

Officials Provide Update on Operation Southern Spear 1 Year After its Launch



U.S. officials spoke to the media yesterday regarding the progress of Operation Southern Spear – the large-scale U.S. military and counter-narco-terrorism campaign in the Western Hemisphere – one year after the operation launched in September 2025, saying the mission has been largely successful thus far.

Of note, one official said U.S. Southern Command's counternarcotics operations over the past year have driven record reductions in illicit maritime activity, with a 65% reduction in the Western Caribbean, a 60% reduction in the Eastern Caribbean and a nearly 50% reduction in key areas of the Eastern Pacific.

The official said President Donald J. Trump made a promise to the American people one year ago to secure the U.S., defend its sovereignty and “take the fight to the cartels and narco-terrorists who have poisoned our communities for far too long.”

“Under Secretary [of War Pete] Hegseth, the Department of War is delivering on that promise and – in the Western Hemisphere specifically – the results are simply undeniable,” the official said.

The War Department's most recent quarterly [report](#) to Congress on Operation Southern Spear, which covers the period from April 1 to June 30 of this year, states that the U.S. military conducted airstrikes on 19 vessels suspected of being affiliated with designated terrorist organizations, with approximately 56 individuals killed or presumed dead.

The previous quarter saw 12 vessels struck, killing 40 suspected narco-terrorists, according to the report.

Regarding the Trump administration's designation of multiple drug cartels in the Western Hemisphere as foreign terrorist organizations, which gives the U.S. military the authority to treat them under the same rules of engagement as foreign terrorist organizations in other parts of the world; one of the U.S. officials told the media the cartels are indeed comparable to long-established foreign terrorist organizations.

"The foreign terrorist organizations that operate in Mexico and across the Western Hemisphere are responsible for more American deaths than any other adversary that we have faced in recent memory," the official said.

The official added that it's not just the spread of the highly lethal drug fentanyl that is contributing to American deaths, but also the exportation of violence to U.S. communities.

"The gang structure in the United States is downstream of the cartel threat in the Western Hemisphere, so the evidence conclusively proves that the violence in our streets – the gangland killings, the assassinations, the bloodshed ... the extortion [and] the armed robbery – are all part and parcel of this vast, sophisticated network of foreign terrorist organizations that operate in the Western Hemisphere, for which the United States is the primary target," the official said.

In addition to the vessel strikes listed in the recent report on Southern Spear, the document also states that, during last quarter, eight U.S. Navy and Marine Corps vessels, a P-8 patrol and reconnaissance aircraft squadron and the Marine Corps' 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit were deployed in support of the operation.

The document also notes that, in late June, three of those

vessels were redeployed to support humanitarian relief operations following the earthquakes in Venezuela.

When asked what the future end state, or mission accomplishment for Operation Southern Spear would look like – as well as how long the Trump administration and War Department are prepared to continue the endeavor, one of the officials said victory would involve U.S. partner nations throughout the Western Hemisphere being in control of their own governments.

“Our job is not acting in defense of those countries for their own sake – though they are our partners and we help them – but in the defense of the United States, the president made clear we can and we will strike wherever we need to,” the official said.

“So, victory is these [foreign terror] organizations cannot raise armies, they can’t control territory, they can’t export violence into America, they cannot exercise control over commerce in the region and they can’t kill American citizens by importing drugs into our country,” the official added.

Sept. 2, 2026 | By [Matthew Olay](#), Pentagon News

Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group arrives in Thailand



LAEM CHABANG, Thailand – Elements of the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group (ABECSG), including Nimitz-class aircraft

carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72); the embarked staffs of CSG-3, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9, and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21; and the nine squadrons of CVW-9, arrived in Laem Chabang, while Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121) docked in nearby Sriracha, for scheduled port visits, Sept. 2, 2026.

Escort Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls (CG 62) also arrived in Map Ta Phut, Thailand, for their own scheduled port visit.

"Our arrival in Laem Chabang provides a well-deserved opportunity for our Sailors and Marines to rest and recharge. It also underscores the strong and enduring partnership and alliance between the United States and Thailand," said Rear Adm. Robert E. Loughran, commander, Carrier Strike Group 3. "What this strike group has accomplished is truly historic. I could not be prouder of the exceptional professionalism and expertise demonstrated by every member of this team during our operations in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility."

