

## PRESS KIT

# LA FAYETTE 26 MISSION

Operational deployment of the French Carrier Strike Group



LA MARINE NATIONALE FÊTE SES 400 ANS



# TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>MISSION LA FAYETTE 26 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MAIN ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INNOVATIONS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>COMPOSITION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
ONBOARD HEADQUARTER STAFF.....	9
AIRCRAFT CARRIER .....	11
CARRIER AIR WING .....	12
DESTROYERS .....	13
SUPPLY SHIP .....	13
ATTACK SUBMARINES .....	14
MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFTS ATLANTIQUE 2.....	14
<b>FRENCH NAVY'S MISSIONS .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>COMMANDER'S BIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>17</b>



# MISSION LA FAYETTE 26

## Exceptional operational deployment in the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea

Since January 27<sup>th</sup> 2026, France has deployed its Carrier Strike Group (CSG), constituted as Task Force 473 (TF 473), alongside its allies and strategic partners in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean, areas of major interest for France, Europe and its partners.

Named LA FAYETTE 26, this exceptional mission fulfills four objectives:

- Contribute to NATO's defensive and deterrent posture in Europe with our allies;
- Secure Europe's borders and participate in national and international operations to enhance maritime security in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean;
- Develop interoperability with our partners and allies;
- Promote a free, open, and stable maritime space for the benefit of our populations, our interests, and those of our partners within the framework of international law. The CSG, through its presence, contributes to the stabilization of this space of competition and contestation.

### WHY this mission name ?

In line with the last CSG deployments, the 2026 edition bears the name LA FAYETTE 26, thus highlighting three symbols:

**the memory of the eponymous aircraft carrier** in service in the Navy from 1951 to 1963, **France's special link with the Atlantic area** in the broad sense, and France's emphasis on a capacity dear to the Marquis de La Fayette: demonstrating **tactical audacity** while pursuing long-term strategic effects.

LA FAYETTE 26 mission is taking place in a global context of heightened strategic competition, characterized by a challenge to the international order, an uninhibited use of force, and the simultaneity of crises. Thus, while the war between Russia and Ukraine continues, the surge in violence in the Middle East and the Near East is destabilizing an already tense international situation.

LA FAYETTE 26 mission demonstrates France's ability to deploy an aeromarine force alongside its allies and strategic partners in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean.



The CSG's escort is regularly reinforced by allied frigates and submarines, more than thirty in total over the past 10 years. During LA FAYETTE 26, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Moroccan, British, Norwegian, Danish, and German combat ships will reinforce the French Task Force.

These common deployments maintain interoperability and the allies' ability to jointly and rapidly conduct inter-allied operational engagements at any level of intensity.

Throughout its deployment, the CSG will benefit from the support of its partners for its port calls, logistical maneuvers, tactical situation sharing in depth, and specific reception of its Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft.

After participating in the large-scale ORION 26 exercise, the CSG will continue its deployment in the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea before transiting to the Mediterranean.

All these interactions strengthen and confirm the connections developed by the French armed forces in the Atlantic over many years.

**“ A European carrier strike group is the ability to integrate partners, coordinate deployments, and synchronize them effectively.**

*Les guerres des mers, Admiral Nicolas Vaujour, Chief of Naval Operations of the French Navy*



## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### ORION 26

In February, the carrier strike group participates in ORION 26. This large-scale inter-service and allied exercise is a major event in high-intensity operational preparation. It aims to harden the forces to deal with the most complex situations and to demonstrate France's ability to be the first to enter a theater of operations, to lead a multinational coalition, and to fully integrate into a national command structure (with particular emphasis on the inter-service operational command). For the maritime component, in addition to the carrier strike group, an amphibious force and a mine warfare headquarters were deployed.

### BALTIC SENTRY

In the Baltic Sea, NATO deploys aeromarine means as part of the BALTIC SENTRY operation to deter threats against critical and strategic NATO underwater infrastructures in the Baltic Sea. This multi-domain activity is a response to the damage suffered by the underwater cables connecting Estonia and Finland on December 25<sup>th</sup> 2024. It follows a declaration of solidarity by the Allies signed on December 30<sup>th</sup> 2024, and the NATO Allies' summit on the Baltic Sea held on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2025, in Helsinki, Finland.

