

USS Sioux City Enters Red Sea as First LCS to Deploy to 5th Fleet



The littoral combat ship USS Sioux City (LCS 11) transits the Suez Canal, May 29. Sioux City is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations to help ensure maritime security and stability in the Middle East region. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nicholas A. Russell MANAMA, Bahrain – USS Sioux City (LCS 11) arrived in the U.S. 5th Fleet region May 28, marking the first time a littoral combat ship has deployed to the Middle East, NAVCENT Public Affairs said May 29.

The ship and crew of 75 personnel are currently sailing in the Red Sea after departing Mayport, Florida, in April. Sioux City is operating in support of a newly established multinational task force, Combined Task Force (CTF) 153, focused on maritime security and partner capacity building in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb and Gulf of Aden.

“We’re excited to welcome a littoral combat ship to the Middle East for the first time,” said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. “Sioux City’s arrival is not only historic but essential to regional maritime security given its immediate integration with our new multinational naval task force.”

CTF 153 is one of four multinational task forces organized under Combined Maritime Forces, the largest international naval partnership with 34 nations. Led by the United States, Combined Maritime Forces is headquartered in Bahrain with U.S. 5th Fleet.

Littoral combat ships are versatile, enabling them to support a broad spectrum of fleet missions and operate alongside regional navies and coast guards.

Last year, Sioux City operated in the Caribbean Sea where it seized 600 kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$24 million from drug traffickers in April. In October, the ship seized nearly 500 kilograms of cocaine worth \$20 million in the Caribbean.

“We’re thrilled to have Sioux City join our team,” said Capt. Robert Francis, commander of CTF 153. “They’ve worked collaboratively in bringing enhanced capabilities to other regions and that’s certainly what we’re looking forward to here in the Middle East while operating with our international partners.”

The U.S. 5th Fleet region includes 21 countries, the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb and Suez Canal.