

U.S. 4th Fleet Hosts Multinational Forces for PANAMAX 2026



MAYPORT, Fla. – U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet is hosting the Combined Force Maritime Component Command (CFMCC) portion of the annual exercise PANAMAX from Aug. 3-12.

Exercise PANAMAX 2026 is a U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)-sponsored exercise that provides crucial training

opportunities for partner nations to build the capability to plan and conduct complex multinational operations. PANAMAX enables allies and partner nations to advance the development and implementation of standard operating procedures for multinational operations. Under multiple scenarios involving both asymmetric and conventional threats, coalition forces will work together in support of shared regional interests.

“Securing the Western Hemisphere requires seamless cooperation and a unified effort between partner nations,” said Sardiello. “PANAMAX strengthens effective hemispheric command and control so that our combined forces can effectively secure strategic key terrain like the Panama Canal. Safeguarding this maritime crossroads is not just a regional defense priority, but a cornerstone of global economic stability.”

More than 150 Sailors, Marines, and public security forces from 19 separate nations will serve on the CFMCC staff under the leadership of U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Carlos Sardiello, Commander USNAVSOUTH.

This year’s exercise is designed to conduct stability operations in support of a fictitious United Nations Security Council resolution. It provides intensive interoperability training for participating multinational staff and builds partner nation capacity to plan and execute complex operations.

“PANAMAX 2026 is an unparalleled opportunity for partner nations to sharpen their tactical edge and deepen interoperability,” said Mr. Patrick Cooper, Lead Planner for PANAMAX 2026. “This exercise rigorously tests our integration, ensuring our combined forces are fully prepared for any future shared endeavors. In addition to the operational gains, the personal connections made among our partners in the AOR will pay dividends for a generation.”

PANAMAX delivers unique, simulated training opportunities

incorporating scripted, event-driven scenarios to maximize interoperability. These scenarios address key aspects of combined operations, such as technology standardization and shared operating procedures.

PANAMAX began in 2003 with three countries—Chile, Panama, and the United States—focusing solely on the maritime security of the Panama Canal. Since that time, it has grown to become the region's largest coalition command post exercise, ensuring the defense of one of the most strategically and economically crucial pieces of infrastructure in the world.

As the exercise host for the Joint Force Maritime Component Command, USNAVSOUTH/4th Fleet supports SOUTHCOM's joint and combined military operations. By employing maritime forces in cooperative security operations, the command maintains access, enhances interoperability, and builds enduring partnerships to promote peace, stability, and prosperity throughout the Caribbean, Central, and South American regions.