

# Department of Defense Completes Underway Recovery Test 12 with NASA



From Expeditionary Strike Group 3, March 31, 2025

SAN DIEGO – NASA’s Exploration Ground Systems Landing and Recovery team and the Department of Defense successfully completed the third recovery test for the crewed Artemis II mission aboard amphibious transport dock USS Somerset (LPD 25) off the coast of San Diego, March 31.

The primary objectives for Underway Recovery Test 12 were to demonstrate and evaluate the processes, procedures, and hardware for recovery operations for the crewed Artemis II mission around the moon.

“The U.S. Navy and NASA have a long history of partnering together to support the recovery of astronauts and equipment used for space exploration and research,” said Capt. Andrew

Koy, commanding officer, USS Somerset. "The inherent capabilities of our amphibious transport dock ships are the perfect combination to ensuring the Artemis capsule and crew are safely recovered following their mission. The well deck, flight deck, medical facilities, and immense cargo carrying capacity crewed by highly trained and proficient Sailors, continues the NASA and Department of Defense legacy."

Underway Recovery Test 12 allowed NASA and the Department of Defense to practice operational procedures for Artemis II, including timing of crew extraction from the capsule to the ship's medical bay and day-and-night recovery procedures to support certification of personnel and processes for Artemis II mission.

Artemis II astronaut U.S. Navy Capt. Victor Glover embarked the ship for Underway Recovery Test 12.

"This puts my two loves together, space and the navy. I am really in my happy place here," said Glover. "The partnership between NASA and the U.S. Navy is a testament to a fostered symbiotic relationship built on trust, where our needs are met by their unparalleled expertise and resources. Together, we're not just working side by side; we're one team! As we prepare to send the next group of explorers around the Moon and beyond, we're pushing the boundaries of human achievement, all thanks to the strength of this incredible partnership."

Working in support of U.S. Space Command, additional U.S. Navy units included Expeditionary Strike Group 3, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 1, and Amphibious Construction Battalion 1, with support from U.S. Air Force's First Air Force, Detachment 3, and U.S. Space Force's 45th Space Launch Delta Weather Squadron.

After the 2022 successful recovery of the Orion spacecraft from the Artemis I mission using amphibious transport dock USS

Portland (LPD 27), and with the addition of crew for the Artemis II mission, the recovery teams modified their timelines and procedures to ensure the astronauts will be safely on the recovery ship within two hours after splashing down in the Pacific Ocean.

After a 10-day mission, NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, and Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen will reenter Earth's atmosphere at 25,000 mph, landing approximately 60 miles off the coast of California, where one of the U.S. Navy's amphibious transport dock ships will recover the capsule and crew with NASA and DoD personnel.

Once the crew splashes down, a group of Navy divers will approach Orion and ensure it is safe for the astronauts to exit the spacecraft. The divers will then open the spacecraft hatch and help the astronauts exit one by one onto an inflatable "front porch." This raft wraps around the capsule and allows for the crew to be picked up via helicopter and flown back to the recovery ship. Once the astronauts are on board the recovery ship, teams will secure Orion with a series of lines and tow it into the ship's well-deck, just as they did during the Artemis I mission.

During the test, the team practiced the Artemis II recovery procedures, including releasing and recovering the crew module test article, a full-scale mock-up of Orion.

"As Navy Divers, we are proud members of the URT-12 team and look forward to a successful mission," said Master Chief Navy Diver Ryan Crider, who leads the team of divers from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 1 assigned to Underway Recovery Test 12. "We are the Navy's experts in mobile salvage and towing, so the unique task of recovering and transporting a space capsule from the ocean to a well deck is the perfect opportunity to put our skills to the test."

The recovery team will capture lessons learned and apply them to future underway tests to make sure they are ready to recover the Artemis II crew and bring them home safely.

“Since 1959, First Air Force, Detachment 3 has collaborated with NASA and the US Navy, a partnership that has led to our critical role in preparing for Artemis,” said Lt. Col. Mahan, First Air Force, Detachment 3 Artemis Program director. “With US Space Command, backed by the U.S. Navy, spearheading DoD human spaceflight support, and Air Forces Space serving as deputy, URT-12 has built a cohesive team committed to mission success. This landmark joint effort is undoubtedly the pinnacle of our year!”

As the Department of Defense’s Human Space Flight Support manager, U.S. Space Command is responsible for the terrestrial rescue and recovery of NASA-sponsored astronauts and spacecraft for the Artemis program.

