

Navy Proposes Elimination of Snakehead LDUUV program



Cheryl Mierzwa, Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport's technical program manager for the Snakehead Large Displacement Unmanned Undersea Vehicle, christens the underwater vehicle at the Narragansett Bay Test Facility in Newport, Rhode Island, on Feb. 2. U.S. NAVY

ARLINGTON, Va. – Even as the U.S. Navy was christening the first prototype of the Snakehead large-diameter unmanned underwater vehicle (LDUUV) in February, planning was underway to cancel the program.

The Navy is proposing in its 2023 budget to eliminate the Snakehead program, according to the Navy Department's recently released Fiscal 2023 budget highlights book.

The Snakehead is intended to be a major advance in UUVs and designed to be the largest UUV to be deployed on the interfaces of the Navy's attack submarines. It is designed to

be autonomous, modular and reconfigurable, equipped with a government-owned architecture. It features innovative hull materials and certified lithium-ion batteries. It is designed to be deployed from a modernized dry-deck shelter.

According to the budget highlights book, the major problem in the program was “Misalignment of Snakehead LDUUV design and procurement efforts with submarine hosting interfaces result[ing] in limited availability of host platforms to conduct Snakehead operations.”

The book also said that “cost and schedule delays associated with LDUUV development and Virginia Class SSN [attack submarine] integration prohibited further investment.”

The only alternative launch and recover interface for the Snakehead is the Modernized Dry Deck Shelter. The U.S. Special Operations Command in conjunction with the Navy is modernizing three Dry Deck Shelters between 2022 and 2026. They are scheduled to become available for use in 2022, 2023, and 2026, respectively.

Under Phase One of the Snakehead program, only one vehicle was built.

The Navy estimates the cancellation of Phase Two of the program and future Snakehead procurement will save the Navy \$185.9 million in fiscal 2023, resulting in a total savings of \$516.8 million over the Future Years Defense Plan.

The Snakehead Phase One prototype was christened on Feb. 2 at the Narragansett Bay Test Facility in Newport, Rhode Island, by a team from the Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport and the Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants.

CNO Visits Bath Iron Works, Meets with Sailors and Maine Congressional Leaders

BATH, Maine – Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday traveled to Bath, Maine on April 18, where he met with congressional leaders from Maine to visit General Dynamics Bath Iron Works, the CNO's public affairs office said.

Gilday met with Sen. Susan Collins and other congressional leaders and together they visited shipyard facilities, toured and met with Sailors aboard the future USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120).

“The work being done here in Maine is critically important to our Navy,” said Gilday. “The entire workforce of Bath Iron Works is delivering cutting edge capabilities at a critical time for our nation.”

“It was a pleasure to welcome back Adm. Gilday to Bath Iron Works, where he had the opportunity to see firsthand the tremendous skill and dedication of employees who are building the Navy's most capable ships. We also met with the commander of the future USS Carl M. Levin. It is reassuring to know that the brave men and women of the Navy will crew a ship built by the world's best shipbuilders,” said Collins. “Increasing the size of our Navy fleet is imperative to our national security in order to counter the rising aggression by Russia and China. As a senior member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I will continue to work to ensure that BIW has the resources it needs to support our Navy.”

During the tour they visited and received updates at the Bath

Iron Works outfit facility, post-blast paint shop, and spoke with shipyard workers.

Gilday also met with BIW leaders to include the Interim President Robert Smith. They discussed the importance and challenges of the shipyard, which include material delays and connecting with a younger generation of shipyard workers.

Aboard the Arleigh-Burke guided-missile destroyer, Gilday presented an award to a Sailor and expressed his appreciation to everyone on board.

“Seeing a new warship being built is exciting, but what truly breathes life into a new ship is her crew,” said Gilday. “We are the finest fighting force in the world because of our people. I am confident USS Carl M. Levin Sailors will embrace a warfighting ethos with the integrity and uncompromising dedication that truly embraces their ship’s namesake, who helped ensure our nation’s armed forces remained the best in the world.”

The visit marked CNO’s second trip to Bath Iron Works.

