

UNITAS Concludes After Successful Exercise



Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, Rear Adm. Jim Aiken, congratulates participants for their performance at the UNITAS LXIII Closing Ceremony in Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 22. *U.S. NAVY / Cmdr. Myers Vasquez*

RIO DE JANEIRO – UNITAS LXIII (63), the world's longest-running multinational maritime exercise concluded with a closing ceremony in Rio De Janeiro on Sept. 22, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command / U.S. 4th Fleet said in a release.

UNITAS, Latin for “unity,” was conceived in 1959, first executed in 1960 and held every year since. This year marked the 63rd iteration of the world's longest-running annual multinational maritime exercise.

This year's exercise was hosted by the Brazilian navy and included 19 warships/vessels, one submarine and 21 aircraft that conducted scenario-driven joint and combined operations and training in and off the coast of Rio De Janeiro. The exercise coincided with Brazil's bicentennial, a historical milestone commemorating 200 years of the country's independence and the birth of their navy.

"It is exciting to see 19 nations from across Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa participating in UNITAS," said Rear Adm. Jim Aiken, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. "This exercise is a demonstration of not only our commitment to the region, but also the strong relationships forged between our nations. The Western Hemisphere is our shared home and exercises like UNITAS reinforce our permanent geographical and cultural ties, connecting us to our shared history and our shared future."

Navy and marine forces from Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, South Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, Uruguay and the United States participated in the exercise.

While the overarching goal was to develop and test command and control of forces at-sea, training in this exercise addressed the spectrum of maritime operations. Specifically, there were scenarios addressing electronic warfare, anti-air warfare and air defense, anti-surface warfare, live fire, maritime interdiction, littoral operations and amphibious operations.

"One of the main benefits of UNITAS is the ability of all participating nations to train together, and exchange ideas and tactics," said Capt. Meger Chappell, deputy commander, Destroyer Squadron 40, and deputy commander, UNITAS Task Group 138.20. "Over the course of the exercise I saw firsthand how the participating nations came together as a multinational

task force to meet all objectives. Together we have strengthened our maritime partnerships, enhanced our proficiency and improved our collaboration and interoperability.”

The exercise progressed in phases, beginning in port with sporting events and community relations projects to build relations between partner nations.

The at-sea phase included a multi-threat, multi-day scenario that allowed participants to work together, further increasing preparedness for real-world crises that would require a multinational force response effort. Events included: surface tactical maneuvers, illegal drug trafficking training, live-fire exercises, anti-submarine warfare exercises, air defense exercises and maritime interdiction operations.

The amphibious phase included U.S. Marines with partner nations taking positions at areas along the coast to train in support of greater naval operations. This phase also consisted of landing from naval vessels.