## **STEADFAST DART 26**

Each year, the French Navy participates in the STEADFAST DART exercise, which aims to implement the NATO Response Force (NRF) on a large scale in various geographical locations, including Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece.

This year, the training is taking place in the Baltic Sea with the involvement of the Carrier Air Wing in air raids. It also marks the first deployment of the Allied Reaction Force in the area of responsibility of the Joint Force Command in Brunssum.

## **COLD RESPONSE / DYNAMIC MARINER**

COLD RESPONSE is a major multinational military exercise led by Norway, organized every two years since 2006. It aims to train allied forces to conduct high-intensity military operations in harsh winter environments. The goal is to maintain NATO's collective defense capability, particularly on the Alliance's Northern Flank.

This year, this exercise will be coupled with the DYNAMIC MARINER exercise, allowing British forces to be certified to take command of the maritime component of ARF26.

## **NEPTUNE STRIKE**

In the North Sea, the carrier strike group will participate in the NATO exercise NEPTUNE STRIKE. This exercise includes sequences of anti-air and anti-surface warfare, as well as a cruise missile firing exercise. The engaged French units will conduct joint multi-domain and anti-air warfare training. The frigates of the CSG, with their anti-submarine and anti-air warfare capabilities, constitute a key element in the defense of the group. The integration of allied escorts into this exercise demonstrates the close ties between NATO navies and their high level of interoperability in conducting complex maneuvers.

NEPTUNE STRIKE thus illustrates the joint response capability of NATO forces in defending the territory of the Alliance.



# **INNOVATIONS**

## **Experiments during the mission**

The French CSG is a true innovation laboratory, capable of integrating new tactics and technologies to envision the future of naval combat by carrying out experiments in real-life conditions.

### **Embarked Data Hub (DHE)**

The DHE is an advanced onboard computer system dedicated to the collection, storage, and massive processing of data from various sources on board Marine units. It allows data to be extracted from sensors, combined with data from the theater's history, exploited, and then shared, increasing situational awareness within the force and sharing it with allies.

First deployed on board the CSG during the CLEMENCEAU 25 mission, this system is once again integrated on board the force's ships for the LA FAYETTE 26 deployment. Big Data engineers and operational reserve officers specialists in data, from various companies, including the French defense industrial and technological base (BITD), reinforce the units equipped with data centers throughout the mission.

### **Submarine Gliders**

Gliders contribute to the protection of maritime approaches and support naval operations at sea. This capability is tested in theaters of operations thousands of nautical miles from the metropolitan coasts. Its implementation as part of the CSG deployment allows it to be integrated into the concept of battlefield drone deployment by carrying out various tactical or operational missions such as collecting environmental or acoustic data, detecting and tracking units of interest, etc. These Gliders will be able to operate autonomously and discreetly for extended periods.

The French Navy is thus equipping itself with a modern and evolving tool that will allow it, depending on the systems embarked, to enhance its effectiveness in the missions entrusted to it.



## **THE CARRIER STRIKE GROUP, A UNIQUE STRATEGIC TOOL**

The CSG is a tool of military and diplomatic power of prime importance. True strategic asset, it offers a graduated capacity for action, capable of lasting in operation, adaptable and adapted to the needs of political authorities.

The CSG brings together an international maritime air force, with military capabilities in all domains (at sea, under the sea, in the air and on the ground, but also in exo-atmospheric and cyber spaces) and in all fields (electromagnetic and informational).

Thanks to the agility of its engagement and to its strategic mobility (the aircraft carrier is capable of traveling 620 miles a day, with a freedom of movement guaranteed by the nature of maritime spaces), it produces multiple effects:

- Control of vast air and sea spaces, including in a contested environment;
- Maintenance of an independent situation assessment capability;
- Projection of power from the air and from the sea, towards objectives on land or against a naval force; this capability allows France to enter a theatre first with significant reactivity, including for high-intensity combat;
- Contribution to deterrence thanks to the nuclear naval air force that it can implement.

The CSG is a real lever for international cooperation in the military field. These common operations maintain France's ability to conduct high-intensity operational engagements in a coalition. They strengthen trust and interoperability with European and transatlantic strategic partners, a guarantee of effectiveness in securing Europe and areas of shared strategic interest.