**Abraham Lincoln Carrier
Strike Group Conducts
Exercises with the JMSDF**



Aircraft from Carrier Air Wing 9 and Japan Air Self-Defense Force fly over the Sea of Japan as the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), center, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG 53), left, JMSDF Kongō-class guided-missile destroyer JS Kongō (DDG 173), right, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Murasame-class destroyer JS Inazuma (DD 105), back left, and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance (DDG 111) sail in formation during a U.S.-Japan bilateral exercise. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Aleksandr Freutel*

SEA OF JAPAN – The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, along with JS Inazuma (DD 105) and JS Kongo (DDG 173), from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, completed bilateral exercises in the Philippine Sea and East China Sea on April 18, said the strike group's public affairs.

USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), USS Mobile Bay (CG 52) and USS Spruance (DDG 111) of Carrier Strike Group 3 and JS Inazuma (DD 105) and JS Kongo (DDG 173) of JMSDF Escort Division 11 engaged in various joint events to include enhanced maritime communication operations, air warfare training, and various

other drills to hone in on integrated maritime operations and combat readiness.

“Our enduring commitments to our relationships in the Indo-Pacific region continue to grow and blossom through integrated and bilateral at-sea exercises including the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force,” said Rear Adm. J. T. Anderson, commander, CSG 3. “These exercises demonstrate our collective combat-credible capabilities while safeguarding our shared interests and values.”

Coordinated maritime engagements and operations with international partners are part of the U.S. Navy’s routine presence in the Indo-Pacific. Since arriving in the U.S. 7th Fleet region in January, CSG 3 units have participated in multiple operations and exercises to include dual carrier operations with USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), exercises Noble Fusion and Jungle Warfare 2022 and a long-range air demonstration.

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group consists of CSG 3 and includes aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72); Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9; Destroyer Squadron 21; the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG 53); and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62), USS Gridley (DDG 101), USS Sampson (DDG 102) and USS Spruance (DDG 111).

Abraham Lincoln’s embarked air wing consists of the “Wallbangers” of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 117; “Titans” of Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) 30; “Chargers” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 14; “Tophatters” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 14; “Black Aces” of VFA 41; “Wizards” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 133; “Black Knights” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314; “Vigilantes” of VFA 151 and “Raptors” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 71.

ABECSG departed its homeport for a scheduled deployment to the Indo-Pacific on Jan. 3.

Coast Guard Offloads \$11.7M in Cocaine, Transfers 6 Suspected Smugglers



Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez crewmembers offload six bales of cocaine, weighing approximately 463 pounds, at Coast

Guard Base San Juan April 18, 2022, following the interdiction of a go-fast smuggling vessel near Puerto Rico April 11, 2022.
U.S. COAST GUARD

Puerto Rico – Coast Guard Cutters’ Joseph Tezanos and Heriberto Hernandez crews offloaded approximately 1,289 pounds of cocaine and transferred custody of six suspected smugglers at Coast Guard Base San Juan April 18, following two separate vessel interdictions near Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

These interdictions are the result of multi-agency efforts involving the Caribbean Border Interagency Group and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force. The seized cocaine has an estimated wholesale value of approximately \$11.7 million.

The most recent interdiction occurred during a routine patrol April 11, 2022, after the crew of a Customs and Border Protection multi-role enforcement aircraft sighted a suspect vessel in waters northwest of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the cutter Heriberto Hernandez that arrived on scene and interdicted a 25-foot go-fast vessel. The vessel was carrying four men – Dominican Republic nationals – and six bales of suspected contraband, which tested positive for cocaine. The cutter crew apprehended the suspects and seized the contraband.

During a routine patrol April 6, 2022, the crew of a Customs and Border Protection multi-role enforcement aircraft sighted a suspect vessel north of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the cutter Joseph Tezanos that arrived on scene and interdicted a 30-foot go-fast vessel. The vessel was carrying three men – Dominican Republic nationals – and eight bales of suspected contraband, which tested positive for cocaine. The cutter crew apprehended the suspects and seized the contraband. One suspected smuggler from this group, who required medical care ashore, was medically evacuated Thursday to a hospital in Puerto Rico.

“Safeguarding the nation’s southernmost maritime border is among our top priorities,” said Capt. Gregory H. Magee, Coast Guard Sector San Juan commander. “You can expect to see many more of these interdictions from the Coast Guard and from our local and federal partners as we work together to stop drug smuggling go-fast vessels from making landfall in the Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands.”

