

Surface Sailors Level-up, Control the Air



Operations Specialist 1st Class Cameron Rogers leads air intercept controller classroom training at Tactical Training Group Pacific at Naval Base Point Loma, Mar. 10, 2025. Air intercept controllers deploy aboard various platforms to support carrier strike group operations around the globe and have played a key role in recent operations in the Red Sea. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Kelby Sanders)

By MC1 Kelby Sanders, COMNAVSURFPAC Public Affairs, May 2, 2025

SAN DIEGO, California – Since the latest outbreak of conflict in and around the Red Sea in October of 2023, several U.S. Navy ships operating within carrier strike groups have engaged and defeated hostile airborne targets while patrolling the area.

The Sailors communicating and coordinating with fighter pilots to shoot down Houthi missiles and drones, called Air Intercept Controllers (AICs), are trained and supported by an elite team of operations specialists assigned to Commander, Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSF) in San Diego.

In response to an increased demand for qualified and motivated AICs, Senior Chief Operations Specialist James Byrnes undertook the necessary steps to establish a detachment of enlisted operations specialists dedicated to developing more AICs and providing them with consistent, challenging training opportunities.

Over the past year, this detachment has conducted more than 800 hours of training and “leveled-up” numerous AICs.

“This has changed the culture of what it means to be an air controller,” said Byrnes. “We’ve provided technical experts to the fleet and enhanced our warfighting capability.”

The AIC training pipeline consists of seven levels of expertise, each featuring specific knowledge and quality-of-work requirements focused on their ability to communicate clearly, accurately, and concisely with friendly aircraft in high-stress environments. The AIC must demonstrate continuous improvement to progress to higher levels.

“We operate in a world that is constantly evolving,” said Operations Specialist 1st Class Cameron Rogers. “In my time as an AIC, I have learned that we are never done preparing and never done studying.”

The CNSF AIC detachment utilizes the Tactical Training Group Pacific Battle Lab at Naval Base Point Loma, in Point Loma, Calif., to immerse trainees in simulated air combat exercises, but also deploys its Sailors aboard ships as operators to complement their watch teams.

“I learned that for real world threats, especially when controlling air assets from different branches or coalition forces, simplifying communications to be easily understood is critical,” said Operations Specialist 1st Class Victor Lacey, who has recently deployed aboard Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Frank E. Petersen (DDG 121).

Lacey is credited with supervising and controlling six confirmed drone kills while aboard Spruance and earned the Combat Action Ribbon.

The detachment was established with a small team of six Sailors. Within a few months, the detachment was supporting its first carrier strike group deployment.

Due to the program’s success, CNSP increased manning to support 25 billets and they’ve now supported four carrier strike group deployments.

While manning challenges persist fleetwide, CNSP remains focused on placing highly trained and motivated AICs where they’re needed most.

“Personnel are the key,” said Rogers. “The difference is made when people who care and study and execute effective air control are added to the fight. A good air intercept controller is a force multiplier.”

Austal USA Welcomes Rear Admiral Jonathan Rucker



From Austal USA

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA welcomed Rear Admiral (RADM) Jonathan Rucker, PE0 Attack Submarines, at the company's Mobile, Ala. shipyard yesterday. RADM Rucker began his visit by addressing more than 200 members of the Austal USA and General Dynamics Electric Boat submarine manufacturing team. RADM Rucker emphasized the valuable work they are doing for the Virginia-and Columbia-class submarine programs. He then toured Austal USA's advanced ship manufacturing facility and discussed the company's critical role as a strategic partner to grow the submarine industrial base.

During the tour, RADM Rucker also viewed the progress being made on the construction of Austal USA's new 369,600 square foot module manufacturing facility purpose-built to produce

submarine modules, Module Manufacturing Facility-3 (MMF 3). MMF-3, which will achieve initial operating capability next summer, is a critical component in increasing the capacity of the submarine industrial base. The building will incorporate industry 4.0 features to provide enhanced efficiency and increase throughput.

“We appreciated the opportunity to host Rear Admiral Rucker this morning and show him the commitment of the entire Austal USA shipbuilding team to supporting the submarine industrial base,” stated Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. “From the on-going work on manufacturing modules to the construction underway for our new production facility, our team is fully focused on increasing our production in support of the Columbia- and Virginia-class programs.”

