NATO MARITIME GROUP VISITS VARNA, BULGARIA, DURING BLACK SEA DEPLOYMENT

Ships assigned to Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) arrived in Varna on 7 March for a scheduled port visit during the Group’s deployment to the Black Sea.

Led by Rear-Admiral Brad Williamson of the United States Navy, SNMG2 currently comprises the flagship USS Vicksburg, from Canada HMCS Fredericton, from Turkey TCG Turgutreis (illustrated), FGS Spessart of the Federal German Navy, from Italy ITS Aliseo, and ROS Regina Maria of the Romanian Navy.

SNMG2 is in the Black Sea as part of a regularly scheduled deployment to the region to assure NATO Allies of the Alliance’s commitment to collective defence. During the deployment, SNMG2 ships will be training with ships from the Bulgarian, Romanian and Turkish Navies.

Said Rear-Admiral Williamson: ‘Our sailors are excited to visit Varna and to interact with the people who represent this city and nation. More importantly, we are looking forward to getting back underway and training with the professional mariners of the Bulgarian Navy.’

During the port visit, SNMG2 leadership is due to meet local Bulgarian authorities and navy officials to discuss numerous issues of shared importance, to include exercises in the Black Sea.

SNMG2 sailors will also have the opportunity to experience the rich culture and history of the surrounding area and participate in volunteer opportunities before returning to the Black Sea to train with the Bulgarian Navy and maintain maritime situational awareness in the region.

Bulgaria became a member of NATO on 29 March 2004, along with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.