Expeditionary Strike Group 3 comprises three amphibious squadrons, 15 amphibious warships, and eight naval support elements including approximately 18,000 active-duty and reserve Sailors and Marines. As the deputy commander for amphibious and littoral warfare, U.S. 3rd Fleet, the Expeditionary Strike Group 3 commander also oversees the 17 littoral combat ships under Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1.

Expeditionary Strike Group 3 is postured in support of U.S. 3rd Fleet as a globally responsive and scalable naval command element, capable of generating, deploying, and employing naval forces and formations for crisis and contingency response, forward presence, and major combat operations focusing on amphibious operations, humanitarian and disaster relief and support to defense civil authorities, and expeditionary logistics.

For more information on Underway Recovery Test 12, please visit:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/URT12>

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# Shield AI Delivers First ViDAR Payloads to NAVAIR for U.S. Marine Corps Operations



From Shield AI, March 28, 2025

WASHINGTON (March 28, 2025) – Shield AI, the deep-tech company building state-of-the-art autonomy software products and defense aircraft, today announced the delivery of its first ViDAR (Visual Detection and Ranging) payloads to NAVAIR's Program Office for the Navy and Marine Corps Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems (PMA-263), destined for operations

with the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC). This milestone marks Shield AI's first turn-key payload delivery and a major step forward in integrating AI-enabled edge solutions into frontline operations.

ViDAR is an AI-enabled optical sensor that leverages edge computing to passively detect, identify, geolocate, and track objects with wide-area motion imagery. It has been deployed in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions as well as search-and-rescue operations, with proven effectiveness in challenging maritime environments, including up to Sea State 6. Delivering ViDAR as a turn-key payload to the USMC is a testament to its low SWaP (size, weight, and power) efficiency, adaptability, and ability to enhance situational awareness in contested environments.

"As modern battlefields become more contested, platforms must detect, locate, classify, and track threats without relying on active emissions. ViDAR provides real-time, passive optical tracking across land and sea, delivering persistent surveillance at a fraction of the size, weight, and power—without emitting a signal—giving operators a critical advantage in covert operations," said Christian Gutierrez, Vice President of Hivemind Solutions at Shield AI. "We look forward to seeing ViDAR fly in support of the Marine Corps, helping them gain a decisive edge in modern combat environments."

ViDAR's operational deployment follows a rigorous Foreign Comparative Testing (FCT) project initiated by PMA-263 in 2022. The evaluation program included extensive ground and flight testing on unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), validating ViDAR's performance for USMC-specific operations in wide-area maritime surveillance. The successful completion of the FCT project saw ViDAR transition to a program element within NAVAIR.


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# MSC Fleet Replenishment Oiler USNS John Lewis Deploys in Support of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group



Military Sealift Command (MSC) fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Lewis (T-AO 205) departs San Diego for deployment with the U.S. Navy's Nimitz Carrier Strike Group. The deployment is the first for the ship and the first for the class of John Lewis fleet replenishment oilers. While on deployment, John Lewis will provide logistics services to the ships of the strike group while operating in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo)

**MSC Fleet Replenishment Oiler USNS John Lewis Deploys in Support of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group**

From Sarah Cannon, March 27, 2025 

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While on deployment, John Lewis will provide logistics services to the ships of the strike group while operating in the Indo-Pacific.

The strike group's deployment will focus on protecting security, freedom, and prosperity for the United States, our allies and partners, and demonstrating the U.S. Navy's unwavering commitment to a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

"From the shipyard through final testing and training, it was a total team effort to introduce this ship to the fleet. USNS John Lewis will bring enhanced logistics capabilities to the fleet and is the first of several ships of this class that will be following in her wake," said Capt. Micah Murphy, commander Military Sealift Command Pacific. "This ship is extremely well-led and is manned by some of the finest Mariners on the planet. I have no doubt she will have a very successful deployment and outsized impact on fleet operations."

MSC directs and supports operations for approximately 140 civilian-crewed ships that replenish U.S. Navy ships at sea, conduct specialized missions, preposition combat cargo at sea around the world, perform a variety of support services, and move military equipment and supplies to deployed U.S. forces. MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 Civil Service Mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and reserve military personnel.

