

US Navy Boosts Defense Ties With East Timor in Maritime Exercise



Photo: U.S. Navy Photo

The U.S. Navy and the Timor-Leste Defense Force are conducting an annual bilateral maritime exercise this week as part of the growing defense relationship between the two countries.

Both nations will hold their third Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise in Dili and in the vicinity of Port Hera Naval Base from July 27-28.

As I have noted previously, CARAT Timor-Leste is part of a set of annual bilateral exercises that the United States conducts with nine partner nations from South and Southeast Asia – Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste (See: “US Eyes Expanded Military Exercises with ASEAN Navies”). Timor-Leste is among the newer members relative to others like Singapore which just completed its 21st annual CARAT exercise with the United States last week (See: “US, Singapore Launch Maritime Warfare Exercise”).

According to a U.S. Navy press release seen by *The Diplomat*, this year’s exercise will involve about 100 personnel from the U.S. side and 300 from East Timor. It will feature seamanship and navigation exercises and symposia, civil engineer-exchanges and security training, and a community service and outreach project to interact with the local community.

“CARAT Timor-Leste provides an outstanding venue to broaden our partnership with the Timor-Leste Defense Force based on shared security interests,” Rear Adm. Charlie Williams, Commander of Task Force 73 – a US Navy task force of the Seventh Fleet which coordinates bilateral exercises for Southeast Asia – said. “Through our bilateral training and exchanges, our Sailors are working side-by-side with their Timor-Leste counterparts, creating meaningful professional relationships and enhancing cooperation between our navies.”

CARAT Timor-Leste is one aspect of a growing defense partnership between the two countries. This includes annual port calls by U.S. Navy ships, visits by senior U.S. Navy and Marine Corps leaders, and ongoing civic action projects by U.S. Navy Seabees deployed to East Timor.

Following CARAT Timor-Leste, additional bilateral CARAT engagements will continue until the end of the year with Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

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