

# Task Force 61/2: Strengthening Crisis Response and Amphibious Readiness Across Europe, Africa



U.S. Marines and Sailors with Task Force 61/2 pose for a group photo at Naval Support Activity, Naples, Italy, Oct. 10, 2024. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Marc Imprevert)

From Task Force 61/2, Nov. 15, 2024

NAPLES, Italy –Task Force 61/2 (TF 61/2) stands at the forefront of the Marine Corps and Navy’s integration efforts in the Mediterranean, enhancing amphibious operations and ensuring that U.S. forces are always ready to respond to any crisis in the region. Based in Naples, Italy, TF 61/2 operates with a scalable presence, supporting Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) deployments in the

U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) theaters. When the ARG/MEU is not forward deployed in the EUCOM and AFRICOM areas of responsibilities, TF 61/2 maintains a smaller staff in Naples, ready to surge forward to command and control the ARG/MEU or respond to emerging crises in the European and African areas of responsibilities. TF 61/2 is currently staffed by Marines and Sailors from the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB), a subordinate command of II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF). Currently, TF 61/2 is commanding and controlling the deployed Wasp Amphibious Ready Group (WSP ARG) composited with the 24th MEU Special Operations Capable (SOC), one of the Marine Corps' most adaptable and responsive forces. In addition to the ARG/MEU, when forward deployed, TF 61/2 exercises tactical control of Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team Company, Europe (FASTEUR), as well as reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance (RXR) forces and other deployed II MEF units as part of Marine Rotational Forces-Europe (MRF-E). The task force maintains an unwavering focus on readiness to respond to crisis, providing swift, flexible options for U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF), U.S. 6th Fleet and U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Europe and Africa (MFEA). TF 61/2 embodies the Marine Corps' commitment to naval integration, ensuring that the ARG/MEU team is capable and ready to execute amphibious operations, humanitarian assistance, crisis operations, and joint missions with NATO Allies and partners.

The 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps' Planning Guidance underscores the critical role of II MEF as the Marine Corps' primary crisis-response force, designed to respond swiftly to emerging contingencies. II MEF is prepared to organize and deploy units through a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) construct, allowing for flexible, mission-tailored force deployment. While II MEF is not directly assigned to any combatant commander, it is structured to be responsive across multiple theaters, including U.S. European Command, Africa Command, Central Command, Southern Command, and Northern

Command. This versatility allows II MEF to remain ready for an array of contingencies, acting as a first response for planned and emerging operations while remaining able to augment, reinforce, or even lead joint task force operations. Within this framework, when the 2d MEB, as a subordinate command of II MEF, deploys forward to Naples, Italy, it assumes the role of TF 61/2. As a forward-deployed extension of II MEF, 2d MEB serving as TF 61/2 embodies this readiness, seamlessly commanding and controlling the deployed ARG/MEU to ensure a crisis response capability is continuously available across Europe and Africa whenever needed.

The ARG/MEU is also prominently featured in the Commandant's Planning Guidance, which underscores its role as the nation's premier crisis response force, combining flexibility and responsiveness. The ARG/MEU provides the United States with a powerful seabasing capability, uniquely equipped to execute amphibious operations, which ensures it can respond to crises swiftly. TF 61/2, currently commanding and controlling the WSP ARG-24th MEU (SOC), is at the core of this mission, as the ARG/MEU brings forward-deployed, combat-credible forces into the Mediterranean and other high-priority regions. The ARG/MEU's ability to execute complex operations, from humanitarian aid and crisis response to combat missions, aligns with the Commandant's vision of a continuously modernizing force that adapts to geographic combatant commander requirements. TF 61/2, therefore, not only supports U.S. 6th Fleet but also enhances the Marine Corps' ability to provide the crisis response that U.S. national defense strategy demands.

Since 2022, TF 61/2's presence in Naples has been a critical element of the U.S. strategy to maintain a flexible and scalable forward-deployed amphibious force in the region, adjusting its staff as needed to support ARG/MEU operations and regional crises. Under the command of Brig. Gen. Samuel L. Meyer, who assumed leadership of 2d MEB and TF 61/2 in May

2024, the task force continues its mission of readiness and preparation for crisis response. The addition of Sgt. Maj. Elena M. Rodriguez marks the first time 2d MEB and TF 61/2 have had an appointed sergeant major, providing enhanced leadership across all levels, and ensuring that all Marines and Sailors in the task force are fully prepared to execute their missions.

“Our ability to remain forward deployed and ready to respond to crises, is built on the integration of the Navy and Marine Corps,” said Meyer. “TF 61/2, with the WSP ARG-24th MEU (SOC), is an adaptable force capable of executing a wide range of operations. We’re committed to maintaining the highest standards of readiness, ensuring that we’re prepared for any contingency.”

The initial deployment of TF 61/2 in the early spring of 2022 marked a new era in U.S. 6th Fleet’s approach to amphibious operations and forward presence in the Mediterranean. Since then, the task force has become a crucial element in real-world crisis response and joint training exercises with NATO Allies and partners. Notably, in early 2023, TF 61/2 was pivotal in humanitarian relief efforts following earthquakes in Turkey. U.S. military personnel assigned to TF 61/2 and the 39th Air Base Wing (ABW) were tasked with building a field hospital for citizens affected by the February earthquakes. Upon completion of the field hospital in March 2023, leaders from TF 61/2 and the 39th ABW conducted a final walk-through with Turkish officials before the Turkish Ministry of Health assumed operations of the facility. This mission underscored the U.S. commitment to NATO Allies and highlighted TF 61/2’s readiness to mobilize forces swiftly in support of humanitarian operations.

In July 2023, TF 61/2 provided wildfire support in Greece. An immediate response team from TF 61/2 deployed as a forward element to Greece to coordinate and exercise tactical control of U.S. European Command forces supporting firefighting and

relief efforts. The Bataan ARG-26th MEU (SOC), forward deployed during this time, also worked closely with local authorities, assisting in firefighting and evacuation operations that demonstrated the versatility and responsiveness of U.S. amphibious forces.

“TF 61/2’s ability to respond to real-world crises, such as the earthquakes in Turkey, and wildfires in Greece, underscores the importance of maintaining a high level of readiness and rapid response posture,” said Col. Andrew Martinez, deputy commander, TF 61/2. “These operations demonstrate the importance of a forward-deployed TF 61/2 command element and ARG/MEU capable of executing missions that protect U.S. interests and assist our Allies and partners in times of need.” The experiences gained from these real-world operations have further strengthened TF 61/2’s preparedness and ability to command and control the ARG/MEU. The task force’s presence in Naples has ensured a continued close partnership with NATO Allies and partners, further enhancing interoperability and joint amphibious capabilities.

Under the command of Meyer and Rodriguez, TF 61/2 has continued to refine its capabilities and ensure the readiness of the WSP ARG-24th MEU (SOC). The task force’s involvement in Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) in June 2024, a NATO-led exercise in the Baltic Sea, exemplified its commitment to joint operations and amphibious warfare. During BALTOPS 24, key personnel from TF 61/2 operated aboard the Blue Ridge-class command and control ship USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), successfully commanding and controlling amphibious forces while integrating in close coordination with NATO Allies. This exercise tested TF 61/2’s multi-domain reconnaissance and amphibious capabilities, reinforcing its role as a crucial command and control element in contested environments.

BALTOPS 24 enhanced interoperability and cooperation among NATO Allies, focusing on freedom of navigation and defending the Baltic Sea region. Throughout the exercise, TF 61/2

combined with Expeditionary Strike Group 2 (ESG-2) and became Commander Task Force 162 (CTF 162), with Meyer serving as Commander, Landing Forces (CLF) and Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson as Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF). During BALTOPS 24, TF 61/2 worked closely with the WSP ARG-24th MEU (SOC), as well as NATO Allies, including Spanish, French, and Dutch naval forces, and played a key role in each of the training phases. The training phases emphasized joint tactical operations and amphibious operations, culminating in a “free-play” scenario to simulate real-world contingencies and build on NATO’s interoperability.

“Our participation in BALTOPS 2024 aboard the Mount Whitney highlighted our ability to operate seamlessly with NATO Allies and lead amphibious operations in contested environments,” said Meyer. “We’ve taken those lessons and applied them to our day-to-day mission, ensuring that we’re ready to respond to any real-world crisis.”

TF 61/2 remains constantly prepared and vigilant, continuously planning for any potential real-world crisis that may arise within the region during its deployment. By maintaining a high state of readiness, TF 61/2 ensures it can swiftly respond to emerging situations, coordinating closely with NAVEUR-NAVAF, U.S. 6th Fleet, and MFEA to assess regional developments and adjust plans as needed. Through regular readiness exercises, crisis response drills, and joint planning sessions with NATO Allies and partners, TF 61/2 continually reinforces its ability to respond to crises at a moment’s notice. This commitment to proactive planning and scalable operational flexibility, positions TF 61/2 as a critical force ready to support stability and security across Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa.

“Seamless coordination with our Navy counterparts and NATO Allies and partners is essential to maintaining readiness,” said Rodriguez. “The leadership team here at TF 61/2 ensures we stay focused on our mission and maintain the readiness

needed to support U.S. 6th Fleet and MFEA. We stand ready to respond to any situation, anywhere in the region.”

This commitment to Marine Corps and Navy integration remains central to TF 61/2’s mission, providing U.S. 6th Fleet with a highly adaptable force that can rapidly respond to emerging crises. Regular participation in NATO exercises, such as BALTOPS, ensures TF 61/2’s ability to project power, enhance interoperability, and execute complex operations in collaboration with Allied and partner forces.

“Our ability to integrate with the Navy ensures that we can execute our mission and provide the rapid-response capability that our nation depends on,” added Martinez. “TF 61/2 and the ARG/MEU remain ready to forward deploy, whether it’s for combat operations, humanitarian aid, or supporting our NATO Allies and partners.”

As 2d MEB nears the end of its current deployment to Naples as TF 61/2, beginning in May 2024, the task force remains fully prepared to respond to real-world crises. Drawing on lessons from past operations, such as the Turkey earthquakes and Greek wildfires, TF 61/2 has played a crucial role in planning and preparing for potential crisis operations, building on its experience to ensure readiness for any emerging contingency. The task force’s command and control capabilities allow it to support NAVEUR-NAVAF, U.S. 6th Fleet, and MFEA, ensuring a vital forward presence that reinforces U.S. commitments to Allies and partners, and enhances stability in the region.

“Our focus is on integrating with the Navy, to ensure that we can respond to any crisis quickly and decisively,” said Meyer. “We have an amazing team here at TF 61/2, and I’m confident in our ability to meet any challenge.”

Since its initial deployment to Naples in 2022, TF 61/2 has cemented its role as an indispensable asset in the European and African theaters. Under the steadfast leadership of Meyer

and Rodriguez, the task force has built on its amphibious operations legacy, continually enhancing its readiness, command and control capabilities, and integration with NATO Allies and partners. TF 61/2 scales back its presence in Naples once the ARG/MEU redeploys, but always maintains its readiness to surge forward as needed for crisis response. Whether participating in major exercises, responding to humanitarian needs, or maintaining its forward-deployed posture, TF 61/2 exemplifies the Marine Corps' commitment to amphibious warfare and crisis response. As the task force looks ahead, it remains focused on its mission to be always ready, always prepared, and always poised to meet any challenge at any time.

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## **Coast Guard Holds Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for New Air Station Ventura**



Coast Guard Fireman Xander Belchere, assigned to Coast Guard Air Station Ventura, cuts a ribbon during the commissioning ceremony for Air Station Ventura at Naval Base Ventura County in Point Mugu, California, Nov. 13, 2024. The ribbon-cutting and commissioning ceremony marked the establishment of the newest Coast Guard air station in 25 years. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Loumania Stewart)

From U.S. Coast Guard District Eleven, Nov. 13, 2024

VENTURA, Calif. – The Coast Guard is proud to announce the opening of its newest air station at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu. The ribbon cutting and commissioning ceremony was held today, marking the establishment of the newest Coast Guard air station in 25 years.

Air Station Ventura features a \$70 million state-of-the-art, 48,000 square foot hangar and a 12,000 square foot administration facility, ensuring that Coast Guard personnel have the resources needed to carry out their vital missions. This new facility is expected to house three MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters and approximately 100 personnel, significantly

enhancing the Coast Guard's capabilities in the region.

"The establishment of Air Station Ventura is a critical development for the Coast Guard's operations within the Eleventh District area of responsibility," said Rear Adm. Joseph R. Buzzella, commander, Coast Guard District Eleven. "This new station offers ready resources that provide safety and security to the maritime community. This is a monumental day for the air crews and for the community in which they serve."

Recently, the aircrew of Air Station Ventura conducted three rescues:

- Oct. 13, 2024: Air Station Ventura medevac a 63-year-old woman suffering from abdominal pain from the Cruise Ship Grand Princess
- Oct. 17, 2024: Air Station Ventura hoists a diver from vessel in 10-foot seas suffering decompression sickness near Anacapa Islands in Channel Islands.
- Oct. 31, 2024: Air Station Ventura medevac a man suffering from seizures from Cruise Ship Celebrity Radiance

"The recent rescues by the team at Air Station Ventura is a testament to the skill, dedication and readiness of our aircrews," said Cmdr. Amanda Sardone, commanding officer, Air Station Ventura. "As plank owners, our crew will continue to leave a lasting mark on the future of this unit and service."

The air station serves a crucial role in protecting the maritime region from Orange County to San Luis Obispo County including the vital ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach

encompassing an area of responsibility more than 350 nautical miles.. Its missions include 24/7 emergency response; search and rescue; drug and migrant interdiction; law enforcement; and marine safety and environmental protection. The permanent presence of the Coast Guard in Ventura County provides enhanced security and quicker response times to emergencies, benefiting both the local community and maritime industries. District 11 now consists of five air stations in its area of responsibility to include: Humboldt Bay, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego and Ventura.

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## **Airbus                    MH-65                    Dolphin Helicopter Passes 40 Years of Coast Guard Service**



From Airbus Helicopters

Today, Nov. 14, Airbus and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Airbus MH-65 Dolphin helicopter fleet supporting the USCG's vital life-saving missions.

**Key Highlights:**

- The first MH-65 Dolphin was delivered on November 14, 1984 to the USCG at Airbus' Grand Prairie, Texas facility, which continues to service and support the maintenance of this fleet today.
- In honor of this milestone, a Houston Coast Guard station will fly in an MH-65 to meet the Airbus team responsible for their ongoing support at the Airbus Helicopters' facility in Grand Prairie, Texas.

- Airbus employees in the Dallas area work tirelessly to ensure the Coast Guard can execute their critical missions effectively.

### **Quick Facts about the Airbus MH-65 Dolphin helicopter:**

- **In Service:** Nearly 100 helicopters supporting the U.S. Coast Guard, accumulating more than 1.8 million flight hours; It currently makes up the largest fleet in the USCG.
- **Locations:** Operates across 26 states and various international locations
- **Missions:** The MH-65 has saved more lives and interdicted more drugs than any other helicopter in history.
- **Global Reach:** The MH-65 has operated on every continent

Airbus is the world's leading helicopter manufacturer, offering the most comprehensive lineup of civilian and military helicopters in the world.

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# **Gray Eagle STOL Makes Historic First Flight from**

# Ship to Land



*Short Takeoff and Landing UAS Operates from South Korean Warship*

From GA-ASI

SAN DIEGO – 13 November 2024 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) logged another aviation milestone on Nov. 12, 2024, when its Gray Eagle STOL aircraft took off from a South Korean warship and landed at a ground base – the first-ever such mission for an aircraft of this type. Working with our GA-ASI’s in-country partner, Hanwha Aerospace, Gray Eagle STOL launched from the South Korean navy’s amphibious landing ship Dokdo underway at sea off the coast of Pohang, South Korea. The Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) then flew to Pohang Navy Airfield and landed normally.

Gray Eagle STOL – which stands for short takeoff and landing – is the only medium-altitude, long-endurance aircraft of its kind with the ability to operate from large-deck warships such as amphibious ships and aircraft carriers, as well as short and unimproved fields on land. The test with the South Korean military further validates the aircraft’s capability and

versatility.

“We applaud the South Korean navy for its foresight in examining the unique capability of GE STOL for its fleet. This demonstration illustrates the ability of the GE STOL to safely operate on many types of aircraft-capable ships, which opens myriad new ways our allies can use this UAS to support multi-domain naval operations,” said GA-ASI CEO Linden Blue.

Hanwha Aerospace is engaged with General Atomics to support national defense with proven, state-of-the-art technology suited for a multi-domain warfare environment, contributing to global security alongside allied nations in response to rapidly growing threats.

“The demonstration is a crucial step in verifying how the GE STOL can contribute to defense capabilities, and I am honored to witness this alongside the Republic of Korea Navy, to whom I extend my deepest gratitude for conducting the test,” said Hanwha Aerospace CEO and President Jae-il Son. “Hanwha is fully committed to making bold investments, fostering collaboration, and providing steadfast support in the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) business.”

The Ministry of National Defense for the Republic of Korea is initially evaluating GE STOL for its ability to meet its emerging military requirements. South Korean navy, army and other officials were asked to evaluate Gray Eagle STOL and supported the test.

“The demo highlighted the versatility of STOL aboard a warship, in the Dokdo, designed not for fixed-wing aircraft but solely for helicopters. Gray Eagle STOL’s flight proves that navies can add significant new capability without costly major modifications to their existing warships,” said South Korean Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Yang Yong-mo.

Gray Eagle STOL is highly common with the classic Gray Eagle aircraft, substituting a different engine, wings, control

surfaces and landing gear. Gray Eagle STOL is General Atomics' name for the production variant of the historic aircraft demonstrator known as Mojave.

In November 2023, GA-ASI and Mojave performed a [demonstration of STOL takeoff and return landing aboard an aircraft carrier](#) in an event with the UK Royal Navy's HMS Prince of Wales, which is smaller than a typical U.S. aircraft carrier at 932 feet long (284m) and 240 feet wide (73m). The Dokdo class is considerably smaller than the Prince of Wales, only 653 feet long (199m) and 102 feet wide (31m).

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## **U.S. Central Command Strikes Houthi Facilities and Weapons Systems**



From U.S. Central Command, Nov. 13, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. - U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces executed a series of precise airstrikes on multiple Houthi weapons storage facilities situated within Houthi-controlled territories in Yemen, Nov. 9-10. These facilities housed a variety of advanced conventional weapons used by the Iran-backed Houthis to target U.S. and international military and civilian vessels navigating international waters in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The operation involved U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy assets to include the F-35C.

This targeted operation was conducted in response to the Houthi's repeated and unlawful attacks on international commercial shipping, as well as U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden. It also aimed to degrade the Houthi's ability to threaten regional partners.

Additionally, U.S. Navy destroyers USS Stockdale (DDG 106), USS Spruance (DDG 111), along with U.S. Air Force and U.S.

Navy aircraft successfully defeated a range of Houthi-launched weapons while transiting the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. These forces successfully engaged and defeated eight one-way attack uncrewed aerial systems (OWA UAS), five anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), and four anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs), ensuring the safety of the ships and their personnel.

There were no injuries or damage to U.S. personnel or equipment. These actions reflect the ongoing commitment of CENTCOM forces to protect U.S. personnel, regional partners, and international shipping, while maintaining security and stability in the region.

CENTCOM remains vigilant in its efforts to safeguard maritime traffic in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and will continue to take appropriate steps to address any threats to regional stability.

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## **HII Redelivers USS Montana from Post-Shakedown Availability at Newport News Shipbuilding**



NEWPORT NEWS, Va., Nov. 13, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII’s (NYSE: HII) Newport News Shipbuilding division has completed post-shakedown availability (PSA) work on *Virginia*-class fast attack submarine USS *Montana* (SSN 794). The submarine was redelivered to the U.S. Navy on Nov. 12.

“Redelivering USS *Montana* back to the fleet reflects the tremendous teamwork and accomplishment by our shipbuilders and the crew,” said Jason Ward, NNS vice president of *Virginia*-class submarine construction. “This successful PSA demonstrates our commitment to building the finest submarines for the Navy and ensuring they are ready to carry out the mission defending our nation around the world.”

The PSA, a maintenance period that typically follows delivery of new ships, included combat systems and electronics upgrades, as well as general maintenance on the submarine.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/newsroom/>

USS *Montana* is the 21st *Virginia*-class submarine, and the 10th delivered by NNS. The Navy commissioned it on June 25, 2022, at Naval Station Norfolk.

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# Retired Admiral Urges Government Transparency on UAPs



A screen shot of Gallaudet testifying before a joint hearing of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

A retired Navy admiral and former acting administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was one of the key witnesses at a remarkable House hearing on Nov. 13 to continue to investigate the mystery of unidentified anomalous phenomena, the fast-flying, quick-maneuvering craft formerly known as UFOs.

Retired Admiral Tim Gallaudet told a joint subcommittee

hearing of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability that when he was serving as commander of the Navy Meteorology and Oceanography Command in 2015 he became aware of how UAPs were interacting with “humanity,” specifically the Navy.

His personnel were participating in a naval exercise off the U.S. East Coast that included the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group and was overseen by a four-star admiral, he said.

“During this exercise, I received an email on the Navy’s secure network from the operations officer of Fleet Forces Command,” Gallaudet said. “The email was addressed to all subordinate commanders, and the subject line read in all capital letters: URGENT SAFETY OF FLIGHT ISSUE. The text of the email was brief but alarming, with words to the effect: “If any of you know what these are, tell me ASAP. We are having multiple near-midair collisions, and if we do not resolve it soon, we will have to shut down the exercise.”

The video included what has come to be called the “go-fast” video, now-unclassified imagery captured by a Navy F/A-18 that shows an object “exhibiting flight and structural characteristics unlike anything in our arsenal,” Gallaudet said. The next day, the email disappeared from Gallaudet’s account and the accounts of other recipients and was never discussed again.

“I concluded that the UAP information must have been classified within a special access program managed by an intelligence agency – a compartmented program that even senior officials, including myself, were not read into. Last year’s UAP hearing before this oversight committee confirmed that UAP-related information is not only being withheld from senior officials and members of Congress, but elements of the government are engaging in a disinformation campaign to include personal attacks designed to discredit UAP whistleblowers,” he said.

He said he has spoken to Navy officials about UAPs moving underwater as well, including ones that could outpace Navy submarines. Asked what he thought UAPs are, he said “there is strong evidence that they are non human, higher intelligence.”

Since leaving government, Gallaudet, who now heads Ocean STL Consulting, said he has become an advocate for greater government transparency.

He recommended Congress establish oversight of the executive branch’s management of any UAP programs; empower an independent UAP Records Review Board to examine all relevant UAP data; and pass and establish a “whole of government approach” to whatever UAPs are.

“My speaking out has encouraged others to do the same, and it is my hope that over time, the number of your constituents who want to know the truth about UAP will increase to such an extent that the congressional action I have just recommended will become inevitable,” Gallaudet said.

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**Navy Makes Significant Investment in Munitions Capability, Awards Kongsberg Defence Multi-Year Over the Horizon – Weapons System**

# Contract



By Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – The Navy has awarded a \$960.8 million firm-fixed-price multiyear contract to Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace (KDA) for the Over the Horizon – Weapons System (OTH-WS) Naval Strike Missile (NSM) requirement, Nov. 12.

The OTH NSM provides the U.S. and its allies with long range anti-surface offensive strike capability as well as increased coastline defense, deterrence, and interoperability.

“This multi-year procurement contract delivers on the Department of the Navy’s commitment to build capability and capacity in the near-term by making our platforms more lethal,” said Nickolas H. Guertin, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition (ASN (RD&A)). “By making the right targeted investments, we ensure we deliver a balance of warfighter-ready capabilities at the right time, scale, and cost.”

Through use of a multiyear contract the Navy will achieve program savings of \$206 million. The award helps provide stability of the munitions industrial base while enabling delivery of munitions critical to sustaining the Navy's maritime dominance.

"This Over the Horizon – Weapons System contract will help ensure our Navy is ready to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and win decisively in conflict if called," said Rear Adm. Tom Dickinson, Program Executive Officer, Integrated Warfare Systems. "It supports ongoing efforts to put more munitions on more platforms in more places to prevail on a globalized battlefield."

