

# Gonzalez Returns To Norfolk from 9-Month Deployment



The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Gonzalez (DDG 66) returns to Naval Station Norfolk after a regularly scheduled deployment in the U.S. 5th Fleet and U.S. 6th Fleet areas of operations, Sept. 28. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication 2nd Class Nathan T. Beard*

NORFOLK, Va. – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gonzalez (DDG 66) returned to its homeport of Naval Station Norfolk, Sept. 28, 2022, USS Harry S. Truman Public Affairs said in a release.

Gonzalez deployed Jan. 23 as part of a surge deployment of five destroyers under commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, that included the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Donald Cook (DDG 75), USS Mitscher (DDG 57), USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) and USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) before Gonzalez joined the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) in the

Mediterranean Sea as a part of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 28.

The ship was dynamically employed by U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets, traveling throughout the regions participating in a multitude of bi-lateral and multi-lateral training opportunities ensuring maritime security and stability.

"We left on this deployment to bolster relationships with key allies and partners as well as defend international interests in the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleets," said Cmdr. Timothy Battles, Gonzalez's commanding officer. "I am proud of the men and women of this ship and all that they have accomplished since we left home and know they can feel a strong sense of pride for a job well done."

The crew's outstanding efforts complemented the ship's diversity of mission sets and substantial capabilities. "The Sailors aboard USS Gonzalez lead the way in demonstrating resolve and dedication to support the mission and each other," said Cmdr. Kate Stegner, Gonzalez's executive officer. "As an independent deployer, our team met each mission with continued success. I am humbled to be a part of this great crew."

While operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, Gonzalez conducted multiple escort transits through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and conducted counter smuggling operations in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 in the Gulf of Oman. Gonzalez also conducted security patrols in support of the recently established CTF 153 to ensure international maritime security and capacity building efforts in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden.

During their operations in U.S. 6th Fleet, Gonzalez demonstrated cohesion and capability by sailing and operating with Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe ships, as well as those of Standing NATO Maritime Group (SNMG) 2 and the HSTCSG.

In the Mediterranean, Gonzalez helped pave the way for the NATO-led exercise Neptune Shield 22, conducting dual and tri-carrier operations with the Italian and French navies. The multinational exercise demonstrated NATO's ability to integrate the high-end maritime warfare capabilities of allied aircraft carrier strike groups, amphibious ready groups and marine expeditionary units to support the defense of the alliance. Training exercises and vigilance activities throughout the deployment provided the opportunity to enhance relationships with European Allies and partners.

As the ship finally pulled into homeport, Command Master Chief Lance Connolly, Gonzalez's senior enlisted leader, reflected on the sacrifices made by those onboard and those waiting at the pier.

"They conducted themselves admirably the past months despite the many challenges presented throughout our deployment," said Command Master Chief Connolly. "I could not have been more pleased with the resiliency and warrior spirit of our crew."

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), commanded by Capt. Gavin Duff, serves as the flagship of the HSTCSG; additional elements include the nine squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1, commanded by Capt. Patrick Hourigan; the staff and guided-missile destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 28, commanded by Capt. Blair Guy, which have included: USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Gravely (DDG 107), USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) and USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109).