

Ronald Reagan CSG Enters South China Sea



The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group is operating in the South China Sea for the first time during its 2021 deployment, June 14. *U.S. NAVY*

SOUTH CHINA SEA – The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group is operating in the South China Sea for the first time during its 2021 deployment, June 14, commander, Task Force 70 public affairs said in a release.

While in the South China Sea, the strike group is conducting maritime security operations, which include flight operations with fixed and rotary wing aircraft, maritime strike exercises, and coordinated tactical training between surface and air units. Carrier operations in the South China Sea are part of the U.S. Navy's routine presence in the Indo-Pacific.

The carrier strike group includes the Navy's forward-deployed aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, and embarked staffs of Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh (CG 67), and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey (DDG 97).

"The South China Sea is pivotal to the free flow of commerce that fuels the economies of those nations committed to international law and rules based order," said Rear Adm. Will Pennington, commander, Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group. "It is both a privilege and a pleasure to work alongside our allies, partners, and joint service teammates to provide full spectrum support to key maritime commons and ensure all nations continue to benefit from a free and open Indo-Pacific region."

Most recently, the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur (DDG 54) operated with Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Anzac-class frigate HMAS Ballarat (FFH 155) in the South China Sea, June 6-11. Wilbur and Ballarat demonstrated the Navy's commitment to work with like-minded allies and partners to preserve international order in the South China Sea.

"In my 23 years in the Navy I've had the pleasure of working with the allied and partner forces from around the world," said Senior Chief Operations Specialist Michael Ojeda, Assistant Operations, DESRON 15. "Integrating with other countries to conduct surface and undersea surveillance in support of our strike group operations serves to highlight that our allies reinforce our strategy in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world."

The strike group is committed to upholding U.S. security agreements with regional allies and partners, as well as demonstrating the capability of forward-deployed naval forces to quickly respond to any contingency across the region.

Upholding freedom of the seas in the South China Sea is vitally important where nearly a third of global maritime trade, roughly \$3.5 trillion, a third of global crude oil, and half of global liquefied natural gas passes through the sea each year.

The Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group is forward-deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. U.S. 7th Fleet conducts forward-deployed naval operations in support of U.S. national interests in the Indo-Pacific area of operations. As the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed fleet, 7th Fleet interacts with 35 other maritime nations to build partnerships that foster maritime security, promote stability, and prevent conflict.