

USNS Trenton Completes Gulf of Guinea Deployment



Military Sealift Command's expeditionary fast transport ship, USNS Trenton (EPF 5) gets underway from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Dec. 20. *U.S. NAVY / Bill Mesta* MALAGA, Spain – The Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport USNS Trenton (T-EPF 5) arrived in Malaga, Spain, following a two-month deployment to the Gulf of Guinea, Aug. 28, 2022, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Public Affairs said Aug. 30.

The deployment demonstrates the U.S. commitment to strengthening maritime security as well as peace and stability within the region. From July to August, Trenton conducted regional maritime presence operations and enriched valued relationships with African partners from Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Morocco and Sierra Leone.

“Our combined military and civilian crew executed their mission with professionalism and enthusiasm, which demonstrated the United States’ steadfast commitment to our partner nations,” said Cmdr. Tim Rustico, officer in charge of Trenton.

Trenton’s deployment also included tri-service maritime efforts within the U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) area of operations. While deployed, Marines assigned to Task Force 61 Naval Amphibious Forces Europe-2d Marine Division (TF-61/2) embarked Trenton to provide in-port security assistance and to continue bolstering integrated maritime operations between the sea services.

“I’m incredibly proud of Trenton’s professional execution during their deployment, where they worked with our partners, developed logistical nodes, and expanded maritime domain awareness in Western Africa,” said Capt. Kenneth Pickard, commodore, Task Force 63. “Trenton’s efforts laid the groundwork for continued presence and partnership in the Gulf of Guinea.”

Over the last decade, the United States has steadily increased maritime security cooperation with partners on Africa’s Atlantic coast to improve maritime domain awareness capability to protect their sovereign waters.

Earlier this month, NAVAF and the Royal Danish Navy jointly hosted the Maritime Operations Planning Workshop (MOPW) in Accra, Ghana for West African partners from 14 nations. MOPW allowed junior officers from African navies and coast guards to exchange operational planning experiences, develop templates for use during exercises, and plan real-world operations.

In July 2022, NAVAF participated in the Naval Infantry Leaders Symposium-Africa (NILS-A) in Dakar, Senegal with maritime partners and allies. NILS-A is a multinational, Africa-focused

forum designed to bring together partner nations with Marine forces and naval infantry.

In March 2022, NAVAF hosted exercise Obangame Express, the largest multinational maritime exercise in Western Africa. These types of exercises strengthen partnerships and allow countries to work more closely on shared transnational maritime challenges including collaborative efforts in support of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and adherence to the rule of law.

In 2013, Gulf of Guinea coastal nations developed and signed the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, a key agreement to improve maritime interoperability. This powerful framework established objectives and improved inter-region coastal relationships and joint capabilities that have reduced illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea.

The U.S. shares a common interest with African partner nations in ensuring security, safety, and freedom of navigation on the waters surrounding the continent, because these waters are critical for Africa's prosperity and access to global markets.