

The Wasp ARG-24th MEU (SOC) Returns Home After a 7-Month Deployment



NORFOLK (Dec. 6, 2024) Sailors assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1) man the rails on the ship's flight deck as the ship returns to Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 6, 2024. Wasp, flagship of the Wasp Amphibious Ready Group (WSP ARG), returned from a seven-month deployment operating in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operation. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Sydney Milligan)

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The Wasp Amphibious Ready Group (WSP ARG), commanded by Amphibious Squadron (CPR) 4, returned to Hampton Roads, Virginia following a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, Dec. 6.

The WSP ARG flagship, first-in-class amphibious assault ship

USS Wasp (LHD 1) and San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, while the Harpers Ferry-class amphibious landing dock ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) is expected to return to Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek.

The embarked 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Special Operations Capable (SOC) returned to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Dec. 3.

“This deployment demonstrated the versatility and strength of amphibious forces,” said Capt. Nakia Cooper, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 4. “Whether enhancing NATO interoperability or on station as the crises response force, the Sailors and Marines of the ARG-MEU team consistently executed with precision and remained ready. To our families and loved ones—thank you for your unwavering love and support.”

Throughout the deployment, the ARG-MEU team operated extensively in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility under the authority of Task Force 61/2, participating in high-profile exercises such as Baltic Operations 2024 in the Baltic Sea and Neptune Strike 24.2 in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The 24th MEU (SOC) routinely rotated its landing forces to the Republic of Cyprus to participate in bilateral training with the Republic of Cyprus National Guard and their elite special operating forces. These engagements reinforced partnerships with NATO Allies and regional partners, highlighting the strategic importance of amphibious forces in fostering multinational cooperation.

The ARG-MEU also conducted more than a dozen port visits across Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, strengthening relationships with Allies and partners while offering opportunities for bilateral training and cultural exchanges. The port visits included Klaipeda, Lithuania and Kiel, Germany

as part of BALTOPS 24; Rota, Spain and Skagen, Denmark for brief stops for fuel and resupply operations; Brest and Cherbourg, France, as part of the ARG-MEU's participation in the 80th D-Day anniversary ceremony; Aksaz and Izmir, Türkiye to strengthen relationships with NATO Ally Türkiye; Souda Bay and Thessaloniki, Greece, where 24th MEU (SOC) units were positioned to conduct bilateral training with Greek military forces; and finally, to Limassol and Larnaca, Cyprus, during bilateral training with the Republic of Cyprus National Guard and their Special Operations Forces.

"We forged stronger ties with our international Allies and partners during this deployment," said Col. Todd Mahar, commanding officer, 24th MEU (SOC). "Every Marine and Sailor displayed remarkable adaptability and professionalism, proving the value of our forward-deployed, rapid response capabilities."

The deployment displayed the ARG-MEU's mission sets as a crises response force by providing readiness and flexibility to the Combatant and Fleet Commanders. From deterring aggression in contested waters to standing by for crisis response, the team consistently demonstrated its ability to adapt and deliver results.

"Our presence ensured regional stability and deterred adversaries," added Mahar. "The ARG-MEU team was ready at every turn to uphold peace, provide aid, and project strength where it was needed most, if called upon."

The deployment's success was underpinned by the ARG-MEU's operational flexibility and the integration of sea, air, and land assets, providing combatant commanders with a versatile contingency force.

"Deployments like these prove the critical role of forward-deployed amphibious forces," said Cooper. "We are a tangible

reminder of America's commitment to our Allies and partners and a powerful deterrent to any potential adversary."

The WSP ARG-24th MEU (SOC) team began deployment operations on June 1, 2024 following an extensive eight-month pre-deployment training program to certify the Navy and Marine Corps units for deployment. Together, the ARG-MEU is organized, trained, equipped, evaluated, and certified to conduct maritime expeditionary warfare and amphibious operations across the full range military operations. As a highly mobile, versatile, and integrated naval formation, the ARG-MEU offers geographic combatant commanders an organic combined arms force that remains forward deployed and capable of persistent competition.

The WSP ARG includes the Wasp, New York, and Oak Hill, with embarked units including Fleet Surgical Team 4, Tactical Air Control Squadron 22 Detachment 1, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28, and Beach Assault Unit 21. The 24th MEU (SOC) is a Marine Air Ground Task Force, comprised of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 (Reinforced) as the Aviation Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team 1/8 as the Ground Combat Element, Combat Logistics Battalion 24 as the Logistics Combat Element, and a command element as their higher headquarters.