Thailand is our oldest partner in the region, spanning 193 years since the 1833 Treaty of Amity and Commerce. Thailand is also our only treaty ally in mainland southeast Asia. The U.S.-Thai relationship, especially in the maritime domain, is instrumental in maintaining peace through strength in the Indo-Pacific region. This relationship is further strengthened by bilateral and multinational exercises like Cobra Gold and by port visits like this.

"Abraham Lincoln's visit to Laem Chabang is a clear demonstration of our enduring commitment to our allies and partners in Thailand, and we are all very excited to make Thailand the first port visit on our historic deployment," said Capt. Dan Keeler, Abraham Lincoln's commanding officer. "This port visit will help us gain a deeper understanding of one another, demonstrate our mutual commitment to the security

of the region, and allow our crew to enjoy this beautiful and historic country.”

The visit marks Abraham Lincoln’s first full port stop since the start of their deployment in November 2025, which includes 286 days at sea. It also comes after nearly seven months of operations in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, where the strike group and multiple other U.S. Navy and Marine Corps assets conducted combat operations in support of Operation Epic Fury and enforced the largest naval blockade in decades.

The ABECSG is conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. The strike group, alongside allies and partners, is committed to an Indo-Pacific that is free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient for all nations.

From USS Abraham Lincoln Public Affairs, Sept. 1, 2026

Coast Guard rescues, interdicts 37 aliens southwest of Channel Islands



LOS ANGELES – U.S. Coast Guard crews rescued and subsequently interdicted 37 suspected aliens approximately 88 miles offshore Channel Islands Harbor, Friday.

At approximately 3:40 p.m., Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles-Long Beach watchstanders received a radio notification on VHF Channel 16 from the operator of a 30-foot pleasure craft

located 88 miles offshore, reporting it was drifting without fuel, food or water for two days and lacked personal safety equipment. Watchstanders diverted crews assigned to Coast Guard Cutter Sockeye (WPB 87337), Coast Guard Halibut (WPB 87340), Coast Guard Station Los Angeles-Long Beach, Coast Guard Station Channel Islands, and Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point to respond.

At approximately 8:30 p.m., Coast Guard crews located and boarded the vessel, identifying 37 suspected aliens aboard.

The Coast Guard crews rescued all individuals from the vessel and transferred them aboard the Sockeye. Sockeye's crew transported the individuals to Coast Guard Base Los Angeles-Long Beach where they were transferred to U.S. Border Patrol personnel.

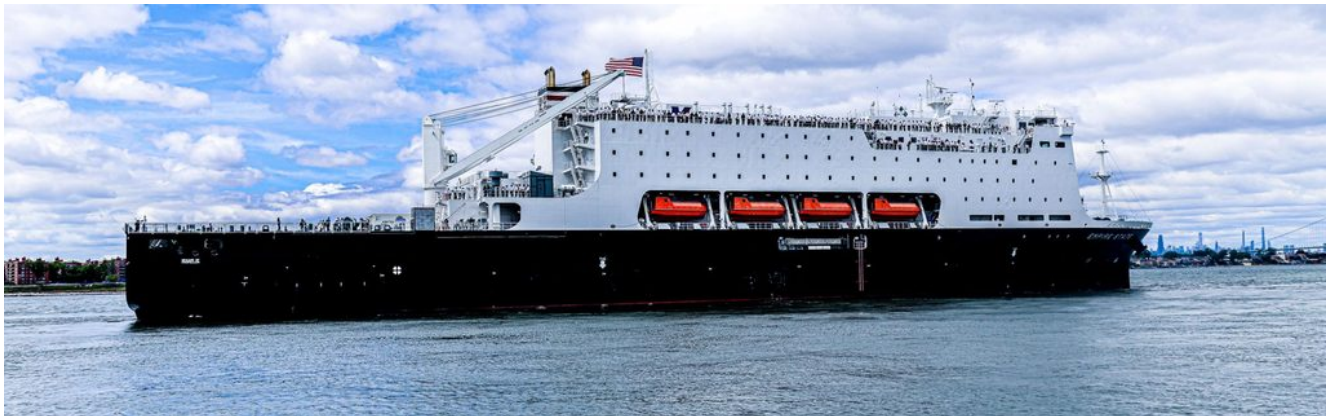
"I could not be prouder of the Coast Guard crews on scene who were directly responsible for 37 lives saved last night," said Master Chief Peter Nelson, Sockeye's officer in charge. "Despite operating far offshore in rough conditions at night, they persevered until every person in danger was rescued. Their extraordinary professionalism, superb judgment, and impeccable seamanship shined throughout the entire case."

