

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Departs for First Deployment



The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), along with the “Valkyries” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50 Detachment 3 and embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment, departed from Naval Station Mayport March 26, beginning her maiden deployment to support U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations.

From Littoral Combat Ship Squadron Two, 26 March 2025

MAYPORT, Fla. – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), along with the “Valkyries” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50 Detachment 3 and embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment, departed from Naval Station Mayport March 26, beginning its first deployment to support U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations.

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul's primary mission will be to support counter-illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean. Minneapolis-Saint Paul operations will involve practical exercises and exchanges with partner nations, supporting U.S. 4th Fleet interoperability, and reinforcing the U.S. position as the regional partner of choice.

Among the key accomplishments, USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul certified in Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) operations, enabling the ship to conduct Maritime Interdiction Operations and support for the embarked Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment.

This capability is vital for countering illicit drug trafficking and ensuring the safety of international waters. In addition, the ship embarked its aviation detachment, which includes the MH-60 R helicopter. This addition significantly enhances the ship's ability to conduct reconnaissance, track contacts of interest, and engage in maritime interdiction operations. The MH-60 R will serve as the ship's eyes in the sky, providing real-time intelligence and provide capabilities to effectively conduct our mission.

"I have watched this crew tackle a challenging and condensed schedule to ensure we are prepared for our [first] deployment to the 4th Fleet. We have overcome every obstacle in our path and have demonstrated that we are a resilient team ready to execute our mission," said Cmdr. Steven Fresse, USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul's commanding officer. "This will be USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul's first deployment, as well as the first for many of my crew members. However, we are eager to accomplish the mission we have been rigorously training for. I am very proud of this crew, and I am confident they will continue to exceed my expectations."

The crew also completed multiple certifications in a range of

critical warfare areas, including Air Warfare, Electronic Warfare, Intelligence, Surface Warfare, Cyber Warfare, and Search and Rescue. These certifications showcase the team's proficiency across multiple domains, proving that they are well-equipped and prepared to handle the complex and multifaceted nature of modern naval operations. This remarkable achievement demonstrates that the Minneapolis Saint Paul is not only combat-ready but also adaptable to a wide spectrum of missions. All of which resulted in the ship exiting the basic phase and entering the advanced phase of the ship's life cycle.

Deploying an LCS to the region aims to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to international cooperation, security, freedom and prosperity. The ship's size, speed, and agility make LCS ideal for narcotics interdictions, partner engagements and port access.

"It has been an honor to watch this crew adjust and adapt to every task we have had to accomplish as a team and get prepared for our first deployment", said Master Chief Ariel Ampier, USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul's command master chief. "I am excited to be a part of a team that has been diligently working through every phase to maintain the readiness and success of this ship!"

LCS are a fast, agile, mission-focused platform designed to operate in near-shore environments defeat 21st-century coastal threats. The LCS is capable of supporting forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence.

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul will operationally be assigned to U.S. 4th Fleet. It is homeported in Mayport, Florida and assigned to Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 2.