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# Garbarino Leads Bipartisan Push to Modernize U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

From the office of Rep. Andrew R. Garbarino, March 27, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Andrew R. Garbarino (R-NY-02), a member of the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) Board of Visitors, today introduced bipartisan legislation to authorize more than \$1 billion over 10 years for a full-scale campus modernization of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York.

The bill is cosponsored by Representatives Laura Gillen (R-NY-04), Nick LaLota (R-NY-01), Tom Suozzi (D-NY-03), and Jen Kiggans (R-VA-02) underscoring a shared commitment to bolstering national security and maritime readiness through investment in one of the nation's five federal service academies.

*“For generations, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy has trained the men and women who keep our supply chains moving and our national defense strong,”* said Rep. Garbarino. *“But the infrastructure on campus must keep up with the rigorous demands placed on today’s Midshipmen. This bill ensures the Academy remains a world-class institution worthy of its mission.”*

The legislation authorizes \$1.02 billion from FY2026 to FY2035 via the Maritime Security Trust Fund, beginning with \$54 million for design and planning in the first year and annual construction funding of over \$107 million thereafter. The bill calls for full operational continuity at the Academy

throughout construction and recommends using design-build contracting to speed delivery and reduce costs.

*“For more than 80 years, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy has been the pride of Long Island. As one of America’s five services academies, USMMA is a pathway for young Americans to serve our country and contribute to our maritime security. I’m proud to join Rep. Garbarino and my colleagues in working together for Long Island and leading this bipartisan bill to strengthen Long Island’s tradition of producing the best Midshipmen and mariners in the world,”* said Rep. Gillen.

*“To ensure the Merchant Marine Academy continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of maritime and national security leaders, Congress must invest in its infrastructure, which has languished since the mid-20th century. Doing so is essential to providing Midshipmen, who will go on to serve America around the globe, with the education and hands-on training they need to excel in critical industries like marine transportation and defense,”* said Rep. LaLota. *“Upgrading these facilities will strengthen the Academy’s ability to prepare top-tier officers and ensure it remains a premier institution for the nation’s future maritime leaders.”*

*“The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy is a national treasure that has been neglected for decades. It is time to restore it to its former glory!”* said Rep. Suozzi.

Rep. Garbarino has served on the USMMA Board of Visitors since joining Congress and has been a leading advocate for modernizing the Academy’s campus and supporting the next generation of maritime leaders.

The full text of the bill can be [found here](#).

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# Secretary of Defense Emphasizes Lethality, Deterrence on Guam



From Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Tucker, March 28, 2025

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam – Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth arrived on Guam March 27 to meet with military and civilian leaders and speak with troops – his first visit to Guam since his January confirmation.

The visit was the second stop on Hegseth’s Pacific engagement tour, which began in Hawaii and will continue from Guam to the Philippines and Japan. Hegseth focused on strengthening alliances and bolstering warrior ethos among service members,

further strengthening the United States' deterrence posture in the region.

More than 600 service members from military commands across Guam gathered for a troop call at Andersen Air Force Base to kick off the visit. Hegseth praised them for their mission contributions, noting Guam's strategic location in the Indo-Pacific region, and charged them to increase lethality and readiness.

"What unites us is who we are and our purpose as Americans," Hegseth said. "We are in the business of warfighting. You are warfighters on behalf of our nation and we are [going to] make sure you have a military built and prepared for that fight ... American leadership ensures the free world is protected – to advance American interests and the interests of our allies."

The visit fell one day after the 80th anniversary of end of the Battle of Iwo Jima that occurred just 750 miles north northwest of Guam. During the troop call, Hegseth recognized a group of seven Iwo Jima veterans who traveled to Guam to attend commemoration events. He thanked them for their courage and fortitude, and for paving the way for Americans in the Pacific.

Commander, Joint Region Marianas Navy Rear Adm. Brent DeVore greeted Hegseth upon arrival along with other senior military leaders on island.

"The Secretary's visit underscored the Department of Defense's commitment to the security of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the entire Micronesia region's strategic importance to the Pacific," DeVore said. "We highlighted our efforts and contributions to strategic deterrence, demonstrating U.S. strength and daily preparedness – and tangible examples of ongoing work in cyber security, missile defense, our construction projects throughout Guam,

CNMI, and the COFA states, and infrastructure resilience.”

“We all emphasized the interconnectedness between the Department of Defense efforts and our local communities, in all we do,” he added.