Units involved:

- Coast Guard Cutter Halibut (WPB 87340)
- Coast Guard Cutter Sockeye (WPB 87337)
- Coast Guard Station Channel Islands
- Coast Guard Station Los Angeles-Long Beach
- Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles-Long Beach
- Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point
- U.S. Customs Border Patrol Air and Marine Interdiction Agents
- U.S. Border Patrol

From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Sept. 1, 2026

SUNY Maritime College Announces Activation of The Training Ship Empire State



BRONX, N.Y. – Maritime College has announced that a decision memorandum from the Maritime Administrator, Stephen M. Carmel has been received, outlining that MARAD will be activating Empire State for temporary federal service, commencing approximately September 1, 2026, for a notional mission duration of approximately 170 days.

Over the upcoming weeks the school's obligation is to prepare the vessel for federal use and remain focused on efforts on what Maritime College does every day: educate and develop the next generation of maritime leaders.

The President of Maritime College, RADM John Okon '91 said *"As we enter a new academic year, the timing and duration of this activation pose significant challenges to the College's academic and training programs. We know that whatever comes next, we will face it together, with our students first and our mission always at the forefront. I am fully confident in*

our ability to meet this challenge as a Maritime College family. We have faced moments of uncertainty before, from Somalia to Hurricanes Katrina, Harvey, and Sandy, and each time, we adapted, persevered, and continued to deliver on our mission. For more than 150 years, Maritime College has demonstrated the agility and resilience required to navigate changing circumstances. We will draw on that same strength today. We will work closely with MARAD and SUNY, advocate for our students and our institution, and do everything within our ability to minimize the impact of this deployment on our students, our College, and our mission."

Empire State is federally owned and is the nation's first purpose-built National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV), specifically designed to provide State Maritime Academies with a modern, adaptable platform for maritime education and training. For SUNY Maritime College, this state-of-the-art vessel is more than a training ship, it is our greatest classroom and laboratory and an integral part of our students' academic and comprehensive educational experience.

The approximately 170-day activation would represent the longest deployment of Empire State in recent history. SUNY Maritime is already working to pivot coursework, training schedules, and other academic experiences to ensure our students remain on track to meet their educational, licensing, and graduation requirements while the vessel is deployed.

SUNY Maritime's current enrollment is 1685 students for Fall 2026 and 1150 of those students are members of the regiment who have classes/training on the ship.

