

USS Nimitz Concludes Southern Seas 2026 Deployment



Navy Quartermaster Senior Chief Benjamin Richards shifts colors on the mast of Nimitz-class aircraft USS Nimitz (CVN 68) after pulling pierside at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Florida, June 16, 2026. Nimitz is underway in the U.S. 2nd Fleet area of operations as part of a scheduled homeport shift to Norfolk, Virginia. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jaron Wills)

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The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) and its strike group successfully completed their highly anticipated deployment to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's Southern Seas 2026.

This year's deployment marked the 11th iteration of the Southern Seas exercise since 2007, demonstrating the United

States' enduring commitment to the Western Hemisphere. Southern Seas 2026 highlighted unprecedented diplomatic and military integration, recording the highest number of Latin American leadership visits in the exercise's history, with approximately 339 distinguished visitors embarking and 3,100 guests hosted during port visits.

As the USS *Nimitz* and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Gridley* (DDG 101) circumnavigated the South American continent, they executed complex passing exercises and operations at sea alongside partner nation maritime forces. The historic volume of high-level DV embarkations provided heads of state, top military officials, and regional dignitaries a firsthand look at the unmatched capabilities of a U.S. aircraft carrier operating at peak proficiency.

Throughout the deployment, the strike group conducted vital engagements with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Uruguay, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The fleet also successfully executed high-visibility port visits in Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, and Panama, further cementing enduring ties with host nations.

"The USS *Nimitz*'s Southern Seas 2026 deployment provided a unique opportunity to enhance interoperability and build proficiency with our partner nations across the maritime domain," said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. "Deployments of this magnitude demonstrate our unwavering commitment to a secure and stable Western Hemisphere. This historic mission is a shining example of our dedication to strengthening regional partnerships, building mutual trust, and countering shared threats together."

Another cornerstone of Southern Seas 2026's success was the integration of an embarked international staff. Approximately a dozen officers from 6 partner nations—including Argentina,

Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico –served aboard the *Nimitz*. These officers received advanced instruction from U.S. Naval War College professors and worked seamlessly alongside embarked Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 9 personnel to conduct detailed, real-world operational planning at sea.

“From presidents and ministers to admirals and generals to sailors and marines, Southern Seas 2026 gave us the opportunity to display not only the unmatched capability of a United States carrier strike group, but also the friendship, trust, and partnership that have long unified the nations of the Americas,” said Rear Adm. Cassidy Norman, commander of Carrier Strike Group 11. “The most enduring outcome of this deployment will be the relationships we built. Whether conducting complex operations at sea, welcoming distinguished visitors aboard USS *Nimitz*, or training side-by-side with our partners, we demonstrated that American leadership is measured not only by strength, but also by trust. We leave this region with stronger relationships, deeper interoperability, and a shared commitment to ensuring our hemisphere remains secure, prosperous, and free.”

Nimitz-class aircraft carriers remain the pinnacle of mobile projection of naval air power and forward operational presence. The successful conclusion of Southern Seas 2026 reinforces that no other weapons system possesses the responsiveness, endurance, multi-dimensional might, inherent battlespace awareness, and command-and-control capabilities of a U.S. carrier strike group.

NIMCSG consists of the USS *Nimitz*, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 9, and Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS *Gridley* (DDG 101). USNAVSOUTH/FOURTHFLT is the trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central and South America maritime forces improving regional unity and security.