Austal USA has delivered 32 ships to the Navy over the company’s 25-year history. As part of the company’s efforts to expand the production capacity of the submarine industrial base, Austal USA is manufacturing and outfitting modules for the Virginia- and Columbia-class programs. Seven modules under construction were on display for RADM Rucker during his tour today.

Austal USA is also leading the standup of the Navy Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence in Danville, Va. In this capacity, the company is responsible for developing a national network of vendors with qualified additive manufacturing machines and processes to provide critical submarine parts.

HII Welcomes High School

Seniors to Shipbuilding Careers at Newport News Shipbuilding



[From HII](#)

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., May 09, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – More than two dozen high school seniors know what they’ll be doing after graduation this year, after accepting offers to begin their shipbuilding careers at HII’s (NYSE: HII) Newport News Shipbuilding division.

The shipyard participated in the [New Horizons Regional Education Centers](#) (NHREC) Good Life Solution Program’s Career Selection Day Thursday, in Hampton. During the event, 18 students accepted employment offers from NNS, to either begin full-time trade positions within the shipyard or attend [The Newport News Shipbuilding Apprenticeship School](#). Funded by HII to train and develop the next generation of shipbuilders, The Apprenticeship School offers four- to eight-year, tuition-free apprenticeships in 19 trades and seven optional programs.

The [Good Life Solution Program](#) is a collection of partnerships between NHREC and local employers looking to improve the way they recruit, hire, train and retain entry-level new hires out of high school.

Additionally, The Apprentice School held a ceremony April 29 to recognize high school students who participated in the Youth Builders program, with 13 of those students accepting offers to attend The Apprentice School. Youth Builders is a pre-apprenticeship workforce readiness program open to 11th and 12th grade students with interest in shipbuilding careers.

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

“These students are embarking on careers where the mission and purpose is clear: delivering the submarines and aircraft carriers our nation needs,” said Xavier Beale, NNS vice president of human resources. “We are thrilled to welcome them into our shipbuilding family as they build their careers while making important contributions to our national security.”

For more information about careers at Newport News Shipbuilding visit, hii.com/careers.

Philippines, U.S. Conclude Exercise Balikatan 25



U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Mary Grace Villarica, center-right, a dental hygienist with the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, and Philippine Dental Corps 1st Lt. Eliza Aira, a dental hygienist assigned to 1365th Dental Detachment 5ID, teach dental hygiene to local children during Exercise Balikatan 25. *Photo credit: U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Roger- Junior Annoh*

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) hosted the closing ceremony of Exercise Balikatan 25 on May 9, marking the successful completion of the largest annual combined military exercise between the Philippines and the United States.

During this 40th iteration of Balikatan, more than 14,000 Filipino, U.S., Australian and Japanese service members trained shoulder-to-shoulder across the Philippine archipelago.

“Together, we executed complex training across the archipelago, building readiness for today and resilience for tomorrow,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Michael S.

Cederholm, the U.S. Joint Task Force commander. "From live-fire drills and humanitarian missions in Palawan to sea denial in the Luzon Strait with the deployment of NMESIS to Batan Island, we advanced our capability to deter, respond, and prevail."

In a display of the increasingly modernized Philippine-U.S. alliance, the combined force conducted six all-domain field events, enhancing air and missile defense, counter-landing, and maritime security and strike capabilities. These events provided tactical and operational units with realistic, challenging training while refining command and control capabilities throughout the Philippines.

At the same time, service members from all four participating nations constructed classrooms, provided medical and dental exams, and built community ties during five humanitarian civic assistance projects. These events introduced nearly \$2.5 million in support and supplies for local Filipino communities and improved the lives of more than 75,000 Filipinos.

"Beyond the technical achievements, the most valuable outcome has been the enhanced mutual trust, deeper understanding and renewed commitment to shared security goals," said Philippine Army Gen. Romeo S. Brawner Jr., chief of staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines. "Balikatan is not merely a series of military exercises – it is a demonstration of enduring partnerships and collaborative resolve."

With the improved quality, complexity, and scope of this year's events, Balikatan 25 underscored the strength of the ironclad alliance in addition to the enduring friendship between the two nations and other regional allies and partners.

"The evolutions in Balikatan, and in our alliance, are only possible thanks to the foundation on which they are built: our shared democratic values and the deep abiding ties between our

peoples,” said MaryKay L. Carlson, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines. “With that strong foundation in place, our countries work together – at all ranks, civilian and in uniform – to adapt to evolving threats in order to achieve our shared security goals.”