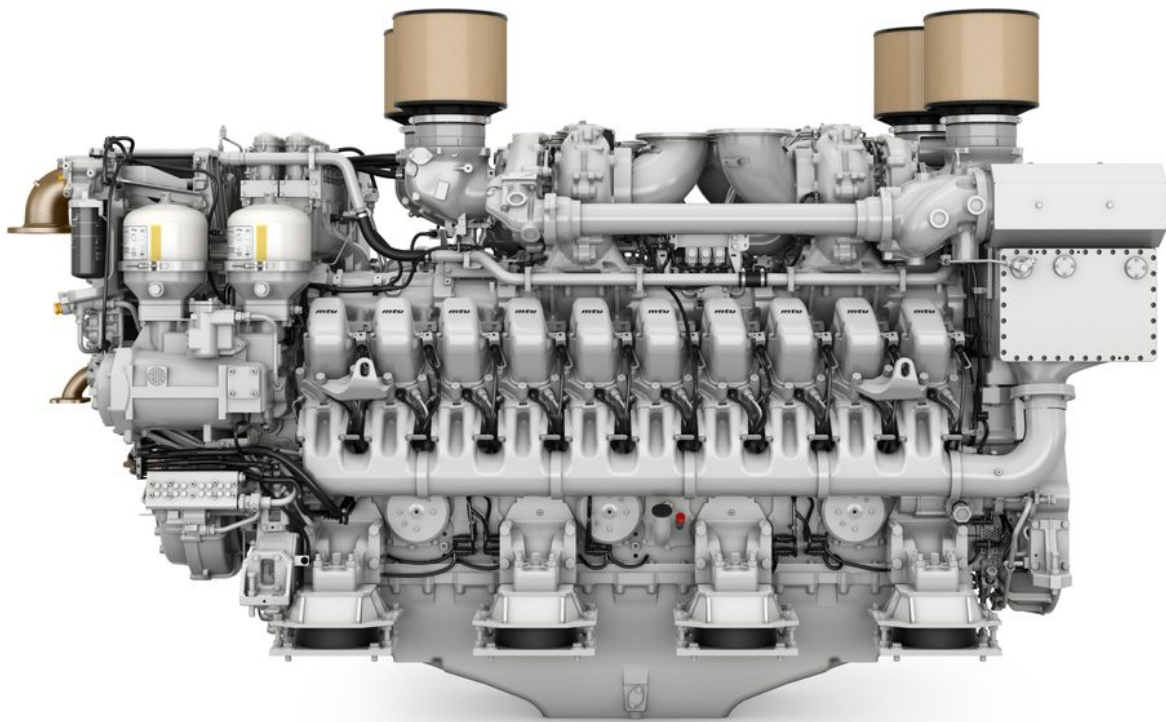
About SUNY Maritime College

With more than a dozen undergraduate majors—including five ABET-accredited engineering programs, two master's degree options, and a renowned U.S. Coast Guard license program—Maritime College arms you with the skills to navigate,

power, and operate the world's maritime industry. Beyond the classroom, Maritime fosters hands-on learning and leadership development with over 50 student clubs and organizations, 13 NCAA Division III teams, independent collegiate sports, and various programs, including the only Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program in New York City. The College's global alumni network offers unparalleled career connections and support.

From SUNY Maritime College, Sept. 1, 2026

Rolls-Royce Achieves U.S. Navy Certification for its mtu Engines in Autonomous Naval Vessel Operations



Rolls-Royce today announced that its mtu Series 4000 and Series 2000 marine engines have received certification from the U.S. Navy for use in autonomous naval vessel operations, marking a significant milestone in the advancement of unmanned maritime capabilities.

After passing two 720-hour durability tests, mtu Series 4000 engines were certified for use in autonomous applications for up to 4300kW of propulsion power and 3000kWe of power generation. The Series 4000 is available in V-configurations of 8, 12, 16 and 20 cylinders.

The mtu Series 2000 platform was also certified based on the results of rigorous engine component testing along with thousands of hours of reliable field operation. The Series 2000 is available for propulsion applications up to 1939kW in V-configurations of 10, 12 and 16 cylinders.

The certifications align with the requirements outlined in the 2021/2026 National Defense Authorization Act for unmanned

systems, which require engines to pass demanding operational and reliability tests without human intervention or preventive/corrective maintenance or repairs to the main propulsion, fuel and oil systems. Successful testing qualifies propulsion systems to power an unmanned ship for 30-day deployments at sea without requiring maintenance.

Scott Hanson, Vice President, Governmental Sales at Rolls-Royce Power Systems in North America said: "The certification of our engines for unmanned operations further demonstrates the reliability and advanced technology of our mtu Series 4000 and 2000 marine propulsion systems. For decades, mtu engines have been trusted to provide reliable, mission-ready power for our crews at sea. As autonomous missions become increasingly important to naval strategy, we are proving that we can deliver the power systems, long-endurance capability and technology required for the new operational demands of unmanned vessels."

Autonomous unmanned surface vessels (USVs) represent a rapidly growing priority for the U.S. government as it seeks to expand fleet capacity and enhance operational flexibility. One of the Navy's first autonomous unmanned surface vessels, the Sea Hunter, was operationally deployed earlier this year along with Seahawk by the U.S. Navy as the first division of unmanned surface vessels. Sea Hunter is powered by twin mtu 12V 2000 engines and has logged tens of thousands of operational hours since its christening in 2016.

USVs enable extended missions, deliver high reliability and improve safety by removing personnel from hazardous environments. To ensure they meet these objectives, USVs are subject to robust certification frameworks, emphasizing rigorous validation of control systems, cybersecurity and safety-critical functions. These U.S. Navy processes are essential to ensuring the safe and reliable deployment of unmanned technologies across maritime, aerial and subsea domains.

Rolls-Royce is also a leader in propulsion systems for unmanned aircraft, powering current unmanned platforms for the U.S. Air Force (RQ-4 Global Hawk) and U.S. Navy (MQ-4C Triton). Most recently, Rolls-Royce supported successful test flights for the Navy's new MQ-25A Stingray™ – an unmanned refueling aircraft powered by the AE 3007N engine from the Rolls-Royce AE engine family. The aircraft autonomously executed a full mission profile, including taxi, take-off, flight maneuvers, and landing.

As a trusted partner to the U.S. Armed Forces for several decades, Rolls-Royce is providing the advanced technology and proven reliability for the next generation of unmanned military vehicles in the air and at sea.

From Rolls-Royce, Sept. 1, 2026

The Marines' Ground Arsenal in the 2020s and 2030s



The U.S. Marine Corps hosted a media roundtable on its Ground Combat Element visions for 2040, the service's outlook, arsenal investments and planning for the next 14 years. *Seapower* sent the USMC questions that were addressed and answered outside of the media roundtable.

Ground Combat Element 2040 Vehicles

"The Marine Corps is exploring all avenues to modernize our force, focusing on an enterprise system approach that creates scalable and easily produced attritable systems," wrote Captain Steven J. Keenan, Communication Directorate, Plans, Policies, and operations media officer from Marine Corps headquarters. "As we build the Ground Combat Element of 2040, we are shifting away from relying solely on exquisite, highly complex, and expensive legacy platforms. Instead, our modernization strategy prioritizes agility, adaptability and mass. We are focusing on open architectures and a unified enterprise systems approach. This allows us to rapidly integrate new technologies, update software and seamlessly share data across the Joint Force, rather than being locked into bespoke, standalone prototypes that cannot communicate with one another. A core component of our Human-Machine

Teaming strategy is the use of attritable uncrewed platforms that are affordable enough to be lost in combat without compromising mission success or risking Marine lives. These easily produced systems will be pushed to the tactical edge to absorb first contact risk, conduct reconnaissance, and deliver precision fires.”

The Marines acknowledge GCE vehicles for 2040 still have to fit within the size constraints of the C-130, V-22, CH-53K, Landing Ship Medium and the Navy’s hovercrafts. “To remedy these transport limitations, the Marine Corps created the Ground Systems Enterprise to bring all systems under a common family. This ensures each system is complementary and limits the addition of bespoke platforms that cannot operate within the enterprise of systems that enable Marine Air Ground Task Force structure,” Keenan said.

“The Marine Corps is prioritizing highly mobile, expeditionary wheeled platforms over tracked vehicles to align with the demands of worldwide deployment in support of distributed maritime operations,” Keenan told Seapower when asked if any tracked or Arctic-specific vehicles will be acquired in the future. “We continue to aggressively experiment with, develop, and field next-generation combat and tactical vehicles, ensuring our Marines maintain a decisive advantage in any clime and place. Additionally, the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) is fully capable of conducting cold-weather operations.”

Concerning lighter wheeled vehicles and potential lack of heavy firepower, armor, and limited ammunition quantities compared to a M1A2 Abrams tank, Keenan replied, “The Marine Corps is not compromising on lethality; we are modernizing it. By divesting our heavy armor, we are replacing larger, less agile systems with a highly mobile, distributed web of anti-armor systems and Organic Precision Fires (OPF). We have traded a singular, easily targeted platform for a survivable and agile network of precision-strike capabilities that radically expand a commander’s operational reach.

“Ultimately, our newest wheeled vehicles enable a lighter, more agile force designed to outmaneuver the enemy. We rely on speed, signature management, low detectability and rapid dispersion to avoid being targeted in the first place. These platforms do not operate in isolation; they are mobile, sensor-fused nodes integrated with the Joint Force. By leveraging capabilities such as the Family of Integrated Targeting Cells (FITC), our Marines on the ground can rapidly tap into the substantial magazine depth of naval vessels, aviation assets, and joint theater fires bringing overwhelming combat power to bear at the time and place of our choosing.”

Asked if the U.S. Army’s 155mm Multi-Domain Artillery Cannon System (MDACS) might replace the Marines’ divested M1A1 tanks, Keenan said, “The Marine Corps is not currently exploring the use of the U.S. Army 155mm MDACS.”

