Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Enters U.S. Fourth Fleet



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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), entered the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility (USSOUTHCOM AOR), Nov. 11. The maritime forces' arrival comes 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.

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"The enhanced U.S. force presence in the USSOUTHCOM AOR will bolster U.S. capacity to detect, monitor, and disrupt illicit actors and activities that compromise the safety and prosperity of the United States homeland and our security in the Western Hemisphere," said Chief Pentagon Spokesperson Sean Parnell. "These forces will enhance and augment existing capabilities to disrupt narcotics trafficking and degrade and dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations."

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.

The carrier strike group will augment joint forces already in the area of responsibility, including the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group and embarked marine expeditionary unit, under a Joint Task Force, created to defeat and dismantle criminal networks that exploit our shared borders and maritime domains.

"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."

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).

The embarked squadrons aboard Gerald R. Ford include Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31, VFA 37, and VFA 87, flying the F/A-18E Super Hornet; VFA 213, flying the F/A-18F Super Hornet; Electronic Attack Squadron 142, flying the E/A-18G Growler; Airborne Command and Control Squadron 124, flying the airborne command and control E-2D Advanced Hawkeye; Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, flying the MH-60S Seahawk; Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 70, flying the MH-60R Seahawk; and a detachment from Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40, flying the Carrier Onboard Delivery C-2A Greyhound.

The destroyers in company bring anti-air, anti-submarine, and anti-surface capabilities including the Aegis Combat System, missile vertical launch systems, and various large-mount guns. As the IAMDC, Winston S. Churchill leads the strike group's air and ballistic-missile defense.

The U.S. Southern Command Area of Responsibility encompasses 31 countries and 12 dependencies and areas of special sovereignty. The region represents about one-sixth of the landmass of the world assigned to regional unified commands. USSOUTHCOM´s Area of Responsibility includes the land mass of

Latin America south of Mexico, the waters adjacent to Central and South America, and the Caribbean Sea.

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. Inquiries may be submitted to CUSNS-C4F_PAO@us.navy.mil.