

USS Gerald R. Ford Makes First Caribbean Port Call With Arrival in St. Thomas

The USS Gerald R. Ford is docked in St. Thomas for its first Caribbean port visit, bringing more than 4,500 personnel to St. Thomas as part of Operation Southern Spear and delivering a substantial, short-term economic lift to Charlotte Amalie.

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The USS Gerald R. Ford stationed in the Crown Bay area during its first Caribbean port visit under Operation Southern Spear. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), the world's largest and newest U.S. aircraft carrier, is anchored offshore in the Crown Bay area of St. Thomas for a scheduled port visit that brings thousands of service members to the island for several days of rest and recuperation.

The stop marks the Ford's first port call since entering the Caribbean theater under U.S. Southern Command.

Measuring more than 1,090 feet and displacing roughly 100,000 tons, the nuclear-powered carrier serves as a floating city at sea. Its crew and air wing number more than 4,500 personnel, and the vessel has the capacity to support more than 75 aircraft. The ship is deployed as part of Operation Southern Spear, a mission aimed at disrupting transnational criminal and illicit maritime networks across the Western Hemisphere.

For St. Thomas, the scale of the visit translates into an immediate economic boost. Thousands of sailors are expected to come ashore throughout the port call, moving through hotels, restaurants, bars, tour operators, and beach destinations. Taxi drivers and other transport operators are preparing for days of heavy traffic between Crown Bay, downtown Charlotte Amalie, and popular beaches across the island.

The influx also includes family members of officers who fly in to meet their loved ones, further increasing hotel stays and visitor spending. Port calls by vessels of this size are known to inject significant direct economic activity into tourism-reliant communities, and the Gerald R. Ford's presence effectively places a small town's worth of temporary visitors into the St. Thomas economy for several days.