USS Donald Cook Concludes Forward Deployment to U.S. 6th Fleet



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) departed Naval Station Rota, Spain, for the last time as a Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe (FDNF-E) destroyer, June 30, 2021. *U.S. NAVY*

ROTA, Spain – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) departed Naval Station Rota, Spain, for the last time as a Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe (FDNF-E) destroyer, June 30, 2021, said Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaila Peters, in a July 6 U.S. 6th Fleet release.

USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51), the lead ship of its class of Aegis-equipped guided missile destroyers with the latest AEGIS baseline 9 upgrade, replaced Donald Cook in the second of four

scheduled homeport shifts to occur in support of the U.S. Navy's long-range plan to gradually rotate the Rota-based destroyers. USS Roosevelt (DDG 80) replaced USS Carney (DDG 64) in the first homeport shift.

"These Sailors distinguished themselves throughout their five years deployed overseas," said Capt. Joseph Gagliano, Commander, Destroyers Squadron 60 and Task Force 65. "Their contribution to NATO security and freedom of navigation is a legacy that will now continue with Arleigh Burke."

Donald Cook bookended its operations in U.S. 6th Fleet by conducting operations in the Black Sea.

Upon arrival in U.S. 6th Fleet in 2014 as one of the first Rota-based FDNF-E destroyers under Commander, Task Force (CTF) 65, Donald Cook executed operational tasking immediately by conducting operations in the Black Sea following Russia's annexation of Crimea. After 11 patrols and numerous visits to the Black Sea, the ship wrapped up its last visit to the Black Sea in support of NATO Allies and regional partners, Feb. 10, 2021. During this last visit, Donald Cook conducted presence operations, demonstrated commitment to NATO allies and partners, and engaged in exercises that strengthened interoperability and collective readiness.

Donald Cook's commitment to NATO Allies and regional partners extended well beyond the Black Sea. During its time in Europe, Donald Cook operated from the Barents Sea above Europe, to the Gulf of Guinea along the west coast of Africa.

"Donald Cook's time in 6th Fleet has afforded this ship and her crew a number of invaluable experiences that are unique to this area of operation to include operating in the Black Sea, crossing the Arctic Circle, and a multitude of international operations," said Cmdr. Matthew Curnen, Donald Cook's commanding officer. "My time in 6th Fleet has been unlike anything else I've experienced in my naval career. I am

extremely thankful for the opportunities and challenges it has presented that have helped all of us grow professionally and personally."

The agility and capabilities of the Arleigh Burke class destroyer has made it an ideal platform to integrate and strengthen relations with regional allies and partners.

Throughout Donald Cook's time in U.S. 6th Fleet, the ship participated in previous iterations of Exercise Sea Breeze, BALTOPs, Phoenix Express, Formidable Shield, Atlas Handshake, and other multi-lateral maritime training opportunities with partners to include Algeria, France, Georgia, Italy, Morocco and Norway. Mission sets during these exercises included surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, and anti-air warfare scenarios that focus on maintaining maritime stability and security.

Notable milestones include Donald Cook's Oct. 2019 visit to the High North for the first time. The ship's presence in the Arctic Circle reinforced the United States' commitment to regional security and stability, as well as the Navy's ability to deploy to many different environments on short notice, and the value of having forward-deployed naval forces available to operate in the region.

The visit also provided the crew the rare opportunity to become "Blue Nose" Sailors when the ship crossed into the Arctic Circle, a Navy tradition that only Sailors who have been to the Arctic can claim. Donald Cook's time in the High North followed a historic port visit to the Faroe Islands, with Donald Cook being the Navy's first destroyer to visit the island, and the first Navy vessel to visit in 33 years.

"It has been a bittersweet departure from Rota," said Operations Specialist Second Class Jory Fetterolf. "My time in Spain has been an amazing opportunity to experience a different culture and afforded me the opportunity to travel to

places I would’ve never seen if I wasn’t stationed here, however, I’m excited to return to the Unites States to be closer to family.”

Donald Cook completed one final underway to the Aegean Sea to perform maneuver exercises with the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Roosevelt (DDG 80) to conclude its last patrol. The two destroyers formed a Surface Action Group (SAG) led by Capt. Joseph Gagliano, commander, Task Force 65, who was embarked on the Roosevelt during this underway. The SAG conducted numerous scenarios to provide integrated training and test real-time response to combat situations.

Named after U.S. Marine Corps Col. Donald G. Cook, a prisoner of War during the Vietnam War who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, Donald Cook is scheduled to return to its former homeport of Mayport, Florida.

Forward-Deployed Naval Forces-Europe ships have the flexibility to operate throughout the waters of Europe and Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Arctic Circle, demonstrating their mastery of the maritime domain.

CTF 65 and Destroyer Squadron 60, headquartered in Rota, Spain, oversee the FDNF of C6F’s area of operation in support of regional allies and partners as well as U.S. national security interests in Europe and Africa.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S. national interests and security and stability in Europe and Africa.