U.S. 2nd Fleet Forward Deploys for Steadfast Defender 2024



U.S. 2nd Fleet staff load luggage onto a Marine Corps C-40 aircraft departing for Bodø, Norway for Steadfast Defender 2024, at Naval Air Station Oceana, Va., Feb. 7, 2024. Steadfast Defender 2024, NATO's largest exercise in decades, will demonstrate NATO's ability to deploy forces rapidly from across the Alliance to reinforce the defense of Europe. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Anderson W. Branch)

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BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS RYAN SEELBACH, U.S. 2ND FLEET PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BODØ, Norway – A contingent of more than 100 U.S. 2nd Fleet and Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 2 personnel are forward

deployed to Bodø, Norway to establish a maritime command element, Commander Task Force North (CTF-N), in support of the NATO exercise Steadfast Defender 2024.

Rear Admiral David Patchell, vice commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, and Commander CTF North explained how large, multi-national exercises continue to solidify NATO's interoperability and readiness.

"Steadfast Defender is a chance to practice, to exercise, to come together, build relationships, and strengthen the readiness and unity that already exists," said Patchell. "NATO is stronger than it has ever been. This exercise represents another opportunity for over 90,000 sailors, aviators and soldiers to work together across the alliance."

Steadfast Defender 2024, NATO's largest exercise in decades, includes more than 90,000 troops from 31 allied nations, and Sweden. The exercise will demonstrate NATO's ability to deploy forces rapidly from across the Alliance to reinforce the defense of Europe. Within the CTF-N command center, there are currently eight allied nations that comprise the task force, and the numbers of personnel will grow as the exercise progresses.

The Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44), left Norfolk, Va., Jan. 24, 2024 as the first tactical movement of Steadfast Defender 24. Rear Admiral Benjamin Nicholson, commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 2 and deputy commander CTF-N, said that he is incredibly proud of the work the ship has done already.

"The ships' crew has already completed multiple training events and represented the United States as ambassadors during a port visit to Portsmouth, England," said Nicholson. "This exercise is about learning and teamwork. We will learn the tools and techniques to conduct future maritime operations and

further develop our tactics and training as a team with our Allies and partners.”

The CTF-North staff will conduct the full range of maritime operations in coordination with NATO Allies and partners operating out of Bodø Airbase.

“I’m thankful for the Sailors of U.S. 2nd Fleet, ESG-2 and all of our partners that are joining us. The commitment is outstanding, and you can see and you can feel the excitement, the readiness. This team is ready; ready to execute, ready to learn, ready to be creative and innovative as we go through this exercise.” said Patchell.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime forces ready to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

U.S. Navy photos and b-roll are available on DVIDS. For more information, contact c2f_pao@us.navy.mil.

Follow along with the exercise on social media by using #steadfastdefender24