

USS Gabrielle Giffords Seizes Drugs, Tests New Concept During Deployment



The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) transits the Pacific Ocean while conducting flight operations, Oct. 20, 2020. Gabrielle Giffords is deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations to support Joint Interagency Task Force South's mission, which includes counter illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Allen Michael Amani

AT SEA – The Independence Class Littoral Combat Ship USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10) is conducting enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the U.S. Fourth Fleet area of operations and has seen great success since arriving on station in October, the U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet Public Affairs Office said in a Nov. 4 release.

The ship has proven to be an invaluable asset through strengthening partnerships while also improving interoperability with U.S. forces in the region.

"U.S. Fourth Fleet is refining globally relevant processes supporting forward deployment," said Rear Adm. Don Gabrielson, commander U.S. 4th Fleet/U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command. "This team is partnered across the Navy testing new approaches that can refine and improve LCS operations. These concepts are expanding LCS operational reach, increasing operational availability, and enhancing engagement with our partners."

Gabrielle Giffords recently completed a routine Planned Maintenance Availability executed by 24 Sailors from the Maintenance Execution Team deployed onboard the USNS

Burlington (T-EPF 10), an afloat staging base deployed as a testbed to support new concepts for expeditionary LCS maintenance and support. Several concepts show promise.

"We are able to demonstrate our capabilities on a daily basis," said Cmdr. Rion Martin, USS Gabrielle Giffords' commanding officer. "I'm extremely proud of our efforts. This week, we were able to demonstrate our advance warfighting capabilities with the use of our Mk110 57mm gun when we conducted a sinking exercise on an unmanned vessel that was determined to be a hazard to navigation."

To date, Gabrielle Giffords, with an embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment team, has seized over 2,200 of suspected cocaine worth an estimated wholesale value of \$83.2 million dollars supporting enhanced counter-narcotics operations.

Additionally, Gabrielle Giffords conducted at-sea replenishment with a partner nation oiler, and a cooperative deployment with five ships from the Salvadoran Navy in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Their operations enhanced maritime domain awareness and warfighting partnership.

Gabrielle Giffords also worked with the "Winged Warriors" of 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment to complete MH-60L Black Hawk flight deck landing qualifications in support of Joint Task Force-Bravo's mission, ready to support humanitarian and civic assistance, counterdrug, contingency and disaster relief operations in Central America.

Both Gabrielle Giffords and Burlington will participate in the upcoming UNITAS LXI exercise hosted by Ecuador, the longest-running multinational maritime exercise in the world, building and exercising regional maritime readiness. UNITAS brings together like-minded nations to hone warfighting skills and ensure readiness to quickly assemble an effective team in a crisis.