KDA recently announced plans to build a new production facility in the U.S. Located near key Navy facilities, the site in James City County, Virginia will provide additional production capacity, sustainment and in-country tech refresh capabilities for the Naval Strike Missile (NSM).

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## **Centcom Conducts Strikes in Yemen, Syria**



PACIFIC OCEAN (June 7, 2024) An F-35C Lightning II, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VMFA) 314, launches from the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). (U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Mario Castro Gamez) Nov. 12, 2024 | By C. Todd Lopez, DoD Public Affairs

Since Friday, U.S. Central Command has conducted strikes against Iranian-backed Houthi targets in Yemen and against targets in Syria as part of the defeat-ISIS mission there.

On Saturday and Sunday, Centcom forces executed airstrikes against multiple Houthi weapons storage facilities within Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, said Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder during a briefing today.

“These facilities housed a variety of advanced conventional weapons used by the Iran-backed Houthis to target U.S. and international military and civilian vessels navigating international waters in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden,” Ryder said.

Both Air Force and Navy assets, including F-35C fighter aircraft, were involved in the strikes, which were in response to Houthi attacks on commercial, U.S. and coalition vessels in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab Strait and Gulf of Aden.

“As you’ve heard us say before, we will continue to make clear to the Houthis that there will be consequences for their illegal and reckless attacks,” Ryder said.

Yesterday, Ryder said, Centcom also conducted strikes against nine targets in two locations associated with Iranian groups in Syria. The strikes, he said, were in response to two attacks on U.S. personnel in Syria that happened Nov. 10 at Mission Support Site Green Village in northeast Syria.

One of those attacks involved a UAV, while the second attack involved an indirect fire incident with two rockets. There were no U.S. injuries involved with either attack.

Ryder said the U.S. strikes will degrade the ability of Iranian-backed groups to plan and launch future attacks on U.S. and coalition forces who are in the region to conduct the defeat-ISIS operations.

Centcom commander Army Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla said the U.S. will do what’s needed to defend its personnel in the Centcom area of responsibility.

“Our message is clear. Attacks against U.S. and coalition partners in the region will not be tolerated,” said Kurilla. “We will continue to take every step necessary to protect our personnel and coalition partners and respond to reckless attacks.”

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# United States, Canada, and Finland Sign MOU to Build Arctic and Polar Icebreakers

*New trilateral arrangement formalizes collaboration on the production of Arctic and polar icebreakers*

From the Department of Homeland Security, Nov. 13, 2024

WASHINGTON – Officials representing the Governments of the United States, Canada, and Finland today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to begin working together to develop world-class Arctic and polar icebreakers through the exchange of knowledge, information, and resources in each of our countries. Today’s landmark MOU builds off the launch of the Icebreaker Collaboration Effort (ICE) Pact by Prime Minister Trudeau, President Stubb, and President Biden on the margins of the NATO Washington Summit in July.

In signing the ICE Pact MOU, we have embarked on a transformative partnership that strengthens our ability to uphold international rules and maintain security in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. By jointly developing and producing world-class Arctic and polar icebreakers, we are laying the foundation for a resilient and competitive shipbuilding industry, capable of meeting both national and global demand for these critical assets. This arrangement underscores our collective commitment to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Arctic and polar regions, and is a testament to the strength of allied cooperation in addressing strategic challenges.

Each of our nations recognizes the need to enhance our Arctic and polar icebreaking capabilities to assert our collective presence in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Building these specialized vessels at a faster pace, on a larger scale, and

at competitive costs is a shared priority as we uphold safety and security in these strategically important areas.

The ICE Pact includes four components: 1) enhanced information exchange between the United States, Canada, and Finland; 2) workforce development collaboration; 3) engagement with allies and partners, and; 4) research and development. Given the high costs of shipbuilding, long-term orders are essential for shipyard success in each of our countries. The collective investment in our domestic shipyards has the potential to scale production and reduce the cost of Arctic and polar icebreakers for our own use and for our allies and partners.

By leveraging our collective expertise and resources, the MOU will facilitate knowledge, information, and resource sharing with shipyards, with the potential to create high-quality manufacturing jobs in the maritime infrastructure industry. ICE Pact will help provide the stability necessary to support the production of Arctic and polar icebreakers and strengthen our shipbuilding industries.