

# U.S. Navy Ships Support Disaster Relief Operations in Venezuela



VENEZUELA (June 27, 2026) U.S. Sailors and Marines, with Littoral Combat Force 24, unload Meals, Ready-to-Eat boxes from Landing Craft Utility (LCU) 1662, assigned to Assault Craft Unit (ACU) 2, in La Guaira, Venezuela, June 27, 2026. At the direction of U.S. Southern Command, assigned U.S. military forces are supporting Department of State-led U.S. disaster assistance to the people of Venezuela in the aftermath of the June 24, 2026, earthquakes. (U.S. Navy photo) By LTJG Paul Archer, July 2, 2026

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela – At the direction of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and the Department of War, assigned U.S. military forces are actively supporting Department of State-led disaster assistance to the people of Venezuela following the devastating earthquakes on June 24. The San Antonio-class

amphibious transport dock USS Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28) and Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Billings (LCS 15) have arrived in the region to provide rapid, life-saving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

Marking the first visit by a U.S. Navy vessel to Venezuela in decades, Fort Lauderdale safely arrived pierside in La Guaira on the evening of June 28. The historic port call, executed at the direct request of the Venezuelan government, was preceded by U.S. Sailors and Marines delivering critically needed disaster relief supplies to the port via landing craft.

“Being directed at a moment’s notice to transit into Venezuela presented a vast number of unknowns, but the one absolute certainty was the unmatched professionalism and work ethic of the Fort Lauderdale team,” said Capt. Jiwan Mack, commanding officer of USS Fort Lauderdale. “We were able to safely arrive pierside and deliver immediate assistance to the Venezuelan people because of the incredible dedication of our crew.”

The presence of embarked Sailors and Marines is strictly humanitarian. As a highly capable and self-sustaining platform designed for extended expeditionary operations, Fort Lauderdale requires minimal local security, logistical support or port resources while pierside. This minimal footprint ensures that all local Venezuelan assets can remain entirely focused on domestic recovery efforts.

Beyond cargo transport, Fort Lauderdale brings advanced onboard medical facilities, heavy-lift capabilities and robust command-and-control infrastructure. Functioning as a primary coordination hub, the ship recently hosted the Venezuelan chargé d’affaires and serves as a vital communications node. This enables SOUTHCOM to work seamlessly with the State Department, interagency partners and interim Venezuelan authorities to direct rapid relief operations across the

affected areas.

In support of the ongoing relief efforts, U.S. Navy aviation assets are executing critical operations across the region, with a significant emphasis on the vital contributions of Billings. Operating in Venezuelan territorial waters, Billings has delivered essential search and rescue support utilizing its embarked helicopters from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 48. Concurrently, Fort Lauderdale has bolstered these aviation capabilities; while operating in the Caribbean Sea on June 27, embarked U.S. Marines provided crucial flight support by signaling a UH-1Y Venom helicopter assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 365 (Reinforced).

“Our naval forces are organized, equipped and trained for rapid response to any global situation, making us uniquely capable of executing foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief on short notice,” said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “These crucial, immediate relief efforts underscore our enduring commitment to being good neighbors, proving that even in times of severe crisis, we are dedicated to the safety, security and prosperity of our citizens, interests, allies and regional partners.”

Planning for additional U.S. military support is ongoing in close coordination with the State Department, the Venezuelan government, and other international partners and allies contributing to the relief effort. Further support measures will be announced once confirmed.