

Hershel “Woody” Williams Delivers Supplies to Türkiye



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From Petty Officer 2nd Class Conner Blake

MERSIN, Türkiye – USS Hershel “Woody” Williams (ESB 4) arrived in Mersin, Türkiye, Feb. 28, to deliver disaster relief supplies to Turkish officials for those affected by the Feb. 6 earthquakes.

The role of U.S. military forces during this disaster relief mission is to rapidly respond to the natural disaster with critically needed capabilities and life-saving equipment, delivering assistance to aid areas the government of Türkiye deems necessary. Hershel “Woody” Williams’ arrival to Mersin demonstrates a continued commitment to successfully completing that mission.

While operating in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, the Hershel “Woody” Williams’ crew took on over 100 pallets of supplies consisting of hygiene products, clothes, blankets, cots, comfort kits and more.

“To be able to execute this mission really rounds out the mission set the Navy has to offer,” said Lt. Micah Gustafson, Hershel “Woody” Williams Gold military crew (milcrew) supply officer.

After coordinating with Commander, Task Force 63 (CTF-63), the crew was tasked with organizing the pallets so the supplies could be expeditiously delivered to those in need.

“We sorted through and took inventory of the supplies so everything can be delivered as fast as possible to the areas and people who need the aid,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Kyle Son Smith. “This crew is working long hours to execute this mission and we feel honored to have the opportunity to help the people of Türkiye. Everyone has showed a great deal of unity during this mission and I am proud to be a part of it.”

As the crew offloaded the supplies for the Turkish people, Capt. Lenard Mitchell, Hershel “Woody” Williams Gold milcrew commanding officer, said he is proud of the commitment his Sailors have demonstrated while embracing this mission for the greater good.

“Woody’s warriors always stand ready to answer the call to work with our Allies,” said Mitchell.

Following a 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Türkiye on Feb. 6, 2023, U.S. military forces assigned to U.S. European Command are providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in support of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), and the international community to Turkish people during this tragedy.

Hershel “Woody” Williams is forward-deployed to the U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) area of operations, while employed by U.S. Sixth Fleet. The ship is capable of conducting humanitarian and disaster relief operations, as well as

supporting a variety of rotary wing aircraft. Hershel "Woody" Williams' unique capabilities are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to support global missions.

Task Force 63 is headquartered at Naples, Italy. Composed of oilers, provision ships, and repair ships, its mission is the delivery of supplies at sea, and effecting repairs to other ships and equipment of the Fleet. Commander, Task Force 63 (CTF-63) is the operational commander of all the U.S. 6th Fleet air and sea logistics.

Task Force 61/2, under operational control of U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Sixth Fleet, is responding to the deadly 7.8 and 7.6 magnitude earthquakes that devastated Türkiye on Feb. 6. Hours after the earthquake, U.S. Marines and Sailors established a forward crisis response operations center at Incirlik Air Base, Türkiye, in close coordination with U.S. interagency partners and Turkish officials.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with our Allies and Partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.