



Public Affairs Office

Press Release

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Brazil, Argentina and the George Washington Strike Group kick-off

UNITAS 49-08.

By MC2 Riza Caparros, USS George Washington Media Dept.

Rio, Brazil -- UNITAS 49-08, a multinational exercise designed to increase interoperability between navies in North and South America, kicked off April 22 in Rio, Brazil with the George Washington Carrier Strike Group here for the opening ceremony.

UNITAS, Latin for “unity,” is a 49 year-old annual exercise designed to enhance friendly, mutual cooperation, understanding and interoperability for participating navies through cultural exchanges and maritime warfare and maritime interdiction operations scenarios.

Commander, Destroyer Squadron Four Zero (DESRON 40), Capt. Rodelio Laco Jr. described the mission of UNITAS as working together to solve common issues and to engage with maritime partners in the hemisphere.

“By increasing interoperability, information sharing and cooperation, we can collectively improve the maritime security of the hemisphere, which will ensure the free flow of maritime trade,” Laco said. “Our mutual economies highly depend upon maritime

shipping to keep them thriving and it is in our mutual interest to protect the freedom of the seas.”

Laco stressed the Navy’s new maritime strategy as a key element of UNITAS 49-08.

“We’re attempting to engage our partner navies of Brazil and Argentina on multiple levels,” he said. “Multi-national task groups will include sailor exchanges and cultural sharing while participating in complex and sophisticated scenarios beneficial to all participating navies.”

Lt. j.g. Jacob Steele, DESRON 40 Asst. Operations and Planning Officer, said these exercises help the U.S. maintain strong relationships with other countries.

“The goal is to be completely interoperable with the other country’s Navies, to be able to work with any ship from any South American navy,” said Steele. “We do that through collaborative planning and execution of challenging, realistic scenarios.”

As the host nation for UNITAS, Brazil has been instrumental in getting UNITAS off on the right foot, Steele added.

“UNITAS would not happen without the Brazilians, because as the host nation they have taken the lead on multiple issues. Their leadership made the planning conferences run smoothly and we expect it to continue throughout the exercise,” he continued.

This is the 49th year UNITAS has been held. The exercise is conducted annually in the Atlantic and Pacific waters around South America, bringing together Sailors and naval officers from various countries to train and operate as a cohesive unit, while developing cooperative relationships, professional understanding and lasting friendships between nations.

The George Washington Strike Group is commanded by Rear Adm. Phil Cullom

and comprised of: The aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73); Carrier Air Wing Seventeen (CVW-17); the guided missile frigate USS Kauffman (FFG 59); homeported in Norfolk, and Destroyer Squadron 40 (DESRON 40) and the guided missile destroyer USS Farragut (DDG 99); homeported in Mayport, Fla.

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