

USS Ross Completes 11th Patrol in U.S. 6th Fleet, Returns to Rota, Spain



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71) returned to Naval Station Rota, Spain, following completion of its 11th Forward-Deployed Naval Forces (FDF) patrol in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, July 26, 2021. *U.S. NAVY*

ROTA, Spain – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71) returned to Naval Station Rota, Spain, following completion of its 11th Forward-Deployed Naval Forces (FDF) patrol in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, July 26, 2021, Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Claire DuBois of the U.S. 6th Fleet said in a July 27 release.

Ross departed Rota on April 9, marking the beginning of patrol 11 to conduct naval operations in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national security interests in Europe and Africa.

Patrol 11 began with Ross's participation in Fleet Operational Sea Training (FOST), a two-week British-led exercise designed to evaluate and increase the warfighting abilities of any allied navies who participate. During FOST, Ross Sailors participated in multiple general quarters drills, man-overboard drills, combat simulations, and other training scenarios.

After FOST, Ross moved on to the North Sea, and then on to the Hebrides Range to take part in Exercise At-Sea Demo/Formidable Shield (ASD/FS) in early June. During ASD/FS, Ross fired an SM-2 missile at an air target simulating incoming fire, proving the ship's ability to conduct ballistic-missile defense.

"Our Sailors have met every challenge to meet mission and successfully complete patrol," said Cmdr. John D. John, commanding officer of Ross. "I'm excited to get everyone home safe so we can reconnect with our loved ones."

After successful completion of ASD/FS, Ross moved south and joined the Moroccan-led exercise African Lion. This included multiple surface navigation exercises, as well as several weapon shoots with participating ships.

Following African Lion, Ross transited to the Mediterranean Sea, and made a stop in Souda Bay, Greece. In Greece, Sailors had a few days to experience their first liberty port since the COVID-19 pandemic began, exploring the area while adhering to local COVID-19 safety restrictions.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to see the world again and experience different cultures," said Quartermaster 2nd Class Zach Lober, "It was one of the reasons I joined the Navy, so I'm happy to have that part of the experience back."

In late June, Ross departed Greece and transited to the Black Sea, making a stop in Odesa, Ukraine to mark the beginning of its participation in Exercise Sea Breeze.

During Sea Breeze, Ross conducted surface navigation exercises, weapon shoot evolutions, and many other exercises with participating ships from 30 countries. Ross Sailors spent the Fourth of July in port, celebrating Independence Day and recognizing Ukrainian Navy Day with other Sea Breeze participants. Ross also had the opportunity to host Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy aboard the ship for a tour.

“It was an honor to pipe the president of Ukraine on board,” said Boatswain’s Mate 3rd Class Sean Van Horn, who was part of the receiving line. “It was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and I am privileged to have done it.”

After Sea Breeze, Ross moved on to Varna, Bulgaria, to begin participating in the Bulgarian-led exercise Breeze. During Breeze, Ross was able to take part in various exercises, including surface navigation, with 13 other NATO Allies and partners.

Following Breeze, Ross transited back to the Mediterranean Sea, beginning its journey back to Rota for the end of patrol. During this time, Ross conducted qualifications, firing its Mark 45 5-inch gun and crew-served weapons, and held a “steel beach” picnic on the ship’s flight deck.

Ross, forward-deployed to Rota, Spain, operates in support of U.S. national security interests in the Sixth Fleet area of operations.

Four U.S. Navy destroyers are based in Rota, Spain, and assigned to Commander, Task Force 65 in support of NATO’s Integrated Air Missile Defense architecture. These Forward-Deployed Naval Forces-Europe ships have the flexibility to operate throughout the waters of Europe and Africa, from Cape of Good Hope to the Arctic Circle, demonstrating their mastery of the maritime domain.