

U.S. 2nd Fleet Flexes Expeditionary Command and Control



Vice Adm. Andrew “Woody” Lewis, commander of the 2nd Fleet, speaks Feb. 4 at Maritime Security Dialogue, sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the U.S. Naval Institute. CSIS Via YouTube

WASHINGTON – The U.S. 2nd Fleet exercised its ability to operate expeditionary maritime operations centers in its run-up from initial to full operational capability, achieved in December, the fleet commander said.

Vice Adm. Andrew “Woody” Lewis, commander of the 2nd Fleet, who spoke here Feb. 4 at Maritime Security Dialogue sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the U.S. Naval Institute, said his staff deployed on board the USS Mount Whitney – traditionally the flagship of the U.S. 6th Fleet – to the Baltic Sea last year to command maritime forces in the BATLTOPS 19 exercise.

Lewis gave a second example where a mobile operations center with 30 personnel was deployed to Keflavik, Iceland, last month, to control operations of P-8 maritime patrol aircraft. The deployment tested the scalability of the fleet staff to run maritime operations centers from two locations.

He also dispatched a surface action group (SAG) to the Atlantic – the first to deploy to that ocean in more than a decade – elements of which operated in the Arctic region.

The 2nd Fleet was established in 2018 to operate in the North Atlantic in response to the growing Russian presence in the ocean in recent years. In the previous two decades, the East Coast ships mostly deployed to Europe and the Middle East.

"The Atlantic is a battlespace that can't be ignored," Lewis said, noting the increased Russian submarine presence and even a Russian icebreaker armed with Kalibr cruise missiles.

Lewis said he did not expect that his fleet would operate its own command ship soon but that he saw his staff eventually "having a kit to deploy with which we don't currently have," but that he needed the personnel to maintain it.

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Vice Adm. Andrew "Woody" Lewis

Lewis said that soon the fleet will deploy a mobile operations center at an expeditionary location in the U.S. homeland under the auspices of U.S. Northern Command and that the fleet staff would deploy afloat on a ship that was not a command ship.

Because of the Russian submarine threat, Lewis emphasized that the fleet is "re-learning" much of anti-submarine warfare (ASW).

"It's an all-domain integrated fight – in the air, on the surface, in the subsurface down to the seabed, and it's in space," he said. "It's a really hard challenge, a real varsity operation. And that's something we're getting back into, very much so."

Lewis also praised the ASW capabilities of the Navy's P-8 aircraft.