

Ishee Assumes Command of U.S. 6th Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO



Vice Adm. Thomas E. Ishee relieved Vice Adm. Gene Black III as commander, U.S. 6th Fleet and commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO in a change of command ceremony held onboard U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy, Sept. 15.
U.S. NAVY

U.S. NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY NAPLES, Italy – Vice Adm. Thomas E. Ishee relieved Vice Adm. Gene Black III as commander, U.S. 6th Fleet and commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) in a change of command ceremony held onboard U.S. Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy, Sept. 15.

Adm. Stuart Munsch, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) and commander, Allied Joint Forces Command Naples, presided over the ceremony. Munsch outlined Black's

extensive accomplishments as 6th Fleet commander and presented Black with the Distinguished Service Medal.

“Gene has sustained an unprecedented level of activity as the fleet commander for the Euro-Atlantic area, recalibrating our combined forces for dynamic operations, as the tenets of strategic competition dictate, to deter Russian aggression and stand ready to defend NATO,” said Munsch. “No one can look at the tenor you’ve set and argue that our adversaries haven’t factored your warfighting command of 6th Fleet and STRIKFORNATO into their calculus.”

As 6th Fleet commander and deputy commander of NAVEUR-NAVAF, Black provided regional, national and international leadership with credible Navy and NATO combat capabilities across the European and African areas of operations. He also spearheaded the establishment of a European Navy-Marine Corps task force (Task Force 61 Naval Amphibious Forces Europe/ 2d Marine Division (TF-61/2)). TF 61/2 is charged with command and control of high-end U.S. forces, including Amphibious Ready Groups and Marine Expeditionary Units; Reconnaissance and Counter-Reconnaissance Marines; and intelligence and collection units able to integrate with theater allies and partners.

“The establishment of Task Force 61/2 has brought an enhanced rapid response capability to the 6th Fleet area of operations and has displayed the strength and flexibility of the Navy-Marine Corps team,” said Brig. Gen. Andrew Priddy, commanding general of TF 61/2.

Additionally, Black’s leadership of STRIKFORNATO yielded the first transfer of authority of a U.S. Carrier Strike Group to NATO since the Cold War, setting a new standard in NATO cohesion and cooperation. 6th Fleet and STRIKFORNATO executed multiple phases of the Project Neptune series in 2021 and 2022, expanding transfer of authority of allied carrier strike groups and of the USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) ARG and 22nd MEU,

substantially increasing flexibility and cohesion throughout the alliance.

“Demonstrating and enhancing NATO’s high-end maritime warfare capabilities shows the world the true strength and teamwork of our alliance,” Black said of Neptune Shield, held in May 2022. “NATO’s capacity to conduct integrated operations in the maritime domain ... validates more than seven decades of Alliance interoperability.”

Ishee, previously the Director of Global Operations for U.S. Strategic Command, spoke of his appreciation for the team he will lead, while outlining his vision and goals for the command.

“History is unfolding before our eyes, and our nation, the alliance, other allies and our partners around the world are relying on 6th Fleet and STRIKFORNATO to maintain freedom of navigation, defend our nations and the alliance, and support our partners,” said Ishee. “We will continue to build these enduring relationships through training and exercises, common values, and shared experiences and vision.”

Black has been selected for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral and assignment as deputy chief of naval operations for operations, plans, and strategy, N3/N5, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

U.S. 6th Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.