USS San Antonio Assumes Relief Mission in Venezuela



San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS San Antonio (LPD 17) sails into the port of La Guaira, Venezuela, July 9, 2026. At the direction of U.S. Southern Command, assigned U.S. military forces are supporting Department of State-led U.S. disaster assistance to the people of Venezuela in the aftermath of the June 24, 2026, earthquakes. Photo credit: U.S. Marine Corps.

VENEZUELA – Demonstrating an unwavering commitment to ongoing disaster relief efforts, the amphibious transport dock USS San Antonio (LPD 17) arrived pierside in La Guaira on Thursday, July 9, 2026. The San Antonio seamlessly relieved the USS Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28) as the primary maritime component center in support of the Department of State-led humanitarian assistance mission following the devastating June 24 earthquakes.

Following Fort Lauderdale's historic arrival on June 28 – the

first U.S. Navy port call to Venezuela in decades – San Antonio will now assume duties as the primary afloat coordination hub and carry-on sustained recovery efforts. The ship's robust command-and-control infrastructure enables U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) to work seamlessly with the State Department, interagency partners, and Venezuelan authorities to distribute resources and direct rapid relief operations across the affected zones.

"The Sailors and Marines of USS Fort Lauderdale and Littoral Combat Force-24 have worked tirelessly to deliver humanitarian assistance to the people of Venezuela," said Capt. Jiwan Mack, commanding officer of USS Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28). " Our Navy-Marine Corps team remains ready to respond rapidly to emerging crisis, and I am confident that Capt. Uhl and the crew of USS San Antonio will continue the meaningful work that we have initiated."

The continuous presence of a San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock in port is a critical force multiplier for the interagency relief operation. Designed for extended, self-sustaining operations, the warship requires minimal local security, logistical support, or port resources. This approach ensures that all local Venezuelan assets can remain entirely focused on domestic recovery rather than supporting the U.S. presence.

Beyond serving as a communications node, San Antonio brings advanced onboard medical facilities, an expansive flight deck to support ongoing rotary-wing search and rescue operations, and a well deck capable of launching amphibious landing craft to deliver heavy cargo and vital supplies directly to damaged coastal infrastructure.

"We are prepared to continue the vital mission that USS Fort Lauderdale began," said Capt. Tom Uhl, commanding officer of USS San Antonio. "The presence of USS San Antonio and Littoral Combat Force 24 in La Guaira represents more than just a

transition of ships; it demonstrates the resolve and inherent capabilities of the Navy-Marine Corps team in supporting Department of State-led disaster response efforts to bring relief to the Venezuelan people.”

The transition between the two U.S. Navy vessels was executed safely and efficiently, with San Antonio immediately integrating with U.S. aviation assets already operating in the region, including elements of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 48 and Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 365 (Reinforced).

At the direction of U.S. Southern Command, assigned U.S. military forces are supporting Department of State-led U.S. disaster assistance to the people of Venezuela in the aftermath of the June 24, 2026, earthquakes. Planning for continued U.S. military support remains ongoing in close coordination with the State Department, the Venezuelan government, and international partners contributing to the relief effort.