Lightfish Unmanned Vessel First Joint Maritime Launch



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VICTORIA, Seychelles – Commander Task Force (CTF) 66 launched a Lightfish Unmanned Surface Vessel (USV) for the first time off a partner nation's vessel during Cutlass Express 2026 off the coast of the Indian Ocean, Feb. 9.

The launch was part of an unmanned systems training event with the Seychelles Navy, designed to test the Lightfish USV abilities in open ocean with limited connection.

"We are making history at Cutlass Express 2026 by demonstrating our enhanced warfighting skills through our robotic and unmanned capabilities alongside our maritime partners," said Lt. Bryna Loranger, CTF 66 Operations Officer. "6th Fleet is seeking new ways to build partner maritime

domain awareness capabilities during this exercise by promoting interoperability. Through sharing and experimenting with Seychelles Coast Guard assets and infrastructure, we are enhancing our expeditionary robotic autonomous systems capabilities in the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility."

CTF 66 is a fully uncrewed task force that uses advanced technologies, like artificial intelligence, to help U.S. 6th Fleet and its partners move faster to maintain a strong presence across Africa's maritime zones while detecting illegal activity.

CTF 66 is leading the U.S. Navy in innovating its approach to warfighting during an age where information systems, technology, and vulnerabilities in the global economy are being weaponized by adversaries operating in the grey-zone outside the domain of traditional warfare.

"Through exercises like Cutlass Express 2026, we are adapting alongside our partners by integrating unmanned tactics directly into operations," said Rear Adm. Kelly Ward, Commander, Task Force 66. "We are leaning into this domain hand-in-hand with our partners, translating innovation into warfighting readiness and enhancing maritime security to protect freedom of navigation."

Cutlass Express 2026 has 19 partners and allies working together through a series of shore-based training events. Cutlass Express provides all participating nations an opportunity to work side-by-side to synchronize and rehearse real-world scenarios that will include visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) and maritime interdiction training, counter-illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing procedures, and medical training.

Established in May 2024, CTF 66 is U.S. 6th Fleet's first all-domain task force designed to integrate Robotic and Autonomous

Systems (RAS) with naval, joint and NATO partners in the European and African theaters of operations. Since its establishment, the task force drives to innovate and develop unmanned technologies to enhance the way militaries integrate naval platforms across all domains, all enabled by this emerging technology.

CTF 66 currently maintains 22 USVs, however the task force is expecting to double its lethality as additional assets reach operational readiness in the near future. These USVs provide precise maritime domain awareness and serve as force multipliers. This enhanced technology forces adversaries to overextend their defenses and in positions to face complex strategic dilemmas.

Exercises like Cutlass Express 2026 allow CTF 66 to leverage strong collaboration with partners and allied nations to operate large numbers of unmanned systems at scale. These partnerships allow the task force to pre-position and deploy assets into host countries ahead of time using the 'deploy to employ' approach, while guaranteeing its immediate readiness in the area of operations.

CTF 66 and their USVs will continue to enhance deterrence, lethality and capabilities within the European and African theaters of operations.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa (NAVEUR/NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability. Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR/NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S.

national interests and security and stability in Europe and Africa.