# COMPOSITION

## ONBOARD HEADQUARTER STAFF

Commanding the task force from aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*

Rear Admiral Thibaut de Possesse, commander of the French Strike Force (FRSTRIKEFOR), commands the French CSG. On board, it has an operations control center, an intelligence center, and an operational planning and logistical support office. It is in direct contact with the national, joint and allied command structures.

Deployed in times of peace, crisis or conflict, FRSTRIKEFOR is organised and equipped to engage in a national or international mission within NATO, the European Union or a coalition.

FRSTRIKEFOR is thus one of the structures qualified to operate within the NATO Responsive Force (NRF) for which it acted as the maritime component alert in 2021.





# AIRCRAFT CARRIER

## *Charles de Gaulle*

**Control of air and maritime space and power projection**

A nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, *Charles de Gaulle* offers France a first-rate, versatile and graduated capacity for action.

It is a strategic tool through the freedom of action that maritime spaces provide and through her power projection capacity. She combines autonomy of action, flexibility of use, power, mobility and endurance.

**KEY FIGURES**

**42 500 tons**

4 times the weight of the Eiffel Tower

**1200 sailors**

(1,800 with the hundred people of the embarked headquarters staff and of the carrier air wing)

**30 years**

average age of her crew

**246 ft**

Length of a catapult runway

**15 to 23 tons**

Average weigh of a Rafale Marine aircraft

**160 miles/hour**

maximum speed reached in 3 seconds during a catapult launch by a Rafale Marine and a Hawkeye aircraft

**30 secondes**

interval between two catapult launches

# CARRIER AIR WING



- **Rafale Marine (F4) fighter aircraft**

Air force protection, conventional or nuclear strike to sea and land

- **AE-2C Hawkeye aircraft for airborne surveillance**

Airborne command of a fighter raid, long-range detection of ships and aircraft



- **Dauphin helicopters**

Pedro function (securing catapults and landings) and logistical support



- **Caiman Marine helicopters**

Multi-role combat (detection, anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare capabilities, logistics support)



- **Panther helicopters**

Above-water combat and logistics support



## **DESTROYERS, an expanded defense**

The French CSG always includes first-rate destroyers, essential to guarantee the freedom of action of the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*. These modern units and their on-board helicopters make it possible to have an extended capacity for action. They combine state-of-the-art systems and weapons, including Aster 15 and 30 anti-aircraft missiles, MU90 torpedoes and naval cruise missiles, to conduct deep strikes.

As part of the three dimensional control of maritime space (above, on and under the surface), air defense destroyers and multi-mission destroyers have a detection and firepower that complete those of the Carrier Air Wing providing a strong protection to the French CSG.



## **SUPPLY SHIP, operational logistical support**

The mission of the supply ship is to deliver fuel, water, food, ammunition and spare parts, as well as mail, to all units of the French CSG to ensure that operations are maintained at sea.

## **ATTACK SUBMARINES, discreet and enduring scouts**

The attack submarines are the force's early warning system. They provide discreet, effective protection, positioning themselves between potential threats and the Aircraft Carrier. They inform and support the force with offensive capabilities (deep strikes, submarine warfare, mining, navy special forces deployment). They are able to get as close as possible to the coastline and enemy forces, while remaining completely discreet.

## **MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFTS ATLANTIQUE 2, the eyes of the fleet**

The Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft, based ashore at various French support points and integrated into the French CSG, carry out intelligence missions on the high seas and anti-submarine warfare. They can also take part in power projection missions, and handle land targets (laser-guided bombs).



# THE MISSIONS

## OF THE FRENCH NAVY

For 400 years, the French Navy has been operating to ensure the security of the French people and to defend national interests. 365 days a year, 24/7, its 39,000 sailors (military and civilian) act on and under all the seas of the world, in the air and on land.

### DISSUASION

For more than 50 years, at least one nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) has been on permanent patrol at sea. For more than 47 years, the nuclear naval air force (FANU) has been operational when the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) is deployed.

### PROTECTION AND RELIANCE

As much an "Army of the seas" as a public service player, the French Navy protects the maritime approaches, the French people and the country's interests on a daily basis. This is the permanent maritime safety mission (PPSM), which has two components: maritime defense of French territory (DMT) and State action at sea (AEM).

