Italian and U.S. Combined Naval Force Integrates in Mediterranean Sea



By Lt. Ian Tumulty, July 23, 2025

MEDITERRANEAN SEA — The first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) and USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), all assigned to Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG), integrated their force with Italian Navy frigate ITS Spartaco Schergat (F598) beginning July 20, 2025.

“ITS Spartaco Schergat is eager to cooperate with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group,” said Cmdr. Michele Spada, commanding officer of Spartaco Schergat. “Interoperability

activities between our units will result in an extraordinary exchange of experiences, allowing for deeper mutual understanding and strengthened trust between our crews. This strengthens both individual skills and our ability to operate as one."

On July 19, the same members of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group transited the Strait of Gibraltar with Spanish Armada Santa Maria-class ESPS Canarias (F86), and fast combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE-6),

"It is a privilege for our strike group to enter the Mediterranean Sea and immediately be met by an Italian Allied warship," said Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of Carrier Strike Group Twelve. "Our transit through the Strait of Gibraltar with Spain and naval integration with Italy is just the beginning of our efforts together in deterring regional aggression and improving the lethality of our forces by raising readiness and responsiveness with our Allies and partners."

While in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, GRFCSG will continue to work alongside NATO Allies and other partners, focusing on strengthening partnerships, deepening interoperability, and supporting theater security and stability.

Built on more than seven decades of partnership and experience, NATO is the strongest military alliance in history. Carrier strike groups like Gerald R. Ford's showcase the inherent flexibility and scalability maritime forces provide to the combined force, while reinforcing the U.S. Navy's ironclad commitment to the stability and security of the European theater.

Gerald R. Ford, along with the nine embarked squadrons of Carrier Air Wing Eight, Destroyer Squadron Two's Bainbridge

and USS Mahan (DDG 72), and USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81), left Virginia in June and conducted multi-domain strike group operations in the Atlantic Ocean before transiting east.

Carrier Strike Group Twelve is on scheduled deployments in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations to support the warfighting effectiveness, lethality, and readiness of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, and defend U.S., Allied and partner interests in the region. For more than 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa has forged strategic relationships with our Allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.