

Hospital Ship USNS Comfort to Deploy to Southern Command Region



The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) sails off the coast of Puerto Rico to provide humanitarian relief in this 2017 photo. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ernest R. Scott*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Defense Department will deploy a hospital ship to the U.S. Southern Command region during the fall of 2022, the department said.

“The Department of Defense plans to deploy the United States Naval Ship Comfort, a Mercy-class hospital ship, to conduct medical assistance in support of regional partners in the fall of 2022,” the release said. “During each port visit, the USNS Comfort typically provides medical assistance to about 3,500-8,000 people.”

The initiative is one of several the department announced in the wake of the XV Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas (CDMA), which convened on July 25-29, 2022, in Brasilia, Brazil.

“CDMA is the premier hemispheric defense ministerial for strategic-level engagement with the top defense officials of the Americas, and convenes every two years,” the release said.

The USNS Comfort, one of two hospital ships operated by the Military Sealift Command, last visited the region in 2019, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It provided medical care in 12 nations in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

“The Department of Defense is committed to its role as the most trusted defense ally and partner for its neighbors to the north and south, building on its longstanding cooperation across a range of areas to foster mutual security throughout the Western Hemisphere,” the department said.

The Comfort’s sister ship, USNS Mercy, currently is deployed to the Western Pacific region as a participant in the Pacific Partnership humanitarian assistance effort.

The U.S. Navy is procuring medical versions of the Austal-built expeditionary fast transport ship to provide medical care for military operations and humanitarian care and disaster relief.