

Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Enters Caribbean Sea



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The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group, led by the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), transited the Anegada Passage and entered the Caribbean Sea, Nov. 16.

The maritime forces' operations in the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) area of responsibility come after Secretary of War Pete Hegseth directed the Carrier Strike Group to support the President's directive to dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations and counter narco-terrorism in defense of the Homeland.

"Through unwavering commitment and the precise use of our

forces, we stand ready to combat the transnational threats that seek to destabilize our region," said Adm. Alvin Holsey, Commander, SOUTHCOM. "The USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group's deployment represents a critical step in reinforcing our resolve to protect the security of the Western Hemisphere and the safety of the American Homeland."

The carrier strike group will join joint forces already in the Caribbean Sea, including the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group and embarked marine expeditionary unit, as part of Joint Task Force Southern Spear, established to defeat and dismantle criminal networks that exploit our shared borders and maritime domains.

"Our nation's leaders have called upon the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group as the most capable, adaptable, and lethal platform in the world to be where it matters, when it matters," said Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12. "Our force will augment existing capabilities to protect our nation's security and prosperity against narco-terrorism in the Western Hemisphere."

With more than 4,000 Sailors and dozens of tactical aircraft aboard, Gerald R. Ford provides combatant commanders and America's civilian leaders increased capacity to project power through sustained operations at sea. The first-in-class carrier can simultaneously catapult launch and recover fixed-wing aircraft on its flight deck, day or night, in support of tasked operations.

After departing on deployment June 24, 2025, the carrier strike group conducted multi-domain strike group operations in the Atlantic Ocean before transiting east into the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, sailing above the Arctic Circle and throughout the Mediterranean Sea with multiple Allies and partners, participating in NATO's Neptune Strike 25-2 and 25-3 enhanced vigilance activities, and conducting port calls in

Croatia, France, Germany, Norway, and Spain. The force arrived in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility after a westbound transit through the Strait of Gibraltar, Nov. 4, and a transoceanic voyage.

Alongside Gerald R. Ford, the carrier strike group brings additional capable, lethal, and adaptable warfighting assets, including the nine embarked squadrons of Carrier Air Wing Eight, Destroyer Squadron Two's Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Bainbridge (DDG 96) and USS Mahan (DDG 72), and the integrated air and missile defense command ship USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81).

U.S. military forces are deployed to the Caribbean in support of the U.S. Southern Command mission, Department of War-directed operations, and the President's priorities to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and protect the Homeland.

Operation Southern Spear is a Department of War mission to enhance security and stability across the Western Hemisphere by detecting, disrupting, and degrading transnational criminal and illicit maritime networks. This operation enhances maritime domain awareness, supports regional stability, and helps prevent illicit activity from reaching the U.S. Homeland. These efforts reflect the Department's commitment to maintaining a safe, stable, and secure hemisphere.