Exercise Phoenix Express 2026 Concludes in Tunisia

By U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs

TUNIS, Tunisia – Eight partner nations concluded the 20th iteration of exercise Phoenix Express, led by U.S. 6th Fleet, sponsored by U.S. Africa Command, and hosted by Tunisia in Tunis, Jan. 20-23, 2026.

This year's iteration focused on improving maritime domain awareness and executing Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) missions through a tabletop exercise that simulated human trafficking, narcotics smuggling, and weapons proliferation across the Southern Mediterranean.

Phoenix Express is a multinational maritime exercise designed to strengthen combined warfighting readiness and lethality in maritime security operations by improving regional cooperation, maritime domain awareness, information-sharing practices, and tactical interdiction expertise.

"The 20th iteration of exercise Phoenix Express underscores our enduring commitment with North African and European maritime partners," said Vice Adm. J.T. Anderson, commander, U.S. 6th Fleet. "By training side-by-side, we sharpen our collective warfighting readiness and enhance our ability to plan, coordinate, and command maritime security operations. This exercise builds the operational independence of our African partners. Safeguarding a stable maritime environment in Africa is a shared strategic interest that protects our homelands and deters threats against regional stability."

The tabletop exercise showcased partner warfighting capabilities through an integrated maritime operations center. The scenario enhanced participants' ability to detect, track, and classify maritime traffic, increased proficiency in

operational-level planning and decision making for interdiction operations, strengthened coordination mechanisms among naval, air, and coalition partners, and improved information-sharing procedures.

“Exercises like Phoenix Express build on more than two centuries of U.S.–Tunisia partnership in maritime security,” said Bill Bazzi, U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia. “We are proud to stand with Tunisia and our partners in Africa and Europe to support a secure and stable maritime environment in the Mediterranean and beyond.

Participating nations in Phoenix Express include Algeria, Belgium, Egypt, Georgia, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia, and the United States.

Phoenix Express is one of three regional maritime exercises under U.S. Naval Forces Africa as part of a comprehensive strategy to provide collaborative opportunities amongst African forces and international partners in order to address maritime security concerns.

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

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa (NAVEUR/NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability. Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR/NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility.