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Strengthening Partnerships through Diesel-Electric Submarine Initiative (DESI)

"The participation of South American partners in support of this premier program has clearly elevated the realism of our training and thus the readiness of our Navy. Additionally, it has served as a key enabler to theater naval cooperation and interoperability."

– RADM Joseph Kernan, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command / Commander, U.S. Fourth Fleet

In partnering with South American navies to employ diesel-electric submarines in support of fleet readiness events off the East and West Coasts, the Diesel-Electric Submarine Initiative (DESI) program was established in 2001 by U.S. Fleet Forces Command. DESI is executed by Commander Submarine Force (COMSUBFOR) and serves to enhance the ability of the Navy's fleet to counter the growing diesel-electric submarine threat.

DESI Objectives

- Provide the U.S. Navy with an elevated level of ASW training against the threat of diesel-electric submarine that countries with hostile or unknown intent possess and are easily obtaining.
- Train and improve capabilities of the South American navies, enabling them to contribute more effectively as coalition forces.
- Support joint operations and aid the attainment of Theater Security Cooperation objectives.

Training to the Threat

- These important partnerships provide the U.S. Navy with unique training opportunities against the real-world threat found in the modern, quiet, diesel-electric submarine.
- During a typical DESI deployment, U.S. and South American units work together to engage in various Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) training scenarios. The participation of South American submarines in fleet training and certification events adds an additional degree of difficulty and reality to fleet ASW training exercises, as diesel submarines have proven to be elusive and difficult to track.
- In 2007, South American diesel-electric submarines provided invaluable ASW training by participating in Composite Training Unit Exercises (C2X) and Joint Task Force Exercises (JTFEX) as opposing forces of USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Carrier Strike Groups.

Looking to the Future

- In alignment with theater naval communication strategies, COMSUBFOR acquired the CENTRIXS system for loan to partner nations while deployed. CENTRIXS will empower deployed submarines with secure communications capability for the exchange of classified operational and exercise information.
- The continuous goal of DESI is to increase partnerships and encourage cooperation between partner nations, furthering the core capabilities of the Maritime Strategy.

Key Messages

- The modern diesel-electric submarine is the most challenging ASW adversary operating in the littoral today.
- DESI provides Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups invaluable ASW training against the diesel-electric submarine threat.
- DESI is a mutually beneficial program supporting operational readiness and regional cooperation.

Facts & Figures

- In 2007, South American diesel-electric submarines provided a total of 155 days of dedicated ASW Opposition Force support in all types of fleet readiness events.
- Participating DESI partners include Colombia, Peru, Chile and Brazil with potential expansion to include Argentina and Ecuador.
- 2007 was the first year that DESI offered support to east and west coast training exercises.