U.S. and Colombian Navies Reinforce Partnership at Maritime Staff Talks



Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, participates in an opening ceremony March 24, 2026 in Cartagena, Colombia. Sardiello, led the U.S. delegation for the annual Maritime Staff Talks, reaffirming the enduring partnership between the two nations and outlining a path for future collaboration in the maritime domain.

By Ensign Paul Archer, March 30, 2026

CARTAGENA, Colombia – Senior naval leaders from the United States and Colombia convened in Cartagena from April 24-27, 2026 for the annual Maritime Staff Talks (MST),

reaffirming the enduring partnership between the two nations and outlining a path for future collaboration in the maritime domain.

The U.S. delegation, led by Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, was hosted by the Chief of Naval Operations of the Colombian Navy, Vice Adm. Carlos Serrano. The tri-service U.S. contingent also included Maj. Gen. Douglas Clark, Deputy Commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South, along with representatives from the Joint Interagency Task Force South and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The talks focused on enhancing interoperability, deepening commitment to mutual security, and advancing a bilateral strategy to address shared challenges across the maritime environment. Key areas of discussion included leveraging upcoming multinational exercises such as PANAMAX and UNITAS to ensure seamless teamwork against common threats.

“The challenges we face in the maritime domain, stemming from illicit trafficking demand a unified response to ensure regional stability,” said Rear Adm. Sardiello. “Through these annual maritime staff talks, we continue to strengthen our partnership and expand operational commitments that increase our combined readiness and effectiveness across the maritime domain.”

As part of the MST, both the U.S. and Colombian delegations delivered presentations on their respective mission objectives and ongoing maritime operations. The agenda also included tours of the COTECMAR Shipyard, the Almirante Padilla Naval Academy, and other key naval facilities in Cartagena, providing the U.S. delegation with firsthand insight into Colombia’s naval capabilities and strategic infrastructure.

The event concluded with the signing of minutes by Rear Adm. Sardiello and Vice Adm. Serrano, formally documenting the key agreements reached and solidifying a collaborative path forward. Both leaders reiterated their shared commitment to the robust and lasting partnership between the United States and Colombia.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet serves as a trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central, and South American maritime forces, working to promote unity, security, and stability throughout the region.