

SECNAV: U.S. Atlantic Fleet to be Resurrected from U.S. Fleet Forces Command to 'Align to Today's Threat'



A U.S. Fleet Forces change of command ceremony in 2009, aboard USS Harry S. Truman at Naval Station Norfolk. Fleet Forces Command will be re-designated the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, the secretary of the Navy announced Dec. 2. U.S. Navy / Petty Officer 2nd Class Todd Frantom

ARLINGTON, Va. – The secretary of the Navy has announced that the U.S. Fleet Forces Command would be re-designated the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in acknowledgement of the realities of great power competition, particularly with Russia.

Navy Secretary Kenneth J. Braithwaite, testifying Dec. 2 before the Readiness and Management Support subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, took the opportunity to announce the forthcoming change, noting that the changing world requires that the Navy must evolve to meet the threat.

“Our existing structure operates on the premise that we still live in a post-9-11 state, where NATO’s flanks are secure, the Russian Fleet is tied to the pier, and terrorism is our biggest problem,” Braithwaite said. “That is not the world of today. As the world changes, we must be bold, evolved, and change with it. Instead of perpetuating a structure designed to support Joint Forces Command, we are aligning to today’s threat.

“To meet the maritime challenges of the Atlantic Theater, we will rename Fleet Forces Command as the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and will refocus our naval forces in this important region on their original mission, to controlling the maritime approaches

to the United States and those of our allies,” he said. “The Atlantic Fleet will confront the reassertive Russian Navy, which has been deploying closer and closer to our East Coast with a tailored maritime presence, capability and lethality.”

The U.S. Atlantic Fleet commander will have two numbered fleets assigned, U.S. Second Fleet, headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia, and U.S. Fourth Fleet, headquartered in Mayport, Florida. The U.S. Second Fleet was reestablished in August 2018 to confront the increasing Russian activity.

The original commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet staff, has a long pedigree that began in 1906, when the North Atlantic Squadron and South Atlantic Squadron were combined. The fleet existed in various forms until 2006, when the chief of naval operations renamed Commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, to Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, which assumed the duties of the former fleet plus the mission of the former Commander, Fleet Forces Command, which was “to serve as the primary advocate for fleet personnel, training, requirements, maintenance and operations issues,” according to the Fleet Forces Command website.

For a detailed history of the commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Fleet Forces command staff, see <https://www.usff.navy.mil/About-Us/History/> .