During a military roundtable, Hegseth received briefs from installation commanders and key leaders throughout the region detailing capabilities and future growth on Guam. Commander, 36th Wing, Andersen Air Force Base Air Force Brig. Gen. Thomas Palenske stressed to Hegseth the importance of the work the team is doing on Guam.

“Andersen Air Force Base is incredibly vital to the mission in the Indo-Pacific,” Palenske said. “Our strategic location and the exceptional readiness of our personnel reinforce our commitment to deterrence and combat readiness in the region. The capabilities showcased and discussed during this visit not only empower our forces but also strengthen our alliances and ensure we stand ready to respond to any challenge.”

The “Island Knights” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 25 flew Hegseth in an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter for an aerial tour of the island. During the tour, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Marianas Commanding Officer Navy Capt. Troy Brown briefed Hegseth on current and future construction and resiliency improvements on Guam including the Glass Breakwater, which was damaged during Typhoon Mawar. The breakwater is critical to harbor protection and the supply chain for the entire island.

Finally, Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Gov. Arnold Palacios, and Guam Rep. James Moylan met with Hegseth to discuss military-civilian partnership from a local perspective.

“Our goal is achieve peace through strength,” Hegseth said.

“By putting America first, that means working with partners and allies throughout the region, reestablishing deterrence and building capabilities right here. These islands are the tip of America’s spear in the Pacific.

“I want to be very clear to everyone in this room,” Hegseth continued. “... Any attack against these islands is an attack against the U.S. We recognize that, we understand that, and we are committed to that.”

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## USS Normandy and GDFS Shahoud Conduct Maritime Exercise



The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60) conducts a passing exercise with Guyana Defense Force Defiant-class patrol ship GDSF Shahoud in the Caribbean Sea, March 27, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Dylan M. Kinee)

By U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/ U.S. Fourth Fleet

## Public Affairs

March 28, 2025

CARIBBEAN SEA – Deployed to strengthen maritime partnerships in the Caribbean, the U.S. Navy Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60) conducted a passing exercise (PASSEX) with the Guyana Defence Force Defiant-class patrol vessel GDFS Shahoud (1039) on Mar. 27.

A PASSEX is an exercise conducted between two or more navies to ensure best practices for communication and cooperation and normally includes both communications and maneuvering drills. These exercises are designed to increase interoperability and enhance capabilities.

The two ships conducted formation-maneuvering events supported by Normandy's embarked MH-60R Seahawk helicopter from Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 50; the aircrew conducted a photo exercise as the final event of the maneuvers.

"Our Normandy Sailors appreciate the opportunity to sail and operate alongside our partners from Guyana," said CAPT Nathan Diaz, USS Normandy Commanding Officer. "Maritime exercises such as these improve our seafaring skills and build our combined readiness for future engagements."

"Shared maritime presence in our region—operating at sea with our allies and partners—is essential," said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. "Through operations and exercises like this one with Guyana we strengthen both U.S. and regional security and improve our military-to-military cooperation."

USS Normandy is deployed to the U.S. Southern Command Area of Responsibility to protect U.S. interests in the region and strengthen maritime partnerships through bilateral,

trilateral, and multinational maritime operations and Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) activities.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet serves as a trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central and South American maritime forces and promotes unity, security, and stability in the region.

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# **Japan, Philippines, and United States Conduct Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity**



The U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Shoup (DDG 85), the Philippine Navy Jose Rizal-class guided-missile frigate BRP Jose Rizal (FF 150), and the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force Mogami-class frigate JS NOSHIRO (FFM 3) conduct a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, March 28, 2025.

By U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Public Affairs, March 28, 2025

SOUTH CHINA SEA – The Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force and the United States Navy, demonstrating a collective commitment to strengthen regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific, conducted a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, March 28, 2025.

This iteration builds upon previous MCAs and our continuing operations together, which strengthens the interoperability of our defense/armed forces doctrines, tactics, techniques, and procedures.

MCAs are conducted in a manner that is consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety and navigational rights and freedoms of all nations. Participating units included the U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Shoup (DDG 85) and a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, the Philippine Navy Jose Rizal-class guided-missile frigate BRP Jose Rizal (FF 150) and King Air C-90 aircraft, and the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force Mogami-class frigate JS NOSHIRO (FFM 3).

The U.S., along with our allies and partners, upholds the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to those freedoms.

