

# Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group operates in 7th Fleet



An F-35B Lightning II, attached to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 242 takes off from the flight deck of America-class amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) during flight operations in the South China Sea, Dec. 11, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Angel Conde)

[Release From Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group](#)

U.S. 7th FLEET AREA OF OPERATIONS – The Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group, composed of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), America-class amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7), Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls (CG 62) and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Rafael Peralta (DDG 115), is conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, Dec. 11.

This marks Tripoli's initial forward-deployed assignment as the flagship for the Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group. The

group's presence promotes regional stability and maritime security in U.S. 7th Fleet.

"The Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group is maintaining peace and security in the Indo-Pacific while assuring access to the seas for all nations," said Rear Adm. Tom Shultz, commander of the Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group. "As the only permanently forward-deployed expeditionary strike group, our Navy and Marine Corps team's ability to operate in the air, on land, and sea, combined with anti-air warfare, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare capabilities allows us to support any contingency in the region."

The 31st MEU brings the ability to conduct a variety of joint, maritime and amphibious multi-domain operations and activities. They are permanently positioned to provide a flexible and combat-capable force to contribute to deterrence, security, crisis response and multi-domain military operations in the Indo-Pacific.

"The 31st MEU is flexible and responsive. We're forward deployed and have longstanding, habitual relationships with Amphibious Squadron 11, the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade and Special Operations Command Pacific," said Col. Chris Niedziocha, commanding officer of the 31st MEU. "Those relationships, coupled with the unit's high operational tempo ensure the MEU is always ready to respond to crises and campaign with our allies or fight tonight."

Embarked aboard Tripoli is a detachment of F-35B Lightning II aircraft from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 242, which provides the Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group more stealth and flexibility than any other aircraft. The Tripoli Expeditionary Strike Group is capable of conducting expeditionary warfare operations with Navy and Marine Corps capabilities to support theater contingencies that range from crisis response to full combat

operations. U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.