Military Sealift Command Continues Support to Operation Deep Freeze 2025

By Feb. 26, 2025

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica – The Military Sealift Command chartered ship MV Ocean Gladiator is conducting a cargo offload of supplies at McMurdo Station, Antarctica in support of the annual resupply mission Operation Deep Freeze (ODF)

2025.

The second of two MSC chartered ships supporting ODF 2025, Ocean Gladiator arrived at McMurdo Station on Feb. 20, where they were met by members of Navy Cargo Handling Battalion ONE and began conducting the offload. The ship is delivering 321 pieces of cargo, consisting of containers filled with mechanical parts, vehicles, construction materials including cement pilings for a pier project, food, electronics equipment and comfort items; supplies needed to sustain the next year of operations at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

Following the offload, Ocean Gladiator will be loaded with 149 containers of retrograde cargo for transportation off the continent. This includes trash and recyclable materials for disposal and equipment no longer required on the station, as well as the 65-ton floating Modular Causeway System, which has been used in lieu of the ice-pier for cargo operations. Before departing McMurdo station, Ocean Gladiator will be loaded with ice core samples that will be stored on the ship in a sub-zero freezer. The ice core samples will be delivered to the United States for scientific study.
Logistics moves are nothing new for MSC, in fact, they are almost a daily occurrence. Moving cargo in the harshest environment on Earth is a mission unto itself, as Marie Morrow, MSC’s ship liaison to the Joint Support Forces Antarctica staff can attest. On her third ODF mission, she has become something of an expert on how to move cargo while moored next to an ice-pier or a movable causeway, in sub zero temperatures and with high winds that whip over a snow-covered mountain and across an island.

Working in Antarctica wasn’t something Morrow had even considered when she came to work at MSC’s Pacific area command, MSCPAC. In fact, a job in San Diego seemed like the perfect place to be, for someone who doesn’t like the cold.

“I thought, San Diego, Southern California, that is exactly what I’m looking for,” said Morrow. “Then I got assigned to go to Antarctica. It wasn’t something I was looking for, or had even thought about to be honest, but, I really enjoy this mission. It is an experience that I share with only a very few people.”

Few world travelers ever get the coveted passport stamp for all seven continents. Access to Antarctica is strictly controlled. As Morrow explained, the journey to the southern most part of the planet isn’t an easy, or short commute. Morrow’s journey began in San Diego, with a flight to San Francisco, followed by an 14-hour flight to New Zealand, and then an 8-hour flight on a military C-130, sitting in a mesh cargo seat.

On the ice, Morrow serves as part of a team consisting of representatives of numerous government agencies including the National Science Foundation, Coast Guard, Navy, Army, Coast Guard. All working together to ensure a successful mission.

“Nothing can happen without all of us working together,” said Morrow. “It is super cooperative and interoperative.”

Everyone who is part of the ODF mission live in barracks at McMurdo Station, or on the ships. Life is communal with shared rooms and a dining hall. Those supporting the mission get to know each other personally and, like a combat unit, create their own support structure for each other.

“Being at McMurdo Station is like being at summer camp for adults,” laughed Morrow. “It’s a very tight-knit group of people, working and living in a challenging environment. We get very close.”

Weather is a constant factor in Antarctica. The continent is known for its extreme environment, particularly subzero

temperatures and high winds. February is summertime in the Southern Hemisphere. In this small window of just a few weeks, ODF takes place. And while it is summer, temperatures on the ice still hover around freezing during the day and below zero at night. Cargo operations can move forward, despite the temperatures, but high winds can put a pause on work for hours, with the ships' cranes unable to move cargo in winds over 25 knots.

"The weather is everything," explained Morrow. "The Southern Ocean is the most unforgiving and treacherous water way on Earth. The weather can keep flights and ships from coming into port. The weather can put the offload on pause. This can mean that some of the cargo may not be offloaded. It is the National Science Foundation who has to make the decisions on how to stay inside the mission window."

With all the challenges and unpredictabilities of the ODF missions, those who support these operations come away with a feeling of being a part of something special and important, something outside the normal course of their job description.

"I never thought I would get to go on a mission to Antarctica," said Morrow. "But I love going to McMurdo Station, and I'm proud to be a part of it and to represent MSC."

Following operations in Antarctica, Ocean Gladiator will travel to Japan to deliver the floating modular causeway, before sailing for Port Hueneme, Calif., where they will offload cargo, completing their mission.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint service, on-going Defense Support to Civilian Authorities mission in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF). NSF is the lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program. Mission support consists of active duty, Guard and Reserve personnel from the U.S. Air

Force, Navy, Army, and Coast Guard as well as Department of Defense civilians and attached non-DOD civilians. ODF operates from two primary locations situated at Christchurch, New Zealand and McMurdo Station, Antarctica. MSC-chartered ships have made the challenging voyage to Antarctica every year since the station and its resupply mission were established in 1955.

Austal USA Hosts Acting Secretary of the Navy

Dr. Brett Seidle – VIP Tour
From Austal USA

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA welcomed the Honorable Dr. Brett

Seidle, acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research Development and Acquisition (ASN RDA) at the company's Mobile, Ala. shipyard yesterday. Dr. Seidle, joined by Rear Admiral Tom Anderson, Program Executive Officer Ships, toured the shipyard's facility and discussed the company's growing diversity of design and shipbuilding contracts with members of Austal USA's senior leadership team. During his tour, Dr. Seidle witnessed Austal USA's talented workforce in action.

This was Dr. Seidle's first visit to Austal USA, providing him a firsthand look at the company's state-of-the-art ship manufacturing facility, including separate steel and aluminum assembly lines. During the tour, Dr. Seidle saw ten vessels under construction as well as aircraft elevators for U.S. Navy Ford-class aircraft carriers (CVN 80 and 81). At Austal USA's vessel completion yard, Dr. Seidle saw the future USS Pierre (LCS 38), the final ship of the class, scheduled for delivery in May.

"We were honored to exhibit our talented workforce and modern facilities to Dr. Seidle and Admiral Anderson," stated Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. "We're proud of our success and diverse portfolio of work, and we look forward to continuing to be a key component of the Nation's shipbuilding industrial base."

Austal USA, celebrating 25 years in Mobile, has delivered 32 ships to the Navy since 2009 and is constructing ships from six different programs. The company also has modules in production for both the Virginia and Columbia-class submarine programs. In addition to Austal USA's nearly one million square feet of existing enclosed manufacturing space, a new final assembly building to manufacture Navy and Coast Guard surface ships, and a dedicated submarine module production facility are both under construction. When complete they will add over 600,000 square feet of indoor production area supporting 2,000 new jobs to the workforce.

U.S. Navy awards GE Aerospace Performance Based Logistics Contract for Avionics

From GE Aerospace, Feb. 24, 2025

CINCINNATI – February 24, 2025 – GE Aerospace has been awarded a contract to provide performance-based logistics (PBL) avionics support for the F/A-18, AV-8B and AH1-Z aircraft globally.

“Supporting the safety and operations of our armed forces is one of the most important things we do,” commented Matt Burns, general manager of Avionics Systems for GE Aerospace. “This five-year contract builds on a series of previous PBL contracts with our team supporting 30 years of 99% availability for the U.S. Navy.”

Under the contract, GE Aerospace will support stores management systems used in mission critical operations for the U.S. Navy fleets of F/A-18, AV-8B and AH1-Z aircraft globally. In addition to the supply, warehousing, and logistics management of the spares, GE Aerospace provides depot level repair of aircraft units and subassemblies and fleet support at major naval bases providing training and technical support.

GE Aerospace’s stores management systems provide scalable architectures with redundant centralized or distributed stores management while maintaining standard stores station interfaces and safety critical release control. Providing the tactical and operational ability to further protect troops while accomplishing their missions, GE Aerospace has delivered

more than 5000 stores management systems to numerous fourth and fifth generation fixed-wing and rotary-wing military aircraft operators worldwide.

Joint Maritime Information Center Meets with Cruise Ship Industry Officials on Red Sea Security

Joint Maritime Information Center director, U.S. Navy Capt. Lee Stuart, briefs cruise line personnel on the maritime security situation in the Middle East region during a visit to a cruise ship visiting Bahrain, Feb. 10, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo)

From U.S. Fifth Fleet, Feb. 26, 2025

MANAMA, Bahrain – The director of the Joint Maritime

Information Center (JMIC) met with representatives of the cruise ship industry in both Bahrain and Dubai in February to discuss JMIC operations and purpose and to reassure industry officials of JMIC partner nations' commitment to regional maritime security.

U.S. Navy Capt. Lee Stuart, JMIC director, along with representatives of Combined Task Force (CTF) 153 of the Combined Maritime Forces, briefed ships' masters, senior officers and corporate security managers on the current Middle East region maritime security situation, specifically in the Red Sea. CTF 153 is responsible for maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and Western Gulf of Aden.

"The Red Sea attacks highlighted the gap in understanding between commercial shipping and navies. JMIC aims to bridge that gap and increase cooperation to help keep mariners and passengers safe at sea," said Stuart.

Stuart also outlined JMIC's role, composition, operations and range of information products, including its incident-specific Information Notes and monthly reports with rolling statistical analysis.

"The cruise industry is highly competitive, rapidly growing, sets schedules years ahead and must keep passenger safety as paramount," he said.

Stuart also introduced JMIC's Bridge Emergency Reference Cards, which guide bridge crews on actions to take before, during and after an incident.

The deepening engagement comes as cruise operators and other commercial shipping operators cautiously evaluate the risk of returning to the Red Sea.

"The cruise industry has some difficult decisions to make in

response to the region’s complex and dynamic regional security situation,” Stuart said. “JMIC has a vital role to play in giving them reliable information to help their decision-making.”

The Joint Maritime Information Center, initially formed in February 2024 to engage commercial shipping stakeholders regarding Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, recently became a permanent part of Combined Maritime Forces with a broader, region-wide mandate.

Similar cruise industry engagements are planned for the future. JMIC also welcomes engagement from shipping industry stakeholders via its LinkedIn page at: https://www.linkedin.com/company/jmic.

USS St. Louis Completes First Deployment to 4th Fleet

The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19) arrives at Naval Station Mayport, Florida, after a deployment to the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. (MC1 Brandon J. Vinson)

From U.S. 4th Fleet, Feb. 25, 2025

NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. – USS St. Louis (LCS 19), a Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), returned to Naval Station Mayport this week, concluding its first deployment to the U.S. 4th Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR).

The eight-month deployment, which lasted from June 15, 2024 to February 24, 2025, marked a series of groundbreaking achievements that underscore the capabilities of the LCS platform and its growing contributions to naval operations.

While assigned to TASK FORCE 45/Destroyer Squadron 40, operating primarily in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean, St. Louis, embarked Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50 Detachment 4, and U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDET) 105 and 407, disrupted and confiscated over $100 million worth of illicit contraband in five

different operations, significantly hampering the activities of transnational criminal organizations.

“From our first week in theater, the crew demonstrated its tactical acumen in locating and intercepting illicit traffickers. Most of these interdictions were conducted at night, requiring long days and late hours but the crew stayed immensely resilient. I am very proud of what the team accomplished,” said Cmdr. T.J. Orth, USS St. Louis’ Commanding Officer.

In August, St. Louis transited the Panama Canal and operated in the Pacific Ocean for the first time, making history as the first FRE-variant LCS to travel as far south as Valparaíso, Chile when she participated in the 65th iteration of UNITAS, the world’s longest-running multinational maritime exercise. Alongside naval forces from 44 countries, the ship showcased its capabilities in maritime interoperability, enhancing ties with partner nations and furthering regional stability.

After returning through the Panama Canal, St. Louis received new tasking to support U.S. Southern Command’s Joint Task Force-Bravo as that command responded to the deteriorating security situation in Haiti. St. Louis served as a fueling station and Search and Rescue force for 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment (AVN REGT) UH-60 Blackhawks conducting evacuations out of Haiti. To prepare, St. Louis and 1-228th AVN REGT conducted more than 50 deck landings. This successful integration expanded the ship’s operational versatility, paved the way for future joint missions, and underscored the potential for cross-branch collaboration in dynamic environments.

