

Release from General Dynamics Electric Boat

Statement from General Dynamics Electric Boat President Kevin Graney Regarding the AUKUS Agreement

GROTON, Conn. (March 13, 2023) – Today, the United States, United Kingdom and Australia announced the trilateral AUKUS partnership, which will provide Australia with a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine. General Dynamics Electric Boat has a long history of leadership in the design and construction of nuclear submarines from the beginning of naval nuclear propulsion with the USS Nautilus (SSN 571).

“We look forward to working with the Navy and our industry partners to use our knowledge and expertise to support Australia’s acquisition of nuclear submarines and the development of that country’s shipbuilding infrastructure. The AUKUS agreement underscores the critical role submarines play in the defense of our nation and our allies and calls attention to the importance of continuing to grow our submarine industrial base here in the United States,” said Kevin Graney, president, General Dynamics Electric Boat.

Coast Guard Cutter Kimball

returns home following Western Pacific patrol



[Release from Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

March 14, 2023

HONOLULU – The Coast Guard Cutter Kimball (WMSL 756) and crew returned to their Honolulu homeport, Friday, following a 42-day, 10,000 nautical mile Western Pacific patrol.

Kimball was the first U.S. military ship in recent history to visit the port city of Kagoshima, Japan, where the crew partnered with servicemembers from Japan Coast Guard's 10th District [to plan and conduct combined operations and search-and-rescue exercises](#).

Kimball's crew met with Japan Coast Guard senior leadership

and hosted Japan Coast Guard servicemembers, U.S. Consulate Fukuoka staff, community leaders and local media aboard the cutter during the port visit in support of Operation SAPPHIRE.

Operation SAPPHIRE is a [joint agreement between the U.S. and Japan Coast Guards](#) signed in 2022 for enhancing cooperation between the two sea services. SAPPHIRE is an acronym for the 'Solid Alliance for Peace and Prosperity with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule of law-based Engagement.'

"By collaborating with Japan Coast Guard members and conducting evolutions that enhanced communication and interoperability during the patrol, the crew continued to strengthen a solid foundation for the positive and productive relationship with the maritime service of a like-minded nation," said Captain Tom D'Arcy, Kimball's commanding officer.

Kimball's crew demonstrated proficiency in the ship's aviation program by working with an air operations inspection team to conduct a biennial Shipboard-Aviation Standardization Inspection (AVSTAN). By achieving their AVSTAN certification, Kimball can continue deploying with aviation detachments during future patrols.

Kimball also supported U.S. Coast Guard efforts to increase its presence in the Indo-Pacific. Kimball's crew delivered a MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Barber's Point to Santa Rita, Guam, to enable forward operations that extend the service's air coverage in the region.

During the patrol, the cutter's engineering department was presented with the Rear Admiral R. S. Lucas Plaque Award for their outstanding contributions to the Coast Guard's naval engineering program. Members from Kimball's engineering department were cited for excellence and ingenuity during

recent patrols and for completing three extensive industrial periods encompassing significant maintenance, contractual repair projects, and casualty repairs valued at over \$4.4 million.

“I am extremely proud of our crew’s accomplishments,” said D’Arcy. “Kimball continues to remain on the front lines of the Coast Guard’s strategic plan. Our engagements in Japan strengthened our existing relationships with international partners who uphold good maritime governance. Kimball’s patrol re-affirmed the U.S. Coast Guard’s commitment to facilitating a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Commissioned in 2019, Kimball is the Coast Guard’s seventh national security cutter and one of two homeported in Honolulu. National security cutters are 418-feet-long, 54-feet-wide and have a displacement of 4,500 long-tons. With a range of 12,000 nautical miles, the advanced technologies of Legend-class national security cutters are designed to support the national objective to maintain the security of America’s maritime boundaries and provide long range search-and-rescue capabilities.

Northrop Grumman Offers Battle Management, Command and Control Expertise for U.S. Navy’s E-XX TACAMO

Program



[Release from Northrop Grumman](#)

MELBOURNE, Fla. – Mar. 15, 2023 – Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE: NOC) is leveraging its weapons system integration and battle management leadership to compete for the U.S. Navy's E-XX TACAMO fleet of aircraft systems.

The Navy's E-XX TACAMO aircraft will be based on the C-130J platform, and provides connectivity between the National Command Authority and ballistic submarines capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The Navy currently operates a fleet of E-6B Mercury aircraft to provide survivable, reliable and endurable airborne command, control and communications between the National Command Authority and U.S. strategic and non-strategic forces. The Navy intends to replace the E-6B fleet with the E-XX to modernize this critical strategic deterrent mission.

“Our extensive experience integrating aircraft and mission systems, combined with our expertise in creating operationally ready solutions in support of the nuclear enterprise, makes Northrop Grumman the optimal partner to deliver the Navy’s E-XX TACAMO weapon system” said Janice Zilch, vice president, multi-domain command and control programs, Northrop Grumman. “As we’ve demonstrated with the Navy’s E-2 programs, we have been a longtime partner in helping the Navy meet its operational requirements. We will bring this expertise in helping the Navy deliver the E-XX TACAMO on time and optimized for this strategically important mission.”

For more than six decades, Northrop Grumman has delivered on the development, production and modification of the Navy’s E-2 Hawkeye system as the prime contractor, and continues to provide total mission assurance with proven solutions that are secure, survivable, multi-layered systems designed for total weapon system security.

“Our team has vast knowledge and expertise in delivering critical command and control, and nuclear enterprise capabilities,” said Henry Cyr, director, multi-domain command and control capture programs, Northrop Grumman. “We perform challenging work that has a real-world impact. You can see that on our legacy platforms, the platforms currently in operation, and the platforms we will deliver tomorrow.”

Northrop Grumman is a leading global aerospace and defense technology company. Our pioneering solutions equip our customers with the capabilities they need to connect and protect the world, and push the boundaries of human exploration across the universe. Driven by a shared purpose to solve our customers’ toughest problems, our 95,000 employees define possible every day.

Amphib Suppliers to Navy Cite Need for Consistency in Ship Orders



ARLINGTON, Va. – The companies supplying components and materials to the shipbuilders who produce the amphibious warfare ships for the U.S. Navy say that consistency in ship orders brings economies to the work and stability to the industrial base.

“The last few years have been fits and starts on numerous ships in the budget,” said David Forster, chairman of the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Council (AWIBC) and vice president for Global Strategy for Rolls-Royce North America Inc. in an interview with Seapower. “What we have not seen is a consistent shipbuilding program has been substantiated over

a FYDP [Future Years Defense Plan] that allows our suppliers the ability to actually plan the work and apply some sort of business practices.”

The [AWIBC](#) “is an organization of amphibious warship suppliers who advocate for Congress to provide funding for the sustained and stable construction of amphibious warships vital to the mission of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. The amphibious warship industrial base is comprised of 614 companies in 38 states and 226 Congressional Districts provide parts worth over \$1.78 billion for the construction of amphibious warships,” according to an email from the company.

“The industrial base can take a lot more work than it currently has,” Forster said. “In order to do that, you do need a plan which allows the industrial base to respond.”

Forster pointed out that the shipyards need time to ramp up to meet increased production requirements, by hiring and training more skilled workers, ordering more materials, and building or installing more infrastructure and equipment.

“I think the industrial base has the capacity for more shipbuilding,” he said. “It’s not the instantaneous response that everyone would like it to be. But, given enough lead-time, as well as enough information, the industrial base can do almost anything you really want it to do.”

Asked about the 31-ship floor set for the amphibious warship fleet, Forster did not take a position.

“We’re going to let that conversation play within the requirements-setting side of the house, whether that’s the warfare modelers, the Pentagon, Congress,” he said. “We’re standing by, ready to support whatever that requirement is, whether it’s 31 as [Congress] mandated last year in the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] or whether it’s some other number. ... We’re just hoping for consistency in shipbuilding rather than a particular number.”

The Navy's proposed 2024 budget would fund completion of the fourth America-class amphibious assault ship (LHA), but the associated FYDP would not fund any Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious dock ships (LPDs) for at least five years. The ships are built at HII's Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

"If we can get the LPDs to about every two-year centers and LHAs to about every four-year centers, what that allows the industrial base to do is apply some of that economic strategy to offset inflation, come through with some investment on whether it's new capability, new material, new processes, or allows them to invest in workers and retain those workers," Forster said.

The proposed medium landing ship, scheduled to be funded in 2025 and designed to support Marine littoral regiments, would be an opportunity to strengthen the industrial base.

"That ship does offer opportunity to the other yards which are not the big hull builders," Forster said. "From an industrial base [perspective], that's pretty good. That helps sustain the industrial base. It also provides resources into the suppliers."

"We remain committed to landing ship medium, and for LPD, we're taking a look at the – the acquisition strategy moving forward, again, to make sure that we would have the right capabilities at the right price, and working with industry partners to put – put together that plan moving forward," said Undersecretary of the Navy Eric Raven, briefing reporters March 13 on the 2024 budget. ... We received a direction from OSD [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] but this will be an integrated team moving forward for that assessment."

Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, deputy secretary of the Navy for Budget, also briefing the reporters, said the "intent here is not a either/or between a LPD or a medium landing ship, it's a

both, so it's an end game, and we have time to get this right. ... I believe the services are fundamentally aligned on this requirement. Both service chiefs like 31 [large and medium amphibious warships] as a requirement, both service chiefs like multi-year procurements, both service chiefs want to buy in a predictable future. And so, if we can do a study and actually lower the cost of this, that's all to the good of the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps."

Navy Requests 9 Battle Force Ships, 88 Aircraft for Fiscal 2024



PACIFIC OCEAN (March 8, 2022) An F-35C Lightning II from the "Rough Raiders" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 125, taxis on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN68).

Nimitz is underway conducting routine operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jared Mancuso)

ARLINGTON, Va. – The [Navy Department is requesting funds](#) for nine battle force ships and 88 aircraft in its fiscal 2024 budget proposal. The service also plans to decommission 11 battle force ships, some before the expiration of their service life.

The 2024 request at \$255.8 billion represents an \$11.1 billion or 4.5% increase over the 2023 budget enacted by Congress, according to Undersecretary of the Navy Eric Raven and Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, deputy secretary of the Navy for Budget, briefing reporters March 13 at the Pentagon.

Ships

The nine ships in the \$32.8 billion ship construction request include one Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN), two Block V Virginia-class attack submarines (and advance funding for four more), two Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, two Constellation-class guided-missile frigates, one John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, and one new-design submarine tender.

Ship construction funding includes \$5.8 billion for the first and second increments of the second Columbia-class, Wisconsin (SSBN 827). Funding also is requested for the Ford-class aircraft carrier program: the seventh increment for the third, Enterprise (CVN 80), and the sixth increment for the Dorie Miller (CVN 81).

The budget allocates \$1.8 billion for the final increment of the Fallujah (LHA 9), the fourth America-class amphibious assault ship.

Of note, no funding is provided for any more Flight II San

Antonio-class landing platform dock ships throughout the Future Years Defense Plan. Procurement of the new medium landing ship is planned for fiscal 2025 and the next-generation logistic ship is planned for 2027.

The proposed budget also funds the procurement of two LCU 1700-class utility landing craft; two used ships for conversion to sealift ships; and the service-life extension of one air-cushion landing craft (LCAC). Procurement of the LCAC 100-class ship-to-shore connector is gapped for 2024, with resumption planned for 2025.

Procurement of the Large Unmanned Surface Vessel and the Orca Extra-Large Unmanned Undersea Vehicle are funded for 2025 and 2026, respectively.

The Navy plans to retire 11 ships, including eight which would be retired before the normal end-of service life. The ships to be retired include: one Los Angeles-class attack submarine, five Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers, two Independence-class littoral combat ships, and three dock landing ships.

Under the 2024 plan, the Navy's battle force would decline by one ship to 293 ships.

Aircraft

The budget proposal included \$17.3 billion for the procurement of 88 aircraft for the Navy and Marine Corps. This includes 16 F-35B and 19 F-35C Lightning IIs; 26 T-54A multi-engine training aircraft; two KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport; 15 CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters; five MQ-9A Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs); two MQ-4C Triton UAVs; and three MQ-25A Stingray UAVs.

Gumbleton said this budget request completes the procurement

of the KC-130J (at 88 aircraft); the MQ-4C (at 22 aircraft), and MQ-9A (at 18 aircraft). The Navy's stated requirement was for 68 MQ-4Cs, so this truncation represents a change in direction. The Navy Air Reserve has an unfunded requirement for 32 C-130J transports.

As expected, the Navy has not requested any F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters. It remains to be seen if Congress will again fund more Super Hornets out of concern for the Navy's strike fighter shortfall.

The 2024 plan would leave the Navy and Marine Corps aircraft fleet at 3,998 aircraft, slightly under the 2023 total of 4,012.

Marine Corps Vehicles

The Marine Corps plans to procure 80 personnel variants of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle and 396 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles in 2024. The Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) and Long Range Fires (LRF) programs would continue development and testing of the Remotely Operated Ground Unit Expeditionary (ROGUE) Fires vehicle, an "unmanned ground vehicle based on a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) chassis mounting a missile launcher system," the Navy's budget briefing book said. The 2024 budget would continue procurement of NMESIS systems as well as funding for 90 Naval Strike Missiles and, for the LRF, 34 Tactical Tomahawk missiles.

Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on AUKUS Optimal Pathway Announcement



JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM (May 25, 2022) The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS North Carolina (SSN 777) returns to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam from deployment in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility. North Carolina performed a full spectrum of operations, including anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, during the extended seven-month, Indo-Pacific deployment. (U.S. Navy photo by Electronics Technician (Nuclear) 2nd Class Leland T. Hasty II)

[Release from the Secretary of Defense](#)

MARCH 13, 2023

Today, I was honored to join President Biden, Australian Prime Minister Albanese, and U.K. Prime Minister Sunak as they announced the AUKUS Optimal Pathway, a commitments-based, phased plan for Australia to acquire conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines. This is the next step forward in the transformational partnership among our three great democracies.

In September 2021, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom laid out an ambitious vision for our countries that will strengthen our combined military capabilities, boost our defense industrial capacity, enhance our ability to deter aggression, and promote our shared goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific. AUKUS is a shared, long-term investment that will allow us to build defense advantages that endure for decades to come.

One of the most important parts of this partnership is increasing each of our countries' submarine capabilities. Under the first phase of the Optimal Pathway, the United States and the United Kingdom will immediately increase port visits of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines in Australia and then, as early as 2027, will begin rotating through Australia under Submarine Rotational Force-West. In the next phase, the United States intends to sell three Virginia-class submarines to Australia in the 2030s, with the potential to sell up to two more if needed. Finally, Australia and the United Kingdom will develop and deploy SSN-AUKUS, a new conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarine that incorporates critical U.S. technologies. Each phase of the Optimal Pathway will set the highest nuclear nonproliferation standards.

We're also working to strengthen our countries' industrial bases; to eliminate barriers to information-sharing and technological cooperation; and to develop and deliver advanced

capabilities in such areas as artificial intelligence, hypersonics, and maritime domain awareness. All these investments will allow us to work more closely with our valued and highly capable allies to deter aggression in the Indo-Pacific—a region whose future is crucial for U.S. national security and the rules-based international order that makes us all safer.

I would like to thank the many public servants in all three proud democracies whose hard work has made this historic announcement possible. I look forward to working with my team and with our Australian and British counterparts to continue to move toward our shared vision of a stable, secure Indo-Pacific and an open world of rules and rights.

Navy Accepts Delivery of Ship to Shore Connector, Landing Craft, Air Cushion 105



[Release from Naval Sea Systems Command](#)

By Team Ships Public Affairs

SLIDELL, LA – The Navy accepted delivery of the next-generation landing craft, Ship to Shore Connector (SSC), Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) 105, March 8.

LCACs are built with configurations, dimensions, and clearances similar to the legacy LCACs they replace – ensuring that this latest air cushion vehicle is fully compatible with existing well deck-equipped amphibious ships, the Expeditionary Sea Base and the Expeditionary Transfer Dock. LCACs are capable of carrying a 60-75 ton payload. They primarily transport weapon systems, equipment, cargo, and assault element personnel through a wide range of conditions, including over-the-beach.

“LCACs are a critical tool for the Navy, the Marine Corps, and all of our warfighters,” said Amphibious Assault and Connectors Program Manager, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships, Capt. Jason Grabelle. “This delivery comes at an

important time for the fleet, and their inclusion will only strengthen our posture.”

The delivery of LCAC 105 comes after completion of acceptance trials conducted by the Navy’s Board of Inspection and Survey, which tested the readiness and capability of the craft to effectively meet its requirements.

Textron Systems of Slidell, Louisiana is currently in serial production on LCACs 107-115.

As one of the Defense Department’s largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, special mission and support ships, boats and craft.

NAVFAC Pacific awards \$2.8-billion contract task order for Pearl Harbor dry dock replacement



JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR HICKAM, Hawaii (July 27, 2021) Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility successfully undocked the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Topeka (SSN 754) on time commencing a two-day evolution on July 27, 2021. This undocking is a major milestone in the submarine's docking selected restricted availability (DSRA). Each undocking is a complex evolution that requires teamwork across the entire shipyard to ensure a safe and on-time event. (U.S. Navy photo by Amanda Urena)

[Release from Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command](#)

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM – Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Pacific awarded a \$2.8-billion task order under a previously-awarded indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity multiple-award construction contract to Dragados/Hawaiian Dredging/Orion JV, based in Honolulu, Hawaii, to replace Dry Dock 3 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) March 10.

The planned five-year project will construct a graving dock, to be designated Dry Dock 5, in order to support PHNSY's ability to continue serving the Navy decades into the future by maintaining and modernizing the U.S. Pacific Fleet's nuclear-powered submarines.

"As part of the Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP), replacing Dry Dock 3 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard is a critical enabler of increased naval capability," said Pete Lynch, program executive officer for Industrial Infrastructure, who oversees SIOP. "This project is a key investment in increasing capacity and modernizing our nation's public shipyards through upgraded dry docks and facilities, new equipment, and improved workflow."

Dry Dock 3 at PHNSY & IMF will become functionally obsolete once the Navy's Los Angeles-class submarines are no longer in service. The dry dock, built in 1942, cannot service Virginia-class submarines or larger surface ships.

"We look forward to working with Dragados/Hawaiian Dredging/Orion JV, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, and all our stakeholders on this project over the next several years in order to deliver this critical capability to the Fleet," said Capt. Steve Padhi, commanding officer of Officer in Charge of Construction (OICC) Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. "The project team and cooperating agencies have gone above and beyond to set the conditions for success. We have incorporated lessons learned and best practices from other dry dock projects and field offices across the Navy, and we have consulted with our construction contractors early in order to confidently meet the requirements we've been given. My OICC team and I are ready to get started on this historic effort."

The Navy is investing heavily in shipyard infrastructure for nuclear-powered warships. The Navy established SIOP to increase throughput at the four public shipyards by updating their physical layout, upgrading and modernizing their dry

docks, and replacing antiquated capital equipment with modern tools and technologies.

SIOP is a holistic investment plan that when fully executed will deliver required dry dock repairs and upgrades to support current and planned future classes of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines, optimize workflow within the shipyards through significant changes to their physical layout, and recapitalize industrial plant equipment with modern technology that will substantially increase productivity and safety.

The full contract announcement is available at:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Contracts/Contract/Article/3326241/>

ASSA Presents 2023 Honorable Thad Cochran Leadership Award to U. S. Senator Roger Wicker



Senator Wicker joins an august group of award recipients dedicated to improving the opportunities for domestic shipbuilding suppliers. The award was first established in 2017 and presented to Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-01). In 2018, the Honorable Tammy Baldwin from Wisconsin was recognized. The Honorable Joe Courtney (CT-02) was the 2019 recipient, and in 2020 the award was presented to The Honorable John Garamendi (CA-03). In 2021, the Honorable Donald Norcross (NJ-01) received the award. Last year, the award was presented to Congresswoman Suzan DelBene (WA-01)
Release from the American Shipbuilding Suppliers Association

Washington, District of Columbia – March 10, 2023 – The American Shipbuilding Suppliers Association (ASSA) presented its 2023 Honorable Thad Cochran Leadership Award to U. S. Senator Roger Wicker, R-Miss., for his dedication and commitment to a robust American shipbuilding supplier industrial base. He was presented the award during the Annual ASSA Congressional Fly-in by ASSA Founder, Carl Fisher of Thrustmaster of Texas.

The Honorable Thad Cochran Leadership Award is given annually to a public servant, as selected by the ASSA membership, and was established to honor the leadership of the late Senator Cochran for his unwavering support to those large and small businesses that provide the technologies and components necessary to build US Navy and US Coast Guard ships, which are critical components of U.S. national security policy.

“On behalf of the members of the American Shipbuilding Suppliers Association (ASSA), I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Senator Wicker for his dedicated advocacy of a strong naval force and a robust domestic supplier industrial base to support that force. The membership of ASSA recognize the importance of his position in support of the shipbuilding supplier industrial base and that his actions clearly demonstrate his continued commitment to strengthening a fragile yet strategically critical industrial component,” said Mr. Fisher

Senator Wicker is recognized by the overall shipbuilding industry for his leadership and actions in support of legislation that requires the US Navy to maintain a fleet of 355 ships along with his support of “Buy America” legislation. Senator Wicker authored the “Securing the Homeland by Increasing our Power on the Seas (SHIPS) Act,” which made it the policy of the United States to achieve the Navy’s requirement for a 355- ship fleet. This legislation, which was designed to bolster national security and

increase American shipbuilding capacity, was signed into law by President Trump during the 115th Congress as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

“A strong fleet has always been the cornerstone of America’s

defense,” Wicker said. “My advocacy for our navy and for American shipbuilding is based on my belief that peace comes through strength. I especially appreciate receiving an award named after my friend and colleague, Senator Thad Cochran, whose contributions to our shipbuilding industry were significant.”

Senator Wicker has represented Mississippi in the United States Senate since December 2007. During his time in the Senate, Wicker has championed pro-growth policies to create jobs, limit federal overreach, protect life, and maintain a strong national defense. He is the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee for the 118th Congress. He is also a senior member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, having served previously as the chairman and ranking member for the 116th and 117th Congresses, respectively. His other committee assignments include the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Rules and Administration Committee. Wicker also serves as a member of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Congressional Board of Visitors.

Senator Wicker has been a strong advocate for economic development initiatives to help keep Mississippians competitive in a global marketplace. He has been honored by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) for his work on pro-growth, pro-manufacturing policies in Congress.

Senator Wicker served on active duty in the U.S. Air Force and then joined the Air Force Reserve. He retired from the Reserve in 2004 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

ASSA is a member driven, national organization, advocating for the American Shipbuilding Supplier Base to the U. S. Congress, Navy, Coast Guard, and shipbuilders to ensure the long-term stability of the U. S. national maritime industry.

U. S. – Indo Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation Meets in India



[Release from Program Executive Office Aircraft Carriers Public Affairs](#)

March 9, 2023

By Program Executive Office Aircraft Carriers Public Affairs

WASHINGTON NAVY YARD, DC – The sixth meeting of the U.S. –

Indo Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation (JWGACTC) concluded on Mar. 3 in India, marking a successful, bilateral exchange of information and best practices in the areas of ship construction and maintenance.

The five-day meeting, co-chaired by Rear Adm. James P. Downey, program executive officer for aircraft carriers, representing the U.S. delegation; and Rear Adm. Sandeep Mehta, Assistant Controller Carrier Projects for the Indian Navy, deepened a successful legacy of cooperation between the two Pacific nations—sessions launched in August 2015 as part of a U.S. – India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI).

“India is a vital strategic partner for the United States,” said Downey, “and our program office takes pride in the collaborative spirit we’ve built with our Indian Navy counterparts. Our technology is diverse, while our goal is linked foundationally—to accelerate our respective missions of building and maintaining these extremely capable ships and systems that deliver readiness to our fleets.”

In mid-February, India logged an important milestone when it completed initial flight deck trials on its first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant.

“Back in 2015, the first Indian Navy delegation visited Norfolk and toured the Gerald R. Ford [CVN 78] when she was still in construction at Newport News Shipbuilding,” Downey recalled. “And this week, our U.S. team stood on board India’s new INS Vikrant, the largest naval ship ever built in India—that was an inspiring moment.” INS Vikrant is expected to begin operations later this year, a step reflective of the government’s vision of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, or greater self-reliance.

JWGACTC Tour Highlights

In a robust slate of events conducted from 27 February to 3 March, JWGACTC representatives gathered in New Delhi at the

Kota House and visited India's Directorate of Naval Design, discussing areas of mutual interest in several technology areas, including topside aircraft carrier systems and aircraft / ship integration. Meeting participants delivered updates and discussed opportunities for the two navies to expand cooperation under the initiative. Rear Adm Downey also met with Vice Chief of Naval Staff Vice Adm. SN Ghormade, DTTI Interagency Task Force (DIATF) Co-Chair Lt. Gen. Manjinder Singh, and Vice Adm. Kiran Deshmukh, Controller of Warship Production and Acquisition.

The combined delegation then flew to Kochi, Kerala, on India's southwest coast, for a tour of Cochin Shipyard Limited, where INS Vikrant was built. Vikrant is the third ship to bear the name, and the first aircraft carrier built entirely by the Indian government and industrial base.

Capt. Brian Metcalf, who leads the Gerald R. Ford-Class New Construction Program Office (PMS 378), appreciated the first-hand look at India's indigenous ship building capability and Cochin's modern facilities, tasked with designing and manufacturing the country's next generation aircraft carrier.

"Looking at our ships, the designs are clearly different: from propulsion to how we launch aircraft—Ford, for instance, using EMALS [Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System] and AAG [Advanced Arresting Gear]; while India employs a STOBAR [short takeoff barrier-assisted recovery] system to launch aircraft off a ski-jump ramp," said Metcalf.

"In terms of the art and science of shipbuilding and sustainment and the need for building efficiencies into everything we do, whether that's leveraging resources or building smarter, we share similar challenges and goals. So we can benefit from hearing new operating philosophies and ideas for streamlining business practices. All of that goes a long way toward enhancing interoperability at sea."

While in Kochi, Downey also visited India's Southern Naval Command, meeting with Vice Adm. M.A. Hampiholi and visiting the Naval Institute of Aeronautical Technology and the School for Naval Airmen.

Hampiholi afforded Downey the opportunity to meet with trainees at the Advanced Aero Engine Training Centre and to see the school's Basic and Specialist Vehicle Simulator, mockup helo decks, and Virtual Reality-Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Training Facility, as well as the Indian Navy's P-8I long-range, multi-mission, maritime patrol aircraft simulator.

After several years of interruptions due to COVID-19, JWGACTC participants were pleased to return to this annual in-person meeting format, with the face-to-face interaction fostering closer relationships, particularly among newer team members.

"One-on-one as well as face-to-face team engagement is so important," said Downey. "These forums and exchanges build trust and teamwork. That's when you learn across the joint team and when you establish solid foundations and protocols that enhance operations and interoperability for our futures."

Building on this highly successful meeting, the seventh JWGACTC meeting is scheduled to be held in the United States in 2024.