

CNO Awards French Carrier Charles de Gaulle Meritorious Unit Award For ISIS Campaign

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The French navy nuclear aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (R91) transits the Suez Canal on Dec. 7, 2015, as it enters the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. French Navy photo.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson today awarded the French Navy's Charles de Gaulle Strike Group the prestigious Meritorious Unit Commendation for service in support of Operation Inherent Resolve against ISIS.

[In a ceremony in Paris](#), he presented the meritorious unit commendation pennant – rarely bestowed on foreign navy units – to Capt. Eric Malbrunot, commanding officer of the French nuclear aircraft carrier FS *Charles de Gaulle* (R91) as “a symbol of how far and how developed our relationship has come.”

The award citation notes that from Dec. 7, 2015 to March 3, 2016, the Charles de Gaulle Strike Group served as the command element for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command's Task Force 50 – the first time a non-U.S. ship has served as a Task Force commander.

In that time, “the strike group executed 271 combat sorties, including 259 precision strikes that significantly degraded ISIL operations in Iraq,” the citation reads. Additionally, “displaying exceptional professionalism, the CDGSG safely interacted with 11 Iranian Y12 and LSF aircraft, seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Naval Force fast attack craft, and three Iranian

unmanned aerial-reconnaissance vehicles.”

Richardson added that the carrier’s pilots flew very difficult strike missions and also provided intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), assurance to friends and deterrence to potential foes.



The aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70), left, and the French nuclear aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (R91) transit the Northern Arabian Gulf on March 8, 2015. US Navy photo.

In the early days of *de Gaulle*’s strikes against ISIS, the French carrier was the only one launching planes – the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group left the Middle East in October 2015 and [Harry S. Truman CSG didn’t launch its first strike](#) until the week of New Year’s Eve. In the absence of an American carrier, Rear Adm. Rene-Jean Crignola, commander of the French Maritime Force embarked aboard *Charles de Gaulle*, took command of Task Force 50 on Dec. 7.

Richardson said the French CSG “filled an important gap in the capability there in the Gulf” during a time when the U.S. could not provide carrier presence in the region.

“To achieve that level of interoperability, true integration, to the point where Charles de Gaulle Strike Group could take command of Task Force 50 – the first time ever that a non-U.S. element has taken command of a task force – is just so indicative of the partnership we share, and the ability to perform at the very highest levels of warfare, and that’s exactly what you did.”

French Chief of Naval Staff Adm. Bernard Rogel was on hand for ceremony in Paris and accompanied Richardson to meetings with the naval staff. Tomorrow Richardson will visit the aviation command and fleet command and speak at the École Navale, or French Naval Academy.