P-8A Poseidon to Support Chilean-Led Search for C-130

NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. – U.S. Southern Command directed U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command to deploy a P-8A Poseidon multimission maritime aircraft to Punta Arenas, Chile, on Dec. 10 to support Chile's ongoing search for a Chilean Air Force C-130 Hercules that went missing in the Drake Passage while transporting 38 passengers and crew to the Antarctic.

In response to a request from the government of Chile, the aircraft and its 20-person crew departed El Salvador's Comalapa Air Base and arrived in Punta Arenas on Dec. 11. The aircraft and crew are expected to begin supporting the ongoing search on Dec. 12.

Prior to the P-8A deployment, SOUTHCOM assisted the Chilean search efforts by providing satellite imagery of the search area.

The aircraft was in El Salvador's Comalapa Air Base supporting counter-illicit trafficking maritime patrol operations as part of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and El Salvador.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Chile and with the families of the missing as we join other regional partners supporting Chile's ongoing search for the C-130, its crew and their passengers," said U.S. Navy Adm. Craig Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command.

The P-8A Poseidon is the Navy's newest maritime, patrol and reconnaissance aircraft and is configured with state-of-the-art sensors and communications equipment, allowing it to support a wide range of missions over large bodies of water, including subsurface search-and-rescue operations. It can reach an airspeed of 564 mph, has a ceiling of 41,000 feet and

a range of 1,200 nautical miles with four hours on station, allowing it to loiter over search areas.

In 2017, SOUTHCOM deployed two P-8A Poseidon aircraft to Bahia Blanca, Argentina, where they contributed to an internationally supported search for the Argentinean Navy’s submarine A.R.A. San Juan after it went missing in Southern Atlantic waters.