

U.S. Army and Air Force takes over USS Tripoli's Flight Deck



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Amphibious assault carrier USS Tripoli (LHA 7) worked with the United States Army's 16th Combat Aviation Brigade based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and the United States Air Force's 66th Rescue Squadron, based out of Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, to land both UH-60M Black Hawk, HH-60 Pave Hawk and AH-64 Apache helicopters on Tripoli's flight deck, Jan. 22-26.

"Tripoli helped the Army pilots by giving them the hours of practice landing on a ship so that they could complete their deck landing qualification," said U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Keith Hibbert, Tripoli's air operations officer.

As a result of these joint operations, Tripoli was able to cross train with the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force.

"It was extremely rewarding being able to work with the Air Force and Army during this evolution because it's not something you get to do every day," said Lt. Jon Kokot,

Tripoli's mini boss.

The qualification tested not only the pilots, but Tripoli's flight deck crew as well.

Air Force, Army, and Navy pilots use different terminology and procedures, presenting a unique challenge for Tripoli's crew. The U.S. Army's aircraft also require a different procedure to secure them to the flight deck.

"The Apache helicopter has different tie down points for the chains that we've never seen before," said Kokot. "We had to have one of their guys come out and show us how to tie the helicopter down."

The experience gave Tripoli's crew a chance to prepare for similar evolutions in the future and expand the ship's capabilities. The landing qualifications demonstrated that Tripoli has the ability to conduct flight operations with other military branches.

Tripoli is underway conducting routine operations in U.S. 3rd Fleet.