Special Agents supporting the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force received custody of the detainees and the seized contraband, and they are leading the investigation into this case. The apprehended smugglers are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico on criminal charges of Conspiracy to Import Controlled Substance and Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance Aboard a Vessel Subject to the Jurisdiction of the United States. The charges carry a minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life.

Cutters Heriberto Hernandez and Joseph Tezanos are 154-foot fast response cutters homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

USS The Sullivans Returns Home After Back-to-Back Deployments



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) pulls into port in Copenhagen, Denmark, March 21, 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mark Klimenko*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returned to Naval Station Mayport after a three-month deployment to the European theater of operations on April 18, said U.S. 2nd Fleet Public Affairs.

This surge deployment follows a 2021 deployment with the Royal Navy's HMS Queen Elizabeth Strike Group (CSG-21), from which The Sullivans returned home just before Thanksgiving.

The Sullivans was in sustainment when it departed Naval Station Mayport in January 2022. Ships in the sustainment phase of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan remain ready for contingency tasking before entering a maintenance phase.

“Despite the dynamic schedule and demanding operational tasking, The Sullivans crew displayed resiliency, grit and

determined self-sufficiency to accomplish all missions,” said Cmdr. James Diefenderfer, Jr., commanding officer of The Sullivans. “We are incredibly proud of our team’s accomplishments.”

The crew navigated over 20,000 nautical miles, operating in the Irish, North and Baltic Seas, and conducted 12 sea and anchor details, 11 underway replenishments, and port visits to Copenhagen, Denmark; Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Ponta Delgada, Portugal; and Rota, Spain.

While deployed, The Sullivans participated in NATO Exercise Dynamic Guard 2022 in the North Sea. Dynamic Guard, hosted by Norway, is a biannual, multinational electronic warfare exercise series designed to provide tactical training for the NATO Response Force and NATO national units. For the first time in three years, two U.S. vessels participated to further enhance the ongoing cooperation, strength and interoperability between NATO Allies.

The Sullivans continued operations with three NATO countries within Standing NATO Maritime Group (SNMG) 1, which was comprised of the German navy Type 702 Berlin-class replenishment ship FGS Berlin (A1411), the Royal Netherlands Navy Karel Doorman-class multi-purpose frigate HNLMS Van Amstel (F831) and the Royal Danish Navy Iver Huitfeldt-class frigate HDMS Peter Willemoes (F362).

During the ship’s 2021 deployment, the crew operated with the Royal Danish Navy Absalon-class frigate HDMS Esbern Snare (F342) in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations. Almost a year later, Esbern Snare escorted The Sullivans through the Danish Strait, demonstrating expert seamanship, navigation and cooperation through one of the busiest waterways in the world.

“While we take time to recover and spend well deserved time at home, we are focusing our efforts on ensuring The Sullivans can continue to operate at peak performance for years to

come,” said Diefenderfer. “Our immediate mission is the expert execution of our maintenance availability and continued training to prepare the ship and crew for future tasking. I know this crew will be ready for whatever comes next – we stick together.”

USS Mitscher Returns to Norfolk After Surge Deployment



A Sailor assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mitscher (DDG 57) embraces his wife after the

ship's return to homeport, Naval Station Norfolk, April 16.
U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ryan Seelbach

NORFOLK, Va. – Nearly 300 Sailors arrived home to Naval Station Norfolk aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mitscher (DDG 57) on April 16 following a surge deployment to the European theater of operations, said the ship's public affairs.

Mitscher rapidly deployed in January to join the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations.

This was the ship's second homecoming in several months. Mitscher returned from an extended nine-month deployment with the Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group in September 2021.

While deployed, the ship conducted presence operations and defense of the HSTCSG with the Greek, Italian, Norwegian and Turkish navies.

"No nation can confront today's challenges alone," said Cmdr. Thomas McCandless, commanding officer of Mitscher. "A more resilient and rapidly innovating Navy, combined with a robust set of allies and partners, demonstrate NATO's commitment to a free and open global commons. I can say without a doubt that our crew rose to the task. With a 10-day notice, Mitscher was able to onload ammunition and deploy with ease."

The crew enjoyed one port visit to Aksaz, Turkey, where they toured several historical sites and experienced local hospitality.

"We arrived in theater and seamlessly integrated with forces who were already on station," said McCandless. "Mitscher did indeed 'seize the day.'"

