

# Japan, U.S. form Surface Action Group in South China Sea



Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Murasame-class destroyer JS Yudachi (DD 103), left, and Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Jackson (LCS 6) sail together in the South China Sea. *JMSDF*

SOUTH CHINA SEA – Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Murasame-class destroyer JS Yudachi (DD 103) and Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Jackson (LCS 6) operated bilaterally in the South China Sea, said Lt. Cmdr. Lauren Chatmas, U.S. Navy, Destroyer Squadron Seven Public Affairs.

Joining to form a Surface Action Group (SAG) while transiting, the ships practiced a range of surface warfare tactics to include flight operations, communications drills and coordinated tactical maneuvering, all designed to enhance interoperability and enabling the ships to practice bilateral tactics in close proximity to one another.

“Meeting our JMSDF allies in the South China Sea allowed both of our teams to build readiness as we sail in the Indo-Pacific,” said Cmdr. Michael Root, Jackson Gold Crew commanding officer. “The complex maneuvering and operations we accomplished without meeting face-to-face reflects the strong friendship and maritime professionalism that our nations and navies share.”

Coming together with partners and allies at sea allows the U.S. Navy to operate closely with other navies and in ways shore exercises do not allow. It further provides the crews with real-life situations to practice their

everyday watchstanding and communication skills with foreign vessels.

“On our way to the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters to engage counter piracy mission, we met with USS Jackson, and conducted various tactical training,” said Cmdr. Wakushima Hidetaka, JMSDF JS Yudachi commanding officer. “Despite COVID-19, Japan and U.S. naval forces are working closely in any sea area, making full use of the characteristics of the naval force.”

Attached to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7, Jackson is on a rotational deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of security and stability in the region, and to work alongside allied and partner navies to provide maritime security and stability, key pillars of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed destroyer squadron in Southeast Asia, DESRON 7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of littoral combat ships rotationally deployed to Singapore, functions as Expeditionary Strike Group 7’s Sea Combat Commander, and builds partnerships through training exercises and military-to-military engagements.

Under commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with 35 maritime nations in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.