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# CMS Launches Publication on Renewing the U.S. Commercial Maritime Industry



Dr. Steven Wills, left, John D. McCown, Brent Sadler and William McDonald at the Center for Maritime Strategy book launch event. *Photo credit: James Peterson*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Center for Maritime Strategy (CMS) held the Washington-area launch of its first major publication, “Returning from Ebb Tide: Renewing the United States Commercial Maritime Industry,” on March 26 at the Arlington headquarters of the Navy League of the United States.

The book is a thorough analysis of the problems facing merchant mariners and contains recommendations to strengthen

American commercial shipping.

Speakers at the event included three of the book's 10 contributing authors: Brent Sadler, senior research fellow, Naval Warfare and Advanced Technology, at the Heritage Foundation's Allison Center for National Security, and the new nominee to head the U.S. Maritime Administration; John D. McCown, non-resident senior fellow at CMS; and William McDonald, former director of the Office of Sealift Support at MARAD.

Admiral James Foggo, U.S. Navy (retired), said the book was an early focus of CMS and is needed because of how China is dominating commercial shipping, with 50% of the commercial fleet to America's 1%.

The decline of the U.S. commercial fleet has several causes, he said, including the Peace Dividend after World War II, the end of industry subsidies under President Reagan and globalization that led to outsourcing.



The book will also have a launch event at Sea-Air-Space 2025.

*Photo credit: James Peterson*

“Now, the fleet is a shadow of its former self,” he said. “...We can ill afford to idly sit by and observe the status quo.”

### **Sea-Air-Space Launch**

CMS will also hold a book launch and discussion at Sea-Air-Space 2025, on Tuesday, April 8 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Editor Dr. Steve Wills will lead a discussion with the authors on how our nation’s commercial maritime capability declined over the past several decades and how to resurrect the United States’ critically important maritime sector.

Confirmed speakers for the Sea-Air-Space event include Sadler and MCown as well as Vice Admiral Dee Mewbourne, U.S. Navy (ret.), CEO at Quadrant Nuclear Industries, and Dr. Brad Martin, senior policy researcher at RAND Corporation.

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# **U.S. Trains First Australian Radiological Control Technicians to Support AUKUS Submarine Force**



In a milestone for the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) enhanced trilateral security partnership, four Australian civilian maintenance technicians, pictured with Norfolk Naval Shipyard commander Capt. James Mosman, graduated from the U.S. Navy's Radiological Controls Technician Qualifying School (RCTQS) at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard March 26, 2025.

By Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility, and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Public Affairs, March 27, 2025

**PORTSMOUTH, Va.** – In a milestone for the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) enhanced trilateral security partnership, four Australian civilian maintenance technicians from the Australian government's submarine company, ASC, graduated from the U.S. Navy's Radiological Controls Technician Qualifying School (RCTQS) at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard March 26, 2025. The group's successful completion of this specialized training marks a key step in supporting Australia's acquisition of sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS Pillar I Optimal

Pathway.

The RCTQS provides the specialized training required to uphold the U.S. Navy's nuclear and radiological safety standards and ensure compliance with U.S. regulatory requirements. The rigorous six-month program provides detailed theoretical and practical-skills training with participants demonstrating their knowledge and abilities through comprehensive assessments and examinations. Upon qualification, these technicians are responsible for ensuring adherence to U.S. radiological controls requirements and standards during the operation and maintenance of naval nuclear propulsion plants at nuclear shipyards and maintenance activities. Since its inception, RCTQS has been instrumental in developing personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect Sailors, workers, the public and the environment.

"This is an intense, demanding school that teaches complex theory and application of radiological controls," said RCTQS instructor Donald Sweeney. "The Australian students were well prepared, focused, and committed from day one. They continue to exceed expectations at every step and are well positioned to perform their roles on conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines in their home country. I look forward to hearing about their future success."

The ASC technicians started their training in the fall of 2024 after spending three months training at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) in Hawaii. Over the next three years, approximately ten ASC technicians will enter the RCTQS program.

"Having the Australian maintenance personnel training and working side-by-side with our American trainees builds Australia's technical expertise and readiness to keep the U.S. submarines assigned to Submarine Rotational Force – West ready to operate," said Meganne Atkins, acting director of the AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Office.

Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY) Commander Capt. James "Jip" Mosman emphasized the benefits of the collaboration: "Incorporating the Australian technicians into our training facility has been a great opportunity to build a positive and productive partnership. The intensive training they received lays the groundwork for them to effectively lead and execute radiological operations."

Participating in the training has been an invaluable experience for the Australian cohort.

"The skills and knowledge we have gained as well as the professional relationships we have forged are essential for us to safely and securely steward Australia's conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines," said ASC trainee Steve\*. "We are more confident than ever in our ability to meet Australia's regulation requirements and to uphold the responsibility imposed upon us in our duties to maintain the integrity and viability of the program."

More than 130 Australian civilian submarine maintainers are currently training at PHNSY & IMF to maintain nuclear-powered fast-attack submarines. "As the lead maintenance activity for Submarine Rotational Force – West, we are charged with ensuring the Australian personnel are ready to conduct maintenance on U.S. submarines," said Capt. Ryan McCrillis, PHNSY & IMF's commander. "Being able to send RCTQS trainees to Norfolk, Virginia, where the Navy has established this centralized high-quality training facility, ensures that when our submarines start rotating to Western Australia, the right people with the right training are ready to keep them fit to fight."

The AUKUS trilateral security partnership strengthens the participating nations' lethality and warfighting capabilities, enhances readiness by adding capacity and resilience to the submarine industrial base and is essential to securing a free and open Indo-Pacific region through operating more

interoperable high-end allied warships to deter aggression.

The AUKUS I&A Program Office is the U.S. Navy office responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to assist Australia in acquiring conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards and continuing to maintain the highest nonproliferation standard.

Norfolk Naval Shipyard, one of the nation's four public shipyards, focuses on generating fleet readiness and putting more combat-ready platforms at sea. As part of a broader effort to standardize radiological training across the service, the U.S. Navy established the RCTQS at the shipyard in 1996. Developed with input from multiple naval shipyards, the program has continuously evolved to incorporate the latest safety protocols and technological advancements. To date, RCTQS has trained nearly 7,000 radiological control technicians, playing a vital role in supporting the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility is a field activity of Naval Sea Systems Command and a one-stop regional maintenance center for the U.S. Navy's surface ships and submarines. It is the largest industrial employer in the state of Hawaii, with a combined civilian and military workforce of approximately 6,400. It is the most comprehensive fleet repair and maintenance facility between the U.S. West Coast and the Far East, strategically located in the heart of the Pacific, being about a week's steaming time closer to potential regional contingencies in the Indo-Pacific.

\*Per ASC protocols, employee last names are not publicly released

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# U.S. Coast Guard cutter promotes regional security in the Pacific with Papua New Guinea



East New Britain Province Governor Michael Marum and members from the East New Britian Province government, Papua New Guinea pose with crew from the Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) on the flight deck in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea March 17, 2025. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jennifer Nilson)

From U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, March 26, 2025

RABAUL, Papua New Guinea – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) recently concluded its second port call in Papua New Guinea (PNG), following nine days of shiprider operations with representatives from the PNG Defence Force, PNG Customs Service, and PNG National Fisheries Authority.

Midgett was invited by the Papua New Guinea government to participate in the operation. The PNG shipriders led the mission by selecting vessels of interests and conducting boardings while the U.S. Coast Guard provided ship based and shoreside support. The successful shiprider operations reinforced the importance of deepening and expanding strong bilateral relationships.

During the nine-day operation, Midgett facilitated six at-sea inspections within the PNG Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under the PNG-U.S. bilateral agreement. The U.S Coast Guard and PNG's bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements enhance PNG sovereignty with the capacity to enforce PNG's maritime laws through shared information exchanges and joint patrols that deter illegal activities and malign behavior in PNG's EEZ.

While in Rabaul, Midgett hosted a key leadership engagement with the East New Britain Governor, Michael Marum, and PNG fisheries stakeholders. During the engagement, members of Midgett and PNG representatives participated in roundtable discussions focused on PNG-U.S. bilateral agreements and security within the PNG EEZ and received a tour of the cutter.

Midgett crewmembers visited a local school to participate in sports and seamanship activities. Midgett also hosted students on board, allowing students to learn about shipboard life and participated in firefighting training.

Commissioned in 2019 and homeported in Honolulu, Midgett is the eighth Legend-class National Security Cutter. At 418-feet,

these cutters are the largest and most capable in the U.S. Coast Guard fleet. Equipped with advanced technology, they are ideally suited to support a wide range of missions, including maritime security, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations.