

U.S., Italian Navies Conduct First Indo-Pacific Multi-Large Deck Event



Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and Cavour Carrier Strike Group sail in formation. The United States Navy and the Italian Navy held the first-ever bilateral Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE) in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jerome D. Johnson)

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PACIFIC OCEAN – The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and the Cavour Carrier Strike Group concluded the first-ever bilateral Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE) held in the Indo-Pacific by the U.S. Navy and Italian Navy, Aug. 9.

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MLDE provides the ships and aircrafts of the two naval forces, comprised of more than 7,500 U.S. and Italian Sailors and Marines, an opportunity to engage in joint operations including enhanced maritime communication operations, air warfare operations and cross-deck flight operations to strengthen maritime integrated-at-sea operations and combat readiness.

“This was a great opportunity to operate with our close NATO Ally, Italy, in the Indo-Pacific. Our efforts are critical in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific region,” said Rear Adm. Adan Cruz, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3. “Interoperability does not just happen, it is practiced and rehearsed across our teams to build the relations and connections necessary to successfully conduct an MLDE.”

During the event, Adm. Cruz hosted Rear Adm. Giancarlo Ciappina, commander, Cavour Carrier Strike Group, aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), flagship of CSG 3 for a visit focused on building interoperability.

“The activity with CSG 3 at sea is an excellent opportunity to enhance our capabilities in Multi Carrier Operations, demonstrating the interoperability of the NATO Alliance worldwide, strengthening our ability to work together and improving our common resilience,” said Ciappina, commander, Cavour Carrier Strike Group. “Conducting this type of activity is one of the strategic objectives of our operational deployment, ensuring security at sea and promoting economic prosperity through a free and open Indo Pacific.”

Participating ships in the MLDE included Nimitz-Class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121), Italian aircraft carrier ITS Cavour

and Italian Frigate ITS Alpino (F 594).

Participating aircraft included MH-60S and MH-60R Sea Hawks, F/A-18E & F Super Hornets, E/A-18G Growlers, F-35C Lightning II, and E-2D Hawkeye, all assigned to Carrier Air Wing 9; and Italian F-35B Lightning II assigned to Cavour Carrier Strike Group.

Prior to the commencement of the MLDE, Cruz and Ciappina conducted a conditions check via virtual teleconference to ensure all participants were ready in the evening, Aug. 8. The exercise started with liaison officers transferring around the Strike Group to ensure communication flow across the vessels and visit with crews. Following the liaison officer exchange, the ships coordinated flight operations and ship maneuvers to practice coordinated operations, Aug. 9.

“I wish to truly thank Adm. Cruz and all of the CSG 3 crews for the outstanding professionalism they showed us and for their willingness and commitment in putting our forces together in such an effective and profitable cooperation,” concluded Ciappina.

Coordinated maritime engagements and operations are part of the U.S. Navy’s routine presence in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. naval forces, with our network of partners and alliances, are indispensable to ensuring maritime security and the flow of unimpeded lawful commerce in the region.

“It is an honor to work with our NATO Allies in the Indo-Pacific,” said Cruz. “I am grateful to Rear Adm. Ciappina and his entire crew for the superb professionalism and coordination in bringing this event to life.”

The last time CSG 3 participated in an MLDE dates back to January 2022 in the South China Sea with the Carl Vinson Strike Group, but this marks the first MLDE with the Italian

Navy in the Indo Pacific.

CSG-3 is deployed to the Indo-Pacific to maintain regional security and stability, keep sea lanes open, and to train to increase combined readiness. Along with our network of allies and partners, U.S. naval forces are indispensable to ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded lawful commerce.

CSG-3 consists of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9, and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, which includes Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS O'Kane (DDG 77), USS Stockdale (DDG 106), USS Spruance (DDG 111), USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) and USS Frank E. Peterson Jr. (DDG 121).

CVW-9 consists of an F-35C squadron, the "Black Knights" of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314; three F/A-18E/F Super Hornet squadrons, the "Tophatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 14; "Black Aces" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 41, the "Vigilantes" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 151; "Wizards" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 133, operating the EA-18G Growler; "Wallbangers" of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 117, operating the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye; "Chargers" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 14 operating the MH-60S Sea Hawk; and "Raptors" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 71, operating the MH-60R Sea Hawk.

Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group is currently conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.