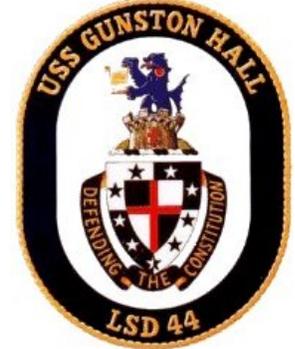




Another example of a mission ready ship because of a U.S. Navy Port Engineer

USS Gunston Hall Deploys to Support Southern Seas 2018



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By Lt. Christopher C. Yee

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (NNS) -- The Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44) departed, June 18, from Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia Beach, Virginia, for a deployment to the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) in support of Southern Seas 2018.

Southern Seas is an annual collaborative deployment in the USSOUTHCOM AOR where a task group deploys to conduct a variety of exercises and multinational exchanges. Southern Seas seeks to enhance interoperability, increase regional stability, and build and maintain regional relationships with countries throughout the region through joint, multinational and interagency exchanges and cooperation.



Southern Seas 2018

USS Gunston Hall will be joined for Southern Seas 2018 with embarked elements of the U.S. Marine Corps 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and a U.S. Navy staff element from Destroyer Squadron (CDS) 40. The units will sail the waters surrounding the East Coast of the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America from June through September.

"I am excited to join forces with nations that share our commitment to defending freedom," said Cmdr. Fiona Halbritter, commanding officer of Gunston Hall. "We have been given a great opportunity to conduct navy-to-navy exercises, build relationships, and enhance our multinational interoperability while working with the navies of the Western Hemisphere."

Cmdr. Halbritter's first deployment in the U.S. Navy was to the USSOUTHCOM AOR 19 years ago as a division officer aboard USS Tortuga (LSD 46). Since her first deployment with Tortuga, she served at-sea aboard USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) and with Commander, Amphibious Squadron 2/Bataan Strike Group (CPR2), before serving as executive officer and now commanding officer of Gunston Hall.

For more news from Expeditionary Strike Group 2, visit www.navy.mil/local/esg2/.

Webmaster's Note:

USS *Gunston Hall* (LSD-44) is a *Whidbey Island*-class dock landing ship of the United States Navy. She was the second Navy ship to be named for Gunston Hall, the Mason Neck, Virginia estate of George Mason, one of Virginia's renowned Revolutionary figures, and "Father of the Bill of Rights".