U.S., Iceland Wrap Up Exercise Northern Viking 2022



From left to right, the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen-class frigate HNoMS Thor Heyerdahl (F314), French F70 type frigate FS Latouche-Tréville (D646) and German Sachsen-class air-defense frigate FGS Sachsen (F219) sail in formation in the North Atlantic Ocean in support of exercise Northern Viking 22. *FRENCH NAVY*

ICELAND – At sea, French, German and Norwegian surface combatants were joined by American and German maritime patrol aircraft in a hunt for adversary submarines while small boats conducted visit, board, search and seizure missions on suspect vessels.

On land, near Keflavík Air Base, an Icelandic coast guard rescue helicopter transported trapped and injured citizens to a temporary medical facility staffed by members of 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit's Shock Trauma Platoon and host nation medical personnel for triage and treatment.

For the last two weeks, allied nations have exercised these capabilities and more, coming together to hone their skills and enhance cooperation during the Iceland-hosted, U.S. 6th Fleet-executed exercise Northern Viking 22, U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs said April 16.

"Northern Viking 22 has been incredibly successful for us and for the participating Allies," said Cmdr. Marvin Ingólfsson, Deputy Commander of Keflavík Air Base. "We have learned from each other these last two weeks and we have shared tactics and procedures, improving our ability to operate together in the defense of Iceland and of the lines of communication that run through this area."

The exercise, which began April 2 and concluded April 14, initially focused on protecting the critical infrastructure of Keflavík Air Base. Exercise participants established temporary secondary refueling positions for Allied aircraft while working to neutralize security threats to the base and its personnel.

"Northern Viking is really important for our cooperation in the high north seas and to our country in defense of law enforcement scenarios," said Lt. Ásgeir R. Gudjonsson, the Icelandic coast guard improvised explosive device disposal specialist. "It's good to have a go at actual events and the training is vital for us. We learned that [different EOD teams] differ a bit, but they're close – so we can work really well together."

The first week of the exercise also included air defense scenarios, coordinated shiphandling evolutions and

hydrographic and airfield surveys. Throughout the exercise, allied maritime forces practiced a variety of evolutions to enhance their cooperation and coordination in defending Iceland and the sea lines of communication in the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom (GIUK) gap.

Participants shifted their focus during the latter half of the exercise to the Marines of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit and Royal Marine Commandos as they conducted multiple ship-to-shore operations, a natural progression in complexity of the overall exercise. Marines and Sailors from the USS Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group and 22nd MEU participated in a tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel, simulated raids on illicit compounds and visit, board, search and seizure operations.

Northern Viking 22, led by the U.S. 6th Fleet as a maritime-focused event for the first time in decades, established a framework for future iterations of the Northern Viking exercise. As units and personnel depart Iceland for their own national taskings and future missions, the planning cycle for Northern Viking 24 is right around the corner. With lessons learned and invaluable training experiences and opportunities to look back on, exercise planners look forward to building on the successes of Northern Viking 22.

CMS: The Navy's Seven Operational Imperatives for This Decade



A Boeing unmanned MQ-25 aircraft is given operating directions on the flight deck aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77). Its initial operating capability as an aerial refueling tanker will extend the range, operational capability and power projection of the carrier air wing and carrier strike group. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brandon Roberson*

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday laid out a 500-ship force earlier this year ahead of the current defense budget submission. The service has worked to balance between recapitalizing for a new, 2045 force structure, and what it needs for the so-called "fight tonight," approaching period of 2027-2030 when China may attempt reunification with Taiwan by force.

Grouping these by operational level of war problems can help the Navy prioritize between what it needs today in case of Chinese or additional Russian aggression now, and what the service needs as it moves toward its future force structure. These are not in a specific priority, but the final imperative

is the most vital.

