

Ford Strike Group Strengthens Interoperability with Italy



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IONIAN SEA – The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) concluded a series of high-end training events with Italian naval forces in the Ionian Sea, Oct. 4, 2023, to increase interoperability as NATO allies and strengthen regional stability in the Mediterranean region.

“This opportunity to train with the Italian Navy again builds on our previous interactions during our current deployment and strengthens our interoperability skills as members of NATO,” said Rear Adm. Erik Eslich, Commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12. “The exercise demonstrates our continued commitment to promote our shared interests of security, stability, and prosperity in the region and I am proud of our collective work to sustain this effort.”

The world’s largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60), the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Ramage (DDG 61), and squadrons assigned to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 participated with Italian Navy flagship ITS Cavour (CVH 550), Italian Orizzonte-class guided-missile destroyer ITS Caio Duilio (D 554), and Italian Bergamini-class guided-missile frigate ITS Virginio Fasan (F 591).

The bilateral training events included multi-ship formation sails, cross-deck personnel training, helicopter cross-deck

evolutions, various simulated defense exercises and airborne interoperability exercises between CVW-8 assets and ITS Cavour airwing.

“I am beyond proud of the work and training the Italian Carrier Strike Group has executed together with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group throughout their deployment. It has reinforced the interoperability and interchangeability within our naval forces and air assets, vital to the alliance. Our current multi-carrier operations continue to promote our shared dedication to the security and freedom of the seas in the Wider Mediterranean region” said RADM Giacinto Sciandra, Commander, Second Naval Division/Italian Maritime Forces.

Sailors assigned to Gerald R. Ford and Normandy participated in cross-deck evolutions with their foreign counterparts aboard Cavour and Duilio, further enhancing mutual understanding of operations and capabilities.

The GRFCSG is conducting a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) area of operations in support of interoperability and maritime security. The GRFCSG provides an inherently flexible naval force capable of deploying across combatant commands to meet emerging missions, deter potential adversaries, reassure allies and partners, enhance security and guarantee the free flow of global commerce. In total, the GRFCSG is deployed with more than 5,000 Sailors across all platforms ready to respond globally to combatant commander tasking.

Gerald R. Ford is the U.S. Navy’s newest and most advanced aircraft carrier. As the first-in-class ship of Ford-class aircraft carriers, CVN 78 represents a generational leap in the U.S. Navy’s capacity to project power on a global scale.

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.

For more information about USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), visit <https://www.airlant.usff.navy.mil/cvn78/> and follow along on Facebook: @USSGeraldRFord, Instagram: @cvn78_grford, Twitter: @Warship_78, DVIDS www.dvids.net/ CVN78 and LinkedIn at USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78).