation personnel worked at these locations and brought the knowledge of their individual skillsets to contribute to the team effort.

“It is important, the friendships we built these two weeks of hard working,” said Chilean Navy Capt. Juan Pablo Villanueva, Deputy Commander of the Maritime Component at PANAMAX 2026, “I am certain that each of us will cherish the personal and professional qualities we shared. Memories will endure, and whenever we cross paths at an international event, we will remember that we were Panamax 2026.”

Nations who participated include Panama, Argentina, Belize,

Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, UK and the United States.

PANAMAX 2026 is a Republic of Panama-hosted, U.S. Southern Command-sponsored training exercise that seeks to improve interoperability and strengthen collective capacity to conduct complex multinational and all-domain operations to ensure free flow of commerce through the Panama Canal and maintain security and stability in the region.

Story by Lt. Cmdr. Elizabeth Allen