1. Readiness of the existing force: Some experts would suggest that the only “ready” navy units are those currently deployed and those coming to relieve them. While not as exciting as new construction, the funding for regular scheduled overhaul and updating of current Navy ships, the training of their crews and their outfitting in terms of spare parts, fuel and above all ammunition is of vital importance. Only 30% of the total cost of any new ship is incurred in its building with a full 70% devoted to the upkeep and maintenance of the ship across its lifetime. Like a car that does not receive regular dealer service, a warship that does not undergo regular maintenance starts to decline in overall readiness. Paying these readiness bills on time ensures that the existing force is ready in the event of hostile action.
2. Logistics, logistics, logistics: The bogged-down Russian invasion of Ukraine again shows that amateurs do tactics and experts think about logistics. Current U.S. naval combat logistics and sealift forces are small, aged in years and designed around a “just in time, hub and spoke” delivery method that maximizes peacetime efficiency but is ill-suited to fleet-level combat. This is especially true in terms of the Navy’s “distributed maritime operations” doctrine that needs a distributed logistics force for resupply during extended combat operations. Rebuilding both combat logistics and sealift to include delivery “over the beach” of fuel and supplies to Marines must remain a top operational imperative.
3. Get the M/Q-25A in the air before 2025: The Navy and Marine Corps have made great strides in carrier air wing aircraft readiness since 2016, but the services must go the extra mile to further reduce the burden on the F/A-18 E/F force and extend the range of the carrier air

wing in general. Carrier aircraft have adopted “buddy tanking” for years to extend the range of strike aircraft in an increasingly dangerous Indo-Pacific menaced by People’s Republic of China missiles and aircraft. Getting the M/Q-25A drone tanker integrated into the airwing not only extends its strike range now but is a bridge to using the drone as a potential unmanned strike aircraft.

4. Scouting the bridge to unmanned futures: There is still uncertainty surrounding projected Navy unmanned systems. Congress does not seem fully convinced the Navy can make them work in combat, and many questions remain on the network connectivity and reliability of these platforms over extended periods of time at sea. However, one aspect of unmanned systems is proving itself in the here and now. Unmanned units employed as long-term distributive sensors are operating commercially with great success in measuring current, temperature and a host of other environmental factors. The U.S. Navy 5th Fleet, located in the Persian Gulf region, just completed a very successful experiment with an unmanned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms called Task Force 59. TF 59’s unmanned units successfully operated over time and provided commanders with real-time information crucial to targeting opponent ships, submarine and aircraft. Naval tactics expert Capt. Wayne Hughes said being able to “attack effectively first” depended on effective scouting that found opponents without revealing one’s own force locations. Expendable unmanned scouting units can fulfill that function and serve as an operational bridge to further unmanned systems development.
5. Train to Fight: Perhaps a subset of the readiness and scouting imperatives, but it’s still vital to train to fight at expected levels of organization and chaos. Throughout much of the post-Cold War era individual Navy carrier strike or amphibious ready groups ventured alone

as deployed assets, secure in general U.S. sea control over wide areas of the world's oceans. The rise of the PRC's navy and the return of a revanchist Russia has ended that blanket level of security and U.S. naval forces will again have to fight for sea control before undertaking other missions. Training to fight at larger levels of organization such as the three-carrier battle force gets Sailors and Marines used to operating in these larger formations. As Russia's ground force mishaps in Ukraine have shown, if forces do not train and get used to fighting in larger formations it is unlikely that they will perform well in combat in those groupings.

6. Stay ahead in the undersea environment: Many documents extol the U.S. lead in undersea systems, especially in its nuclear attack and ballistic missile submarine designs. Since the days of the Walker Spy ring in the 1980s, however, the Russians and others have sought to duplicate or steal elements of the U.S. undersea advantage. No such advantage can be taken for granted as well and the U.S. Navy should seek to expand its undersea capabilities with supporting unmanned systems and forward-deployed infrastructure to support undersea operations. The Navy had 11 deployable submarine tenders at the end of the Cold War and today has only two. If fleet operations (including submarines) must be distributive, then submarine maintenance and logistics, especially weapons reloading, should be equally dispersed as needed. The only way to get there is by adding more submarine tenders to the fleet.
7. It's time to take the maritime strategy "off the shelf." Back in June 1990 during his confirmation hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee as Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Frank Kelso was asked by Sen. John McCain what the Navy intended to do with its maritime strategy to globally fight the Soviet Union now that the communist state appeared in full retreat and

the Cold War over. Kelso responded, "Military strategy needs a specific enemy," and with the end of the Cold War, "the issues before us seem to be ones of naval policy and not strategy." Kelso further stated the maritime strategy for combatting a global great power opponent should be "put on the shelf" and could be "taken down" when needed if another global opponent reappeared. The U.S. now faces two nuclear-armed great power opponents and it's time to pull a maritime strategy down from Kelso's shelf. It will not be the same as its 1980s predecessor, but only a service-generated blueprint that serves as a guide, and not a directive for combatant commanders to follow can integrate all these operational imperatives in a single, authoritative source. A strategy that gives Congress and the American people an idea of what their Navy does in peace and what it could do in war is vital to securing public support for the other operational imperatives. It should speak in terms of numbers of ships, maps, geographic lines of effort that show what the Navy might do, which allies and partners might join the U.S. war effort, and suggest what goals the U.S. would pursue in great power war to have a definition of how such a conflict might end. Open-ended commitments in the Middle East over decades have soured the public on any extensive military operations and telling them "how wars end" is just as important as how the military means to wage them.

All these operational imperatives are important, but the strategy is perhaps the most valuable as it ties together all of the imperatives in a single package for both Congress, American citizens and the industrial organizations that can bring the other imperatives to life.

Q&A: Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, Commander, Naval Surface Forces, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet



Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, speaks with Hospitalman Shakeelah Jordan aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile-destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) during a ship visit. Kitchener visited Hampton Roads commands and ships in June 2021 and hosted a commander's call with waterfront leadership. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jacob Milham*
Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener assumed command of Naval Surface

Forces and Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet in August 2020, and as a type commander he has guided the forces as he continues to man, train and equip the forces for duty in the fleet and service to the U.S. combatant commands. A native of Trumbull, Connecticut, and a 1984 graduate of Unity College with a Bachelor of Arts in political science, he attended the Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, and received his commission in 1985. He also attended the Naval Post Graduate School where he specialized in Western Hemisphere studies and earned a Master of Arts in national security affairs.

As a surface warfare officer, he deployed around the world and commanded destroyers, cruisers and an expeditionary strike group. At sea he served as a division officer aboard USS Dewey (DDG 45); operations and training officer for Special Boat Unit 26, Republic of Panama; combat systems and weapons officer aboard USS San Jacinto (CG 56); executive officer aboard USS Cowpens (CG 63); and operations officer and chief of staff for Commander, Carrier Strike Group 11. He commanded USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) and USS Higgins (DDG 76) during the Navy's Sea Swap Initiative, and also commanded USS Princeton (CG59) and Expeditionary Strike Group 2.

Ashore, Kitchener served as the Surface Warfare Directorate's Naval Surface Fire Support program officer on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations; combat systems instructor at Surface Warfare Officers School; ballistic missile defense operations chief at the Cheyenne Mountain directorate at Commander, U.S. Northern Command; and vice commander of Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command. He served as the chief of staff at numerous commands, to include commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet; commander, Naval Surface Forces; commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and U.S. deputy military representative to the NATO Military Committee. Most recently, he was commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Kitchener responded to questions about the surface Navy fleet from Senior Editor Richard R. Burgess.

The surface Navy is better armed today than it was decades ago, when it was primarily an anti-air and antisubmarine escort force. How has that improvement affected the morale and professionalism of surface warriors?

KITCHENER: No doubt, we have seen tremendous improvements in our network and sensors that give our ever-improving weapons better speed, range and precision. However, I would propose it is our training investments that have had the most impact on the professionalism of the force. The surface force develops leaders, warriors, mariners and managers, and each of these roles requires training, education and mentoring. A well-trained Sailor is a confident Sailor. That is why we have dedicated more than \$5 billion to the Surface Training Advanced Virtual Environment for Surface Force training. Approximately 200 STAVE projects are supporting training in all areas of individual and waterfront training, including navigation and seamanship, engineering, damage control and combat systems. Furthermore, nearly 66% of all afloat billets benefit from STAVE. This training and the human factor programs that we have in place directly contribute to improving our Sailors' professionalism and morale.

The surface Navy has had few combat actions at sea since World War II. How confident are you that today's surface warriors are trained and conditioned to maneuver and fight as well as execute damage control should they fight a peer competitor?

KITCHENER: We are highly confident in the training and professionalism of our surface force. As previously stated, we have dedicated a significant amount of resources to ensure our force is trained and ready to meet today's operational challenges. In addition to investing in STAVE, we are also building the physical and digital infrastructure to support this vast amount of training we are providing to our force.

Most notably, the Mayport [Florida] and Sasebo [Japan] Shiphandling Trainers opened for business in 2021, bringing the number of learning sites to 10 overall and ensuring a site in nearly every fleet concentration area. The Mariner Skills Training Centers in San Diego and Norfolk began hosting a two-phase Officer of the Deck [OOD] course, which shifted from a JOOD [Junior OOD] course to a two-phase OOD curriculum. The change freed up the Advanced Division Officer Course to expand its focus on maritime warfare. ADOC is now providing junior officers with three weeks of maritime warfare training instead of one, allowing us to lay the warfighting foundation earlier in an officer's career.

Regarding specific warfighting training, we are installing virtual operator trainers, or VOTs, in all homeports to provide Sailors with training for the AV-15 sonar system and Aegis Baselines 9 and above. In Yokosuka, Pearl Harbor and San Diego, the sonar trainers are up and running and the Aegis VOTs in Yokosuka and Pascagoula are soon to follow.

Finally, we have worked with the numbered fleet commanders to retool and enhance the high end, at-sea training ships receive prior to deploying to ensure they are ready to defeat current day threats. Never before has our force possessed this quality of warfighting training systems in our homeports, and they are available to commanding officers to build their teams' skills.

Has the seamanship of the force been improving to meet your expectations in the five years since the McCain and Fitzgerald incidents?

KITCHENER: Yes. We have made significant investments to increase the amount and depth of training that junior surface warfare officers receive before they report to their ship.

We introduced and implemented a revised SWO training and assessment continuum that employs navigation, seamanship and ship handling assessments across all career milestones.

We also implemented NSS/go/no-go assessments with four no-go criteria established for a SWO career path, which means that no one gets a pass simply due to experience. We assessed all officers at every level, from brand new ensign to major commander. Those who do not pass their proficiency tests do not assume command of ships at sea. Our standard: To be a professional mariner is more rigorous now than ever.

For our younger officers, the two-phased OOD course provides advanced practical instruction in navigation, seamanship, and ship handling in high-end simulators, emphasizing rules of the road, high-density shipping, in-extremis maneuvering and watch team management.

How are simulators making better surface warriors?

KITCHENER: With the number and complexity of systems and platforms planned to join the fleet in the next decade, the requirement for clear and innovative operational concepts is critical. Simulators provide our surface warriors with a controlled environment to develop and refine their mariner skills. By perfecting these skills in a teachable setting, Sailors can enter the fleet with the most advanced knowledge.



Sonar Technician (Surface) 1st Class Kendall Cochran, assigned to the Freedom-variant littoral combat ship (PCU) Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21), trains using computer-generated simulations during Surface Training Advanced Virtual Environment scenarios at Surface Combat Systems Training Command Detachment Southeast, LCS Training Facility, Nov. 9, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist David Holmes*

What are the chief challenges to improving force readiness?

KITCHENER: The completion of depot level maintenance on time continues to be a significant challenge. We have invested in analytics to help us improve in this area.

As I said at SNA [Surface Navy Association convention] earlier this year, we have seen improvements in two key metrics that we are using to gauge our progress: days of maintenance delay and on-time completion rates. Since 2019, we have reduced our days of maintenance delay by 41%. Our on-time completion is steadily increasing, from 34% in fiscal year 2019 to a projected 59% for all 2021 avails, including those ongoing that began in fiscal year 2021. We still have more to do, but

it has been satisfying to see that the process is working.

Overcoming this challenge is even more important as we deliver modernization upgrades to the fleet, capability that is essential to maintaining our warfighting advantage. The SPY-6 radar and AN/SLQ-32(V)7 electronic warfare suite are a couple of examples of the extensive modernization programs that we will introduce to the fleet. The effective and timely execution of our maintenance and modernization packages during depot avails will be even more important to force readiness as we install this vital capability.

You have spoken about reimagining fleet introduction. What do you mean by that?

KITCHENER: Historically, NAVSEA's [Naval Sea Systems Command's] fleet introduction team provided oversight on the acquisition process and integrated the various program offices in the delivery of a new ship. Independently, the type commander's fleet introduction team would be responsible for actually integrating the ship into the fleet. We feel that a good look at this process will provide us a better process. Reimagining means thinking differently about this process so that the type commander is more engaged in the acquisition process overall, and that the program offices can deliver new ships and capabilities that integrate with the fleet more effectively and efficiently. We anticipate that this review should have significant positive impact and therefore I've asked Rear Adm. Brendan McLane at CNSP [commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet] to take on this task.

We are introducing at least 10 new or modernized platforms to the force in the next decade, and believe that effective fleet introduction is critical to maintaining a competitive advantage.

What is the role of Task Force LCS that stood up last spring?

KITCHENER: We stood up Task Force LCS to consolidate efforts

and drive actions across the LCS [littoral combat ship] program. Experts across the Navy are working together to analyze, develop and rapidly implement improvements to LCS platform reliability, sustainability, lethality and operational employment. The task force, led by Rear Adm. Robert Nowakowski, continues to provide databased recommendations and solutions to improve the reliability and sustainability of the LCS program.

What will be the role of the unmanned surface vessel division standing up this summer? How has Surface Development Squadron One been pushing the envelope in unmanned systems?

KITCHENER: This summer, USV Division One will stand up and grow to 103 Sailors in 2022 to provide dedicated support to USV operations. The command will be led by an O5 SWO commander and will report to SURFDEVRON [Surface Development Squadron] One and operate out of Port Hueneme, California. USVDIV 1 will be focused exclusively on USV experimentation and fleet advocacy with our program offices. The division will be a cornerstone in building the foundational knowledge required for Sailors to operate and maintain the USV fleet and spearhead the development of the processes required for USV operations and sustainment.

With the Zumwalt class to be armed for hypersonic weapons, do you expect them to deploy before their conversion? When do you expect the first conversion to start and what is the planned IOC year for them with conventional prompt strike?

KITCHENER: The Navy's Conventional Prompt Strike Program is developing a non-nuclear hypersonic weapons system that will enable precise and timely strike capability in contested environments. Fielding hypersonic weapons is a top technical research and engineering priority and the Navy continues to accelerate the development of hypersonic capabilities. The Navy is on track to field the CPS on Zumwalt-class destroyers in fiscal 2025.

In support of the Zumwalt class, being the first platform to deliver CPS capability, the Navy commenced engineering design planning that will allow for integration of CPS during a planned fiscal 2024 dry-docking selected restricted availability. The ship's relatively large volume and timing of her already scheduled dry docking availability are key enablers to rapidly field CPS capability in USS Zumwalt.

Looking on the success of the DDG 51 class, what capabilities do you want to see in DDG(X)?

KITCHENER: The DDG(X) class will capitalize on the success of the DDG 51 class by improving an already exceptional craft. DDG(X) will utilize a variant of the DDG-51 FLT III combat system integrated into a new hull form with flexibility for upgrades, an efficient integrated power system and greater endurance, reducing the fleet logistics burden.

State Dept. Approves Possible Sale of AH-1Z Helicopters to Nigeria



Airman Kory Vogel signals an AH-1Z Viper on the flight deck of amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), April 13. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nadia Lund*
WASHINGTON – The U.S. State Department has approved a possible Foreign Military Sale to Nigeria of 12 Bell AH-1Z attack helicopters and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$997 million, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in an April 14 release.

The sale would make Nigeria the third foreign nation to order the AH-1Z, the others being Bahrain and the Czech Republic. The main operator of the AH-1Z is the U.S. Marine Corps.

Nigeria has requested to buy 12 AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters as well as associated avionics, sensor systems, and spare engines and parts. The deal also includes 2,000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) guidance sections for 2.75-inch rockets.

The announcement said the possible sale also would include

“tools and test equipment; technical data and publications; personnel training and training equipment; mission planning system; U.S. government and contractor engineering; technical, and logistics support services; U.S. government and contractor assistance and oversight of facilities construction to include the provisioning of plans, drawings and specifications.”

“The proposed sale will better equip Nigeria to contribute to shared security objectives, promote regional stability and build interoperability with the U.S. and other Western partners,” the announcement said. “This sale will be a major contribution to U.S. and Nigerian security goals. Nigeria will have no difficulty absorbing the equipment and services into its armed forces.”

The principal contractors will be Bell Helicopter, Textron, of Fort Worth, Texas, and General Electric Co., of Lynn, Massachusetts.