Artillery

Asked if the Marines intend to acquire self-propelled howitzers or wheeled howitzers, Keenan replied, “The Marine Corps is not planning to depart from towed howitzers under GCE 2040. The towed 155mm howitzer remains a critical, reliable, and foundational component of the Marine Corps’ organic fire support. While there is no plan to eliminate this capability or shift toward a self-propelled or wheeled 155mm howitzer at this time, the Marine Corps continues its rigorous experimentation and modernization initiatives to improve the lethality, range, and survivability of our artillery formations. I wanted to highlight to you that while we are not replacing our 777s, we are looking to modernize our HIMARS with a new system and phase out HIMARS.”



A U.S. Army 155mm Multi-Domain Artillery Cannon System after firing. The MDACS can also engage aerial drones and cruise missiles with guided 155mm Hypersonic Velocity Projectiles. Photo credit: BAE Systems

Infantry

“Within our infantry formations, we are actively investing in the Lightweight Command Launch Unit (LW-CLU) for the Javelin, while reorganizing our anti-armor capabilities to couple these systems with unmanned Organic Precision Fires-Medium and Light (OPF-M/L) as they field. Furthermore, we have established dedicated anti-armor sections within our weapons platoons to maximize the impact of the Multi-Role Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapon System (MAAWS). Together, these initiatives deliver a far more lethal and versatile anti-armor capability inside our infantry battalions.”

Keenan continued, “By directly aligning our mobility assets with these anti-armor systems, we are creating a lower-signature, highly mobile force. This approach builds true tactical depth and provides commanders with maximum flexibility when employing our HAW-MAW-LAW (Heavy, Medium, and Light Anti-Armor Weapons) concept.”

Biometrics, Exoskeletons, Microchip Implants, Genetic Engineering

“The Marine Corps is not planning to adapt biometrics, mechanical/robotic appendages, genetic engineering, or microchip implants to future GCE Marines. The Marine Corps’ immediate modernization priorities are focused on equipping the individual Marine with better organic capabilities and uncrewed platforms, rather than structurally or genetically modifying the human warfighter,” Keenan said.

AI Humanoid Combat Robots

Keenan told Seapower, “The Marine Corps is not planning to adopt, design vehicles for, or employ AI humanoid battle robots. The Ground Combat Element 2040 concept remains fundamentally human-centric. Marines will still have to seize, hold, and defend key maritime terrain as we have done for generations. However, robotic systems with scalable autonomy will be heavily employed to absorb first contact risk, taking Marines out of high-risk tasks. The Marine Corps is focusing on uncrewed ground, air, and surface platforms to assist with Tactical Breaching & Clearing (e.g., clearing minefields or obstacles), Hazardous Reconnaissance, and Expeditionary Logistics & Material Transport. This is what we mean by Human-Machine Teaming: tactical hardware and Marines working together, fighting side-by-side, to reduce risk to human life while maximizing our lethality and survivability on the battlefield.”

Virginia Beach Economic Development Welcomes Orca AI

Defense to International Incubator



VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – [Virginia Beach Economic Development](#) (VBED) today announced that Orca AI Defense, the U.S. subsidiary of global maritime technology company [Orca AI](#), has established its first U.S. office as a new tenant of the Virginia Beach International Incubator, further strengthening the city's position as a hub for defense innovation, autonomous systems and maritime technology.

Headquartered in London, Orca AI has developed AI-powered maritime navigation technology that enhances situational awareness, improves vessel navigation, and helps prevent collisions. The company's commercial platform has achieved TRL 9 status and is currently deployed on more than 1,500 commercial vessels worldwide, leveraging more than 120 million

nautical miles of operational data.

Building on this proven technology, Orca AI Defense adapts the platform for national security and maritime protection applications. Using advanced cameras, computer vision, real-time object tracking, and automated alerts, the technology helps identify potential threats, improve operational response, detect dark vessels and other low profile maritime activity. The platform is designed to support organizations including the U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, ports, defense contractors, and autonomous and unmanned systems manufacturers.

The U.S. expansion is being led by Alon Shantzer, Vice President of Business Growth for Orca AI Defense, who currently serves as the organization's first U.S.-based employee.

"This expansion represents a pivotal moment for Orca AI Government & Defense as we bring our cutting-edge maritime intelligence directly to the US market. We are deeply grateful to Virginia Beach Economic Development and the local government for their incredible support, which has been instrumental in making this strategic move a reality," shared Shantzer.

The decision to locate in Virginia Beach followed an introduction between Orca AI Defense and Virginia Beach Economic Development at Eurosatory in Paris in June 2026. Within weeks, company leadership visited Virginia Beach and the Hampton Roads region, meeting with local defense companies, military stakeholders, and regional partners to explore collaboration opportunities. Less than two months after the initial meeting, Orca AI Defense joined the Virginia Beach International Incubator as the company's first U.S. location and fifth global office.

"Virginia Beach is proud to welcome Orca AI Defense to our

expanding maritime and defense-technology ecosystem,” said Emily Archer, Director of Virginia Beach Economic Development. “Orca AI Defense’s advanced capabilities in autonomous maritime systems will support our extensive network of defense installations, security partners, and unmanned-systems innovators. We look forward to assisting the company with its first U.S. presence at the Virginia Beach International Incubator and introducing its proven commercial technology into the regional national-security sector.”

In addition to establishing operations in the city, the company is exploring pilot programs and strategic partnerships throughout the Hampton Roads defense and maritime ecosystem to accelerate technology integration. As demand for the company's defense technology continues to grow, Orca AI Defense is actively recruiting a [business development director](#) and expects to expand its Virginia Beach employees.

The Virginia Beach International Incubator provides international companies with a strategic launch pad as they enter the U.S. market, offering direct access to one of the nation's largest concentrations of military installations, maritime industries, advanced manufacturers, and technology companies.

From [Virginia Beach Economic Development](#), Sept. 1, 2026

**SMWDC Hosts Former
Commanders, including VCN0**

for Annual Huddle



SAN DIEGO – Rear Adm. T.J. Zerr, commander, Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC), hosted former SMWDC commanders, including Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jim Kilby, for the annual commanders huddle at SMWDC headquarters in San Diego Aug. 31. Established in June 2015 under Kilby's inaugural leadership, SMWDC has evolved into a fully operational warfighting development center supporting the Surface Force.

During the meeting, Zerr provided a year-in-review update highlighting SMWDC's efforts to increase fleet tactical proficiency and lethality, including the recent graduation of Warfare Tactics Instructor (WTI) Class 26020. Program metrics reflect SMWDC's expanding reach: after patching just 84 WTIs in 2015 and now expecting to graduate approximately 145 in 2026.

"WTIs are shaping that fight right now, from tactical action officers in combat information centers to advisors on watchfloors at U.S. Naval Forces Central Command," Zerr said. "While our team is driving significant operational impact today, we must remain focused on future strategic challenges. Our forces must observe, orient, decide, act, assess and adapt faster than any adversary. Being deployed forward and deterring threats in ways that present constant dilemmas to our adversaries is the Surface Force's true strength."

The leaders discussed SMWDC's sixth line of operation, the Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum, designed to codify training standards for tactical watchstanders and capture performance data at the unit, team, and individual levels. They also reviewed the rapid operational integration of unmanned systems and mine countermeasures.

"The Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum gives us a way to connect training standards, operational experience and proficiency across the force," Zerr said. "By understanding performance at every level, we can identify gaps earlier, learn faster and build a more capable Surface Force." Command leadership emphasized that rapidly adapting tactics remains essential as operational environments grow more complex.

"In the past three years, our surface ships and Sailors have operated under sustained threat, defended forces at sea and ashore, and employed weapons at a pace we have not experienced in decades," said Kilby. "SMWDC has changed the way we trained, equipped, and employed our ships. I'm impressed by the Surface Navy's performance taking lessons learned from combat and rapidly incorporating them into doctrine, training, system development, and Fleet execution."

Kilby was SMWDC's first commander, serving from June 2015 to August 2016. He was followed by Vice Adm. John F. Wade, Rear Adm. David Welch, Rear Adm. Scott F. Robertson, Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, Rear Adm. D. Wilson Marks and Zerr, who assumed command in April 2025.

The commanders huddle provided an opportunity for current and former SMWDC commanders to draw on their collective experience and discuss priorities for the future of surface warfare. As the Navy faces increasingly contested and complex operating environments, SMWDC will continue to develop integrated warfare training and innovative solutions to help ensure the Surface Force remains ready to fight and win.

SMWDC is the Navy's warfighting development center for surface warfare and mine warfare. Its mission is to increase the lethality and tactical proficiency of the Surface Fleet across all domains by providing tactical expertise and innovative solutions through the development and assessment of warfighting doctrine, concepts, and tactics, techniques and procedures.

Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center, Aug. 31, 2026

USS Cooperstown Returns to Naval Station Mayport Following Deployment



MAYPORT, Fla. – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Cooperstown (LCS 23) returned to Naval Station Mayport Aug. 31, 2026, following a four-month deployment to U.S. Fourth Fleet area of operations.

Cooperstown departed Naval Station Norfolk May 16, 2026, to

support USNORTHCOM's border security objectives in line with the president's priorities to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and protect the homeland.

"This inaugural deployment tested my crew in every way and they answered the call in support of our nation's priorities with care and without hesitation," said Commander Jesse DuParc, Commanding Officer USS Cooperstown (LCS 23). From strengthening interoperability with our partner nations to executing every mission with precision, this crew represented the United States Navy with honor and professionalism on every operation and at every port. Their dedication to the mission never wavered, and I could not be prouder of this outstanding team with the Hall of Fame level of effort they brought to everything we set out to accomplish. We are, America's away team!"

Cooperstown is assigned to Littoral Combat Ship Squadron (LCSRON) 2 and homeported in Mayport, Florida. The littoral combat ship (LCS) is a fast, agile, mission-focused warship designed to operate in near-shore environments to counter 21st-century threats. It is a class of small surface combatants armed with capabilities to defeat challenges in the world's littorals. LCS can operate independently or in high-threat scenarios as part of a networked battle force that includes larger, multi-mission surface combatants such as cruisers and destroyers.

Cooperstown is the first ship to bear the name, and honors 70 military veterans who are members of the National Baseball Hall of Fame located in Cooperstown, New York. These particular veterans chose country over career, halting their baseball careers to serve in conflicts ranging from the Civil War through the Korean War.

From U.S. 2nd Fleet, Aug. 31, 2026

PNSY Returns North Dakota to the Fleet

USS North Dakota (SSN 784) successfully completed its Extended Drydocking Selected Restricted Availability at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Aug. 29, returning the battle-ready asset to the fleet ahead of the rebaselined schedule.

The project, which marked PNSY's first Chief of Naval Operations availability on a submarine from the third production block of the Virginia-class (Block III), successfully integrated cutting-edge maritime technologies. The North Dakota project team and ship's crew successfully navigated several first-time technical alterations and executed the testing program, including its critical testing phase, at a historically rapid pace.

"Executing this complex work package on our first Block III submarine was a demanding task, but this team met every challenge head-on with tenacity and selflessness," said Capt. Jesse Nice, shipyard commander. "Their cohesion, expertise, and indomitable will blazed the trail for future Virginia-class success stories and returned a fully modernized North Dakota back to the fleet, ready for the fight."

This commitment ensured that the complex technical upgrades were completed to the highest standard, preparing the vessel for the demands of modern deployment.

"The state-of-the-art technological capabilities integrated during this availability translate directly into immediate operational capability and credible combat power, strengthening the readiness and resilience of the submarine force and helping our Navy maintain its global edge," said

Capt. Mike Poplawski, commodore, Submarine Squadron TWO.

Achieving this enhanced operational readiness required a seamless, months-long partnership between the shipyard's civilian workforce and the submarine's crew.

"To have been a part of such a high performing and very capable Ship's Force and project team combination has been a great experience," said Andrew Stark, North Dakota project superintendent.

"Everyone involved was bought in, stayed the course and executed the fastest, most aggressive end game in recent history on a major availability at PNSY."

As America's leader for attack submarine maintenance, repair and modernization, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard delivers the decisive edge required to master an era of evolving threats. It stands at the forefront of America's commitment to peace through strength, delivering combat-ready submarines that are lethal, resilient, and prepared to win. The work performed at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is a direct contribution to national security, ensuring the U.S. Navy remains the most dominant maritime force anywhere in the world.

From Hanna Lanoie, Aug. 31, 2026