

Standing NATO Maritime Group Two Transfers Flagship in Rota



Standing NATO Maritime Group Two transfers its flagship from USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) to USS James E Williams (DDG 95) as USS Forrest Sherman completes its deployment and prepares to return to homeport in Norfolk, VA. *U.S. NAVY / Petty Officer 3rd Class Ezekiel Duran*

ROTA, Spain – Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) transferred its flagship as scheduled from U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) to U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS James E. Williams (DDG 95) at Naval Station Rota on Dec. 13, said Cmdr. Fernando Estrella, NATO Allied Maritime Command, in a release.

USS Forrest Sherman assumed flagship duties for SNMG2 on July

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While operating in the Euro-Atlantic area she provided continuous maritime capability by operating throughout the Mediterranean Sea, Ionian Sea, Adriatic Sea, Aegean Sea and Tyrrhenian Sea. Her vigilance activities stretched from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Syrian Channel and as far as the northern Adriatic Sea.

"I can't express enough how proud I am of the Sailors on board USS Forrest Sherman," said U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Scott Sciretta, commander of SNMG2. "They served admirably, meeting and exceeding each and every operational commitment and challenge. Their persistent presence as the flagship for an international task group served as an active deterrent to our adversaries and ensured peace and respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and international law. As a result of their efforts, the NATO Alliance is stronger than ever and we will continue to demonstrate how our combat-credible, forward-deployed force is the most potent, flexible and versatile instrument of military power. To the Sailors of Forrest Sherman and their families whose sacrifices allow them to serve, thank you."

USS Forrest Sherman demonstrated a high level of interoperability by serving as the flagship for a task group of 21 different rotating ships from seven NATO nations. Additionally, she led the task group as it integrated with various other Allied maritime groups to include Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group Two (SNMCMG2), the U.S. Navy Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) and George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group (GHWBCSG), the French Navy Charles De Gaulle Carrier Strike Group, the Italian Navy Cavour Carrier Strike Group and the Royal Navy HMS Albion Littoral Readiness Group. Throughout her deployment she visited nine different ports in seven countries, proudly flying the NATO flag, and serving as a visible reminder of the Alliance's solidarity and cohesion afloat.

“Serving as the flagship for SNMG2 has been an incredible privilege,” said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Lawrence Heyworth IV, commanding officer of USS Forrest Sherman. “The crew of the Forrest Sherman enjoyed working closely with ships and Sailors from 12 different nations throughout this deployment, and we are proud of the interoperability and interchangeability we have developed with our NATO Allies and partners.”

USS Forrest Sherman is scheduled to complete her six-month deployment and return to her homeport in Norfolk, Virginia, in the United States. USS James E. Williams is scheduled to serve as SNMG2’s flagship throughout the remainder of her deployment.

“The crew of James E. Williams is prepared and ready to engage the challenges that lie ahead as we assume flagship duties for SNMG2,” said U.S. Navy Commander Robert Ireland, commanding officer of USS James E. Williams. “We look forward to continuing to strengthen our relationship with NATO Allies and partners while operating in the Euro-Atlantic area.”

As a NATO task group, SNMG2 prioritizes its mandate to enhance the collective readiness, responsiveness, deployable readiness, integration and interoperability of its forces. Its focus is on deterrence and defense against all adversaries in the maritime domain, upholding freedom of navigation, securing maritime trade routes and protecting the main lines of communication.

SNMG2 is a multinational integrated task group that projects a constant and visible reminder of the Alliance’s solidarity and cohesion afloat. This continuous maritime capability performs a wide range of tasks, including exercises and real-world operations in periods of crisis and conflict.

SNMG2 is one of four Standing Naval Forces that operate under NATO Allied Maritime Command, headquartered in Northwood, United Kingdom.