

# Wikoff Relieves Munsch as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa



## [From U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa](#)

LAGO PATRIA, Italy – U.S. Navy Adm. Stuart B. Munsch was relieved by Adm. George M. Wikoff as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa (NAVEUR/NAVAF) during a change of command ceremony held at Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Naples, Nov. 19, 2025. Adm. Munsch was the second longest serving commander of Naval Forces Europe since the Command was established in 1917.

The ceremony marked the conclusion of Adm. Munsch's tenure as commander of NAVEUR/NAVAF and JFC Naples, during which he led U.S. naval forces across Europe and Africa through a period defined by the principles of trust, deterrence, and defense since June 2022. Under his leadership, NAVEUR/NAVAF enhanced the Navy's combat readiness, fostered trust, and advanced deterrence through unity, lethality, and sustained maritime operations alongside Allies and partners.

During the ceremony, Munsch emphasized that trust remains the cornerstone of deterrence and defense in an increasingly complex maritime environment.

“Trust is the cornerstone of the collective defense of our homeland and our Alliance,” said Munsch. “Trust is built, layer by layer, over generations, and cannot be surged in times of crisis or conflict. When we come together and when work together, we reinforce the bonds that fuel our warfighting strength into the future.”

Throughout his command, Munsch prioritized deepening partnerships across Europe and Africa while enhancing the Navy’s ability to defend the homeland. He oversaw the establishment of Commander, Task Force 66, and Commander, Task Force 166, which bring together every U.S. Fleet with European nations to integrate advanced technologies and best-of-breed maritime capabilities in robotics and autonomous systems, which improves the combat lethality in defense of the nation and the Alliance.

Munsch also spearheaded significant enhancements in the Navy’s operational posture across Europe. Under his leadership, U.S. naval forces significantly increased operations in the Arctic and the High North, expanding operational reach and reaffirming the Navy’s commitment to freedom of navigation in vital waters. The first-ever U.S. submarine port visit to Iceland underscored this renewed focus, showcasing the United States’ ongoing commitment to Arctic cooperation and maritime security.

His tenure was marked by key milestones in regional defense, including the transfer of authority for Aegis Ashore Poland to NATO and the full operational integration of Aegis Ashore Romania. These accomplishments further strengthened NATO’s layered missile defense system and enhanced deterrence across the European theater.

As commander, Munsch also reinforced the Navy's commitment to learning, innovation, and intellectual rigor. Through partnerships with institutions such as the Naval Postgraduate School, Naval War College, and Oxford University, he championed an enduring "cycle of learning" that extended beyond traditional naval boundaries and ensured the Navy remained adaptable, informed, and forward-looking.

Munsch's tenure demonstrated the Navy's ongoing engagement with Allies and partners through key multinational events that foster trust and interoperability. He hosted the annual Black Sea Maritime Forum, uniting regional partners with Allies to address security challenges and advance shared maritime goals. In Africa, he led the African Maritime Forces Summit inaugural in 2023, encouraging cooperation among African nations and strengthening collective maritime security across the continent.

He also led NAVEUR/NAVAF through multiple commemorations of the D-Day Landings in Normandy, France, including the 80th and 81st anniversaries, where he honored the maritime component of Operation Overlord and the enduring sacrifice of Allied forces. These commemorations reflected his dedication to remembering the past while preparing the fleet for the future.

In 2024, Munsch presided over events marking NATO's 75th anniversary, reaffirming the Navy's commitment to collective defense and the unity of the Alliance. Under his leadership, NAVEUR/NAVAF's contributions to NATO exercises and operations underscored the continuing importance of maritime power in defending every inch of Allied territory.

Throughout his tour, Munsch aligned his command philosophy with the Chief of Naval Operations' vision of sustaining combat at sea and ensuring the Navy remains built to last—today, tomorrow, and into the future. His leadership emphasized readiness, sustainment, and the ability to project

power decisively across the maritime domain in defense of the U.S. homeland and the NATO Alliance.

Allied nations recognized Munsch's service throughout his tenure for his commitment to partnership and deterrence, including being awarded the Norwegian Defence Service Medal with Laurel Branch, the German Badge of Honour of the Bundeswehr, and the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

These honors reflected the trust and respect he earned among both U.S. and Allied forces during his time in command.

Over the last three and half years, Munsch has employed the U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa Band through an unprecedented 838 musical engagements across 35 nations, successfully projected the U.S. Navy's warrior ethos, countered adversarial narratives, and secured strategic access by leveraging non-kinetic "Phase 0" power to achieve military and diplomatic objectives in Europe and Africa.

In addition to the band's operational achievements, Munsch commissioned three original musical works as tributes to the enduring values of service, Alliance, and sacrifice: "Trust, Deter, Defend," "Sailor Mettle and Ship Metal," and "Courage, Crossing and Bombardment on D-Day. Concluding the Change of Command ceremony, the U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa Band performed one of these compositions, "Trust, Deter, Defend," honoring the leadership philosophy that defined his tenure.

Wikoff, who most recently served as Commander, Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces, expressed his gratitude to Munsch for his leadership and dedication, and outlined his priorities upon assuming command.

"It is an honor to join this extraordinary team at a pivotal time for our Navy," said Wikoff. "I look forward to relentlessly enhancing our nation's defense through an innovative focus on warfighting, readiness, and

partnerships.”

For more than 80 years, NAVEUR/NAVAF has forged strategic relationships with Allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to share the duties of preserving security and stability. Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR/NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility.