

U.S., Sri Lanka Navy kick off 6th iteration of CARAT Sri Lanka



U.S. Navy Capt. Michael Messenger, deputy commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 7, gives opening remarks at the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Sri Lanka 2026 opening ceremony in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, July 27, 2026. This year marks the 32nd iteration of CARAT, a multinational exercise series designed to enhance U.S. and partner navies' abilities to operate together in response to shared maritime security challenges in the region. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communications Specialist Mike Wright)

TRINCOMALEE, Sri Lanka – Sailors and maritime forces from the United States and Sri Lanka convened in Trincomalee, July 27, for an opening ceremony to commence the sixth iteration of Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Sri Lanka.

Now in its 32nd year, CARAT is a multinational maritime

exercise series designed to promote regional security cooperation, maintain and strengthen maritime partnerships, and enhance interoperability among participating forces. First held in 2017, the last iteration of CARAT Sri Lanka took place in 2024 between the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and Sri Lanka Navy. During this year's iteration, U.S. forces continue to expand and build upon our joint interoperability with the Sri Lanka Navy, reinforcing our shared commitment to the peace and stability of the region.

This year's multi-domain U.S. force includes a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon multi-mission maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft from Commander, Task Force (CTF) 72 alongside personnel from Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7, CTF-73, CTF-76, and Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific. A U.S. Coast Guard maritime engagement team will also participate in the exercise at sea to refine visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) skills using a rigid-hull inflatable boat recently transferred by the United States to the Sri Lanka Navy.

"On behalf of the U.S. Navy, I want to thank our Sri Lanka Navy partners for hosting CARAT Sri Lanka 2026," said U.S. Navy Capt. Michael Messenger, deputy commander, CTF 76. "This exercise is a highlight of our long-standing relationship. Through collaborative, shore- and sea-based training and expert exchanges, we share valuable skills and enhance our interoperability to support our shared commitment to maritime security and a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Ashore, CARAT Sri Lanka will foster relationships through a series of engagements, consisting of a bilateral sports day, a community service project, and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and Sri Lankan service members. Additionally, classroom subject matter expert exchanges (SMEEs) and practical education serials will be held, focusing on critical capabilities such as maritime domain awareness (MDA), tactical medicine, and explosive ordnance disposal.

At sea, the teams will apply the knowledge and skills from the SMEEs to enhance interoperability between the nations in MDA and bolster VBSS capabilities.

“Since its inception, CARAT has become a cornerstone of maritime cooperation between the Sri Lanka Navy and the United States Navy...” said Sri Lanka Navy Rear Adm. Buddhika Liyanagamage, Eastern Naval Area Commander. “This exercise once again brings together all of us to enhance interoperability, exchange professionalism and strength our collective readiness to address evolving maritime challenges.”

CARAT Sri Lanka is part of the greater exercise series designed to enhance U.S. and partner navies’ abilities to operate together in response to shared maritime challenges in the region.

As the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed DESRON in Southeast Asia, DESRON-7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of assigned ships deployed to the Southeast Asia area of operations.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.