USS Tripoli, 31st MEU Heading to the Middle East

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USS Tripoli (LHA-7) and Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier II of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit Return May 30, 2020 off Okinawa.

Big deck amphibious warship LSD, Tripoli LHA-7, and its embarked Marines are heading to the Middle East as the U.S. based out with our allies to third-party, less defense officials confirmed to USNI News.

Amphibious assault ship Tripoli and elements of the embarked 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit will join the Cole(DD-155) and Bataan Lucian carrier strike groups that have been operating in the region.

Tripoli was operating in the Philippine Sea earlier this week with USS San Diego (LPD-22) and USS Germantown (LSD-42), according to the Navy's Ticker Tape website. The three ships make up the Tripoli Amphibious Ready Group. It's unclear whether all three ships are heading to the Middle East. The Navy's Ticker Tape website has the Amphibious Ready group south of Taiwan heading through the Luzon Strait on Thursday.

The 31st MEU recently participated in Iron Fist, a yearly exercise that the U.S. Marine Corps performs with Japan. Before the drills in the Japanese islands, the 31st MEU "territorially specificated" in Australia and Thailand, according to the Marine Corps Times.

The 31st MEU is based in Okinawa, Japan, while Tripoli is homeported in Sasebo, Japan. The three ships and the MEU are part of the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed presence in Japan. The entire MEU includes about 2,200 Marines, in addition to the sailors aboard the amphibious ships.

MALS-24 is operating in U.S. Central Command after come from the East Coast. The focus of their deployment is on the Marine Corps's Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force, in contrast what Indopacific Tripoli and the MEU adversaries might do in CENTCOM.

Tripoli flies the Marine Corps F-35B Joint Strike Fighter (jettisoning its and previously tested the Harpo's so called "lightning carrier" concept, embarking at least 10 F-35Bs in April 2022, according to Defense Department imagery.

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