BAE Systems Awarded Additional \$172M Full-Rate ACV Production Contract



PACIFIC OCEAN (Nov. 30, 2022) U.S. Marines assigned to 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division conduct amphibious assault exercises in Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACVs) launched from dock landing ship USS Harpers Ferry (LSD 49) during exercise Steel Knight 23 (SK23), Nov. 30, 2022.

(U.S. Navy Photo by MC2 Zachariah Issa)

From BAE Systems

May 1, 2025 – BAE Systems received a \$172 million full-rate production (FRP) contract to produce 30 additional Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACVs) as part of [the recently awarded FRP 5/6 contract](#).

The FRP 5/6 contract includes a series of options to produce up to 150 vehicles. The U.S. Marine Corps exercised the initial option last month for 30 vehicles, valued at \$188.5 million.

BAE Systems is also currently under contract for the ACV- Personnel and ACV-Command variants. Work on the ACV-30mm will take place in York, Pennsylvania; Johnstown, Pennsylvania; and Charleston, South Carolina through the fourth quarter of 2026.

Danish Armed Forces to Begin Operational Testing of Saildrone USVs



Four Saildrone Voyagers will be deployed in Danish waters in June 2025.

From Saildrone, May 8, 2025

COPENHAGEN, Denmark—Saildrone is proud to announce its partnership with the Danish Armed Forces in a groundbreaking initiative to enhance maritime surveillance and intelligence gathering around Northern Europe. Four Saildrone Voyager uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) will be deployed in Danish waters during the summer of 2025.

This collaboration marks a significant expansion in the Danish Armed Forces' exploration of innovative and sustainable technologies to extend their maritime presence—particularly in regions where physical access is limited or logistically challenging. The operational testing will begin in June and is part of a broader effort to integrate uncrewed systems into Denmark's defense architecture.

“The Baltic, North Sea, and European Arctic waters are currently facing unprecedented threats,” said Richard Jenkins, Saildrone founder and CEO. “We are very excited to be partnering with the Danish armed forces to deploy Saildrone

systems, to help protect Europe's critical undersea infrastructure and increase regional security."

Saildrone USVs are powered by renewable wind and solar energy, enabling months-long missions without the need for an onboard crew. Equipped with a suite of advanced, intelligence-gathering sensors and AI data fusion, the USVs will support Denmark's maritime surveillance efforts.

The testing will be conducted in close coordination with the Defence Command Denmark, the Danish Ministry of Defence Acquisition and Logistics Organisation (DALO), the Royal Danish Navy Command, and the Danish Defence Innovation Unit.

Last month, Saildrone announced it was establishing a subsidiary in Copenhagen, called Saildrone Denmark, to support European allies in enhancing maritime situational awareness through the deployment of advanced autonomous technologies.

Coast Guard Offloads \$5.4M in Seized Cocaine Following Interdiction off Puerto Rico



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier offloaded approximately 725 pounds of seized cocaine worth an estimated \$5.4 million to Coast Guard Investigative Service and Drug Enforcement Agency Special Agents custody in San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 7, 2025. The interdiction occurred April 28, 2025, in waters north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, and is the result of multi-agency efforts in support of the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, May 7, 2025

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier offloaded approximately 725 pounds of seized cocaine worth an estimated \$5.4 million to Coast Guard Investigative Service and Drug Enforcement Agency Special Agents custody in San Juan, Wednesday.

The interdiction is the result of multi-agency efforts in support of the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force. The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier crew transferred custody of five suspected smugglers apprehended in this case, Dominican Republic nationals, to the Dominican Republic Navy off Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, Saturday.

During the night of April 28, 2025, the crew of a Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations multi-role enforcement aircraft detected a suspicious 35-foot go-fast vessel in international waters north of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Coast Guard watchstanders in Sector San Juan diverted the cutter Joseph Napier to interdict the suspect vessel. Once on-scene, the cutter Joseph Napier crew launched the cutter's Over the Horizon boat to carry out the interdiction. During the pursuit, the suspected smugglers attempted to flee the scene while jettisoning suspected contraband cargo overboard. Shortly thereafter, the cutter boat crew stopped and gained compliance from the suspect vessel. Following the interdiction, cutter Joseph Napier's crew recovered eight bales, seven of which had been jettisoned overboard, and they apprehended the five persons onboard. The seized contraband tested positive for cocaine.

"This was an excellent case that would not have been possible without the support provided by Customs and Border Protection Caribbean Air and Marine Branch," said Lt. John M. Groen, Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier commanding officer. "Their flight remained on scene for several hours and communicated flawlessly with the pursuit team. I am so incredibly proud of the entire Joseph Napier crew's outstanding performance. The interdiction highlights Sector San Juan and the Seventh Coast Guard District's unwavering commitment to combat drug trafficking organizations and secure America's maritime borders."

The specific mission of the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force (CCSF) is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations. The CCSF is comprised of agents and officers from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement-Homeland Security Investigations, United States Coast Guard Investigative Service, and United States Marshals Service, and the United States Attorney's Office for the

District of Puerto Rico.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier is 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard Offloads Over \$12M in Illicit Drugs Interdicted in Caribbean Sea



A USCGC Tampa (WMEC 902) crew member passes a bale of illicit drugs to another crew member during a drug offload at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, April 30, 2025. The crew offloaded 59 bales of illicit drugs worth more than \$12 million resulting from two interdictions in the Caribbean Sea

by the crew of USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul and their embarked Navy helicopter. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Diana Sherbs)

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District

MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Tampa’s crew ended Fleet Week Fort Lauderdale with the offload of approximately 3,750 pounds of cocaine and marijuana worth an estimated \$12.3 million, Wednesday, at Port Everglades.

The seized contraband was the result of two interdictions in the Caribbean Sea by the crew of USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul and their embarked Navy helicopter and Coast Guard law enforcement detachments.

“We train diligently and stand ready to execute interdiction missions at moment’s notice,” said Cmdr. Steven Fresse, Minneapolis-Saint Paul commanding officer. “To be able to make an immediate impact so early on during our maiden deployment is a testament to the hard work and skills of the ship’s crew.”

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdiction operations:

- [USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul \(LCS 21\)](#)

- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team (TACLET) South, LEDET 406

- U.S. Navy Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50, DET 3

- [Joint Interagency Task Force-South \(JIATF-South\)](#)

- Seventh Coast Guard District command center watchstanders

“Fleet Week Fort Lauderdale was a great opportunity for our Coast Guard, Navy and Marine Corps crews to showcase our sea services to communities here in South Florida,” said Cmdr. Walter Krolman, Tampa commanding officer. “Today’s offload demonstrates the value of our collaborative joint force operations far out to sea in protecting and defending Americans here at home from threats abroad.”

Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. Joint Interagency Task Force-South, in Key West, conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once an interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard for the interdiction and apprehension phases. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Seventh Coast Guard District, headquartered in Miami.

To read more about the USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul’s interdictions, [click here](#).

[USCGC Tampa](#) is a 270-foot Famous-class medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, V.A. under [U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command](#).

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be [found here](#).

Navy League Fly In Focuses Federal Attention on Sea Services



Navy League National President Christopher Townsend, right, speaks with Rep. Rob Wittman of Virginia during the Fly In. *Photo credit: James Peterson*

Members of the Navy League of the United States fanned out across congressional buildings on May 7 as part of the second consecutive “Anchors Aweigh Fly In” to help educate lawmakers and their staff about the needs of the men and women of the sea services.

Luke Lorenz, the senior director of legislative affairs at the Navy League, said nearly 60 members from around the country participated in the Fly In, a significant step up from the 40 who took part last year, when the annual effort was restarted in the wake of COVID.

They came from all over the country, as far away as California, representing the Navy League's different regions, he said.

The Navy Leaguers briefed lawmakers and their staff on a variety of issues, including the importance of passing regular appropriations bills instead of relying on continuing resolutions that freeze federal spending at last year's levels. For many agencies, including the Department of Defense, that amounts to a cut as it doesn't account for inflation.

Bolstered by a new report from the Congressional Budget Office, the Navy Leaguers advocated for at least a \$40 billion annual Navy shipbuilding and conversion budget to get to a 355-ship manned fleet, as well as \$10 billion annually to build an uncrewed fleet.

They also advocated for a \$20 billion Coast Guard budget (up from less than \$13.5 billion in fiscal 2024) and touted workforce development pipeline programs such as the Sea Cadets and Young Marines.

Last but not least, the group sought co-sponsors for the SHIPS for America Act, which would revitalize the U.S. shipbuilding and commercial maritime industries. Creating such an act was a chief goal of the Fly In last year; now that it has been introduced, the Navy Leaguers called for support and passage.



Nearly 60 Navy League members took part in the 2025 Fly In.
Photo credit: James Peterson

“Today was a great day. It’s always a privilege to spend time with my fellow Navy Leaguers who fly down here on their own dime, taking time off from work and their busy lives, to advocate for our sea services, the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and U.S.-flag Merchant Marine,” said board member Sara Fuentes.

“It’s really inspiring to see how they’re able to move the ball forward in terms of our sea service priorities. Last year we were here asking Congress to consider a SHIPS for America Act and today we are here asking for that SHIPS for America Act to have cosponsors. So, it’s amazing to see the progress we’ve already been able to make within one year thanks to the passion, dedication and service of Navy League members.”

After the busy day, members reported to National President Chris “Towny” Townsend they heard support for the SHIPS Act and the sea services during their meetings, and members were pleased the message was non-partisan.

Townsend said the event was “bittersweet” for him, as the Fly In is his last as national president, but said, “As always, it’s great to see our members engage, to execute on of our most important mission pillars, which is to advocate on behalf of our sea services, our sea service members and their families. And I saw that in full display today.”

Resonating Messages

Hampton Dowling, of the Mid-Atlantic Council in Northern Virginia, said although he is a life member, the Fly In was his first event with the Navy League – and it won’t be the last.

He said the staffers he spoke with felt the SHIPS for America Act was something that needs to happen and were impressed that the Navy League is one of the driving forces behind it.

“To have such a definitive statement by staffers on a rather uncommon subject matter – and the bill is about as complex as an octopus – I was really impressed. I was very optimistic,” he said.

Retired Navy Commander Jim Semerad met with a variety of lawmakers and staffers, from Republican Rep. Pete Sessions of Texas to Michigan Democrat Rashida Tlaib, and said the message resonated well on both sides of the aisle.

Semerad said Sessions even “commandeered” him to address Sessions’ staff and educate them about the Navy League and its issues, and Tlaib was “very excited that I showed up” and came out of her office to speak with him.

“People wanted to do the right thing when it comes to the Navy’s and the sea services’ budget,” he said, including for keeping commercial shipping lanes open.

“This was a very positive experience,” Semerad said. “I would encourage everybody from the Navy League: Put on your

comfortable shoes, wear tennis shoes if necessary, and come to Washington, D.C. and have the experience of passing on the Navy's message. You'll feel good about it and the legislators feel good about it, too."

USS Forrest Sherman Departs Norfolk for Routine Deployment



From U.S. 2nd Fleet, May 7, 2025

NORFOLK, Va. – Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) departed Naval Station Norfolk for a scheduled deployment on May 6, 2025.

USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) departed Norfolk as part of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (CSG-12) for a scheduled

deployment to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. The deployment will underscore the U.S. Navy's commitment to maritime security and stability in the region.

"Our crew has relentlessly prepared for this deployment and are ready for any challenge we may face; I could not be more proud to lead these Sailors on deployment," said Cmdr. Andrew Darjany, commanding officer of Forrest Sherman. "Thank you to our families and the Norfolk community for your support as we head out to sea."

Forrest Sherman's last deployment was in 2022, when they served as the flagship for Standing NATO Maritime Group Two and operated in the European theater. As the flagship, Forrest Sherman led a multinational maritime group in operations throughout the Mediterranean Sea, ensuring security and stability in the region while supporting deterrence and defense of NATO territory. The ship conducted five multinational exercises with NATO Allies and partners, strengthening relationships with these critical allies and partners and reinforcing the U.S. commitment to the NATO Alliance and to the region.

"The Sailors of USS Forrest Sherman are headed to do our nation's work at sea," said Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of CSG-12. "The combat capabilities that this ship brings to a fight will be ready whenever tasked to deter, and if necessary, defeat, aggression in defense of America's interests around the world."

"Relentless Fighting Spirit," Forrest Sherman's motto, highlights the crew's commitment to their mission and to the U.S. Navy and our Allies and partners. Commissioned on January 28, 2006, USS Forrest Sherman is named in honor of Adm. Forrest Sherman, the 12th Chief of Naval Operations.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs

maritime ready forces to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.