

# USNS Choctaw County Arrives in Lebanon for First-Ever Central Partnership Station



Sailors assigned to Coastal Riverine Squadron 10 enforce a security zone around the Military Sealift Command expeditionary fast transport vessel USNS Choctaw County (T-EPF-2) in the Gulf of Tadjoura, Djibouti Feb. 10, 2016. *U.S. NAVY / Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Perry Lafoe*

BEIRUT – Expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Choctaw County (T-EPF 2) arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, Sept. 20, to participate in U.S. Naval Forces Central Command's (NAVCENT) first-ever Central Partnership Station (CPS) mission, the command said in a Sept. 21 release.

The CPS mission in Lebanon is designed to build partner capacity through subject-matter-expert exchanges, enhancing interoperability and the military-to-military relationship between the U.S. Navy and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

"This is a new opportunity for the U.S. Navy to work with our Lebanese counterparts," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of NAVCENT, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "We are ushering in a new era of strengthening and expanding capacity building across the region."

The mission includes a series of subject matter expert exchanges between LAF and NAVCENT personnel on mine countermeasures, disaster response, public health and construction capabilities.

U.S. forces working alongside their LAF counterparts include the Choctaw County, explosive ordnance disposal technicians and Navy divers, a medical and health engagement team, and a Seabee construction battalion. Seabees are constructing a

maritime security support facility with LAF engineers.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses nearly 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The region is comprised of 21 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab-al-Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.