

U.S. 4th Fleet Announces Southern Seas 2026 Deployment



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Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) will deploy to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's Southern Seas 2026 deployment.

Nimitz and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101) are scheduled to conduct passing exercises and operations at sea with partner nation maritime forces as the ships circumnavigate the continent of South America. Southern Seas 2026 will feature subject matter expert exchanges and provide the opportunity for distinguished visitors from partner nations to see aircraft carrier operations up close. Engagements are planned with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Uruguay, with port visits planned for Brazil, Chile, Panama, and Jamaica.

"The Southern Seas 2026 deployment provides a unique opportunity to enhance interoperability and increase proficiency with our partner-nation forces across the maritime domain," said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. "Deployments like this demonstrate our unwavering commitment to ensuring a secure and stable Western Hemisphere. This mission is a shining example of our dedication to strengthening maritime partnerships, building trust, and working together to counter shared threats."

"We look forward to continuing the Nimitz legacy of teamwork as we engage with and train alongside our regional partners," said Rear Adm. Cassidy Norman, commander, Carrier Strike Group 11.

Southern Seas 2026 marks the 11th iteration of the exercise to the region since 2007. Like the previous deployments, Southern Seas 2026 will foster goodwill, strengthen maritime partnerships, counter threats, and build our team.

Nimitz-class aircraft carriers are the pinnacle of mobile projection of naval air power and forward operational presence. No other weapons system has the responsiveness, endurance, multi-dimensional might, inherent battlespace

awareness, or command and control capabilities of a carrier strike group and embarked air wing.

The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group consists of Nimitz, its flagship; embarked staff of Carrier Strike Group 11; DESRON 9; embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17; and Gridley.

CVW 17 consists of six squadrons flying F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers, C-2A Greyhounds, and MH-60R/S Sea Hawks.

These squadrons include Helicopter Maritime Squadron (HSM) 73, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 6, Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 22, VFA-137, and Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 139.

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