### PREVENTION - KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND ANTICIPATION

The Navy deploys its naval, air and submarine assets to improve knowledge of the strategic context and to maintain reliable support points and relations in areas of potential or actual crisis. Intelligence, whether electromagnetic, acoustic or visual, is gathered by numerous sensors on its ships and aircraft. Through its deployments, the Navy guarantees France's autonomous ability to assess and make decisions, and helps to prevent crises.

### INTERVENTION

With its power projection and force capabilities, the French Navy intervenes, either alone or as part of coalitions and multilateral cooperation, closest to the threats and crises. It sustains its actions over time and stands ready to intervene without delay in case of deterioration of the situation at sea or on land.

### INFLUENCE

Integral part of the French expression of power, influence is based on a number of national assets and vectors: diplomacy, economy and a global cultural and military presence. For the Navy, the strategy of French influence consists of responding or retaliating to any maneuver or attack.

**DEPUIS 400 ANS,  
SUR TOUS LES OCÉANS,  
LA MARINE VOUS PROTÈGE.**

“ **Le groupe aéronaval incarne la projection stratégique de la France : puissance, dissuasion et engagement. Présents sur tous les théâtres d'opérations, nous assurons la sécurité et la souveraineté française avec détermination et efficacité.**

Contre-amiral Thibault de Possesse, commandant du groupe aéronaval

” ***The carrier strike group embodies France's strategic projection: power, deterrence, and commitment. Present on all theaters of operations, we ensure French security and sovereignty with determination and efficiency.***

Rear Admiral Thibault de Possesse, Commander French Carrier Strike Group



## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **REAR ADMIRAL THIBAUT DE POSSESSE** Carrier Strike Group commander

Rear Admiral Thibault de Possesse is the commander of the French Strike Force (FRSTRIKEFOR) since August 2025.

His 28 years of service, including 20 at sea aboard 11 different combat vessels, led him to take part in most of the operations entrusted to the French Navy, as well as in numerous safety missions at sea. A specialist in air-sea operations, air defence, and State action at sea, he commanded three combat vessels and held senior positions within naval force headquarters and in the field of doctrine. He also served in joint headquarters and within the offices of senior military and political authorities.

Rear Admiral de Possesse graduated of the Naval Academy, the Naval Combat Systems and Weapons School, the Naval Command College in Newport (USA) and the War College. He was an auditor at the Centre for Advanced Military Studies and the Institute for Advanced Studies in National Defence.

During his career, he commanded the patrol boat *La Capricieuse* in French Guiana, where he ensured fisheries policing, drug trafficking combat, and protection of the space center. In 2010, he commanded the patrol vessel *Commandant Birot* during the Libyan war (operations *Ellamy* and *Unified Protector*). He then held planning and communication positions within the headquarters, covering major crises such as the 2015 terrorist attacks, the implementation of Operation Sentinelle, operations in Mali and the Central African Republic, and Operation Chammal.

In 2018, he commanded the frigate *Chevalier Paul*, participating in operation *Chammal* and missions in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

From 2021 to 2023, he served as Maritime Advisor to Prime Ministers Jean Castex and Elisabeth Borne, managing strategic files such as nuclear deterrence and cybersecurity.

Promoted to Rear Admiral in 2023, he appointed Head of the Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires (CHEM), before taking command of the FRSTRIKEFOR.

He is decorated with the Legion of Honor, the National Order of Merit and the Order of Maritime Merit.





# PRESS CONTACTS & SOCIAL NETWORK

## **FRENCH CARRIER STRIKE GROUP – Communication service**

LV Mathilde Pallu de Beupuy

[mathilde.pallu-de-beaupuy@intradef.gouv.fr](mailto:mathilde.pallu-de-beaupuy@intradef.gouv.fr)

+33 (0)4 94 02 10 23 / +33 (0)6 31 47 66 76

**X : @French\_CSG**

## **ARMED FORCES STAFF – Communication unit**

09 88 68 28 61 / 09 88 68 28 62

[cab-cema-com.relation-presse.fct@def.gouv.fr](mailto:cab-cema-com.relation-presse.fct@def.gouv.fr)

**X : @EtatMajorFR / @FrenchForces**

**Facebook : Armée française – opérations militaires**

**Instagram : armeefrancaise**

**More images on the French Navy Media Library:**

<https://www.mediatheque.marine.defense.gouv.fr>