To wrap up USS St. Louis’ first deployment, St. Louis Sailors showed their flexibility and capacity to rapidly deploy in support of Joint Task Force Operation Southern Guard onboard U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Sailors supported the

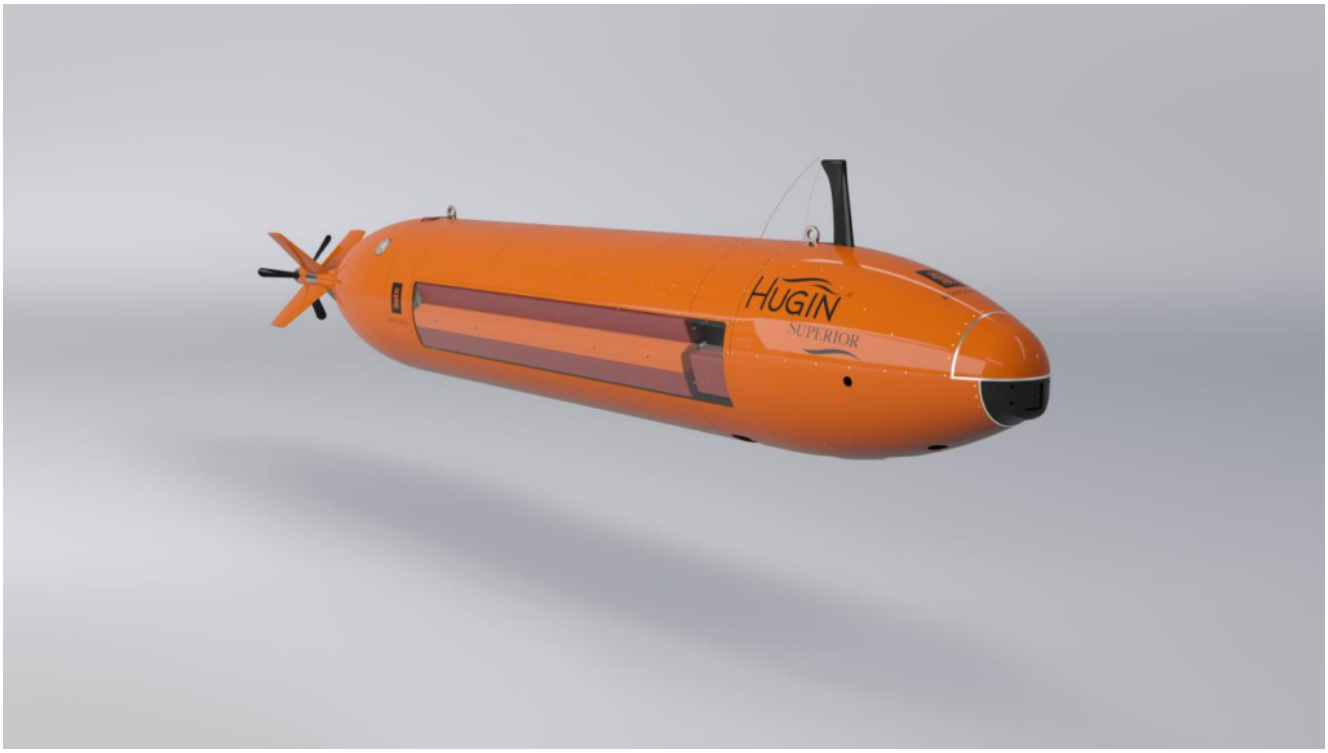
expansion of the Maritime Operations Center (MOC) in preparing the MOC to receive up to 2,000 illegal aliens, erecting 50 tents and setting up several hundred cots in several days. Operation Southern Guard is highlighting effective interagency collaboration, as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) oversees the operation.

“We saw a lot of ‘firsts’ on this ship’s first deployment and it was amazing to see what this ship and crew was capable of. Looking back, this deployment demonstrated the growing potential for Freedom class LCS and the support they can provide not just in the Caribbean, but in the entire 4th Fleet AOR,” said Cmdr. Lee Shewmake, USS St. Louis’ executive officer. “There were many lessons learned that the crew took to heart and put in practice as deployment went on, and I believe that is what enabled our success over the past seven months.”

“St. Louis demonstrated the great potential of the LCS Freedom class, not only in executing its assigned missions but also in breaking new ground for the community. The professionalism and dedication of this crew have laid a strong foundation for the future of LCS operations,” said Master Chief Roderick Bolton, St. Louis’ Command Master Chief. “USS St. Louis returns home with its crew proud of their achievements and eager to share lessons learned from this historic deployment. As the U.S. Navy continues to evolve, St. Louis has proven itself a capable and innovative platform, ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.”

USS St. Louis’ first deployment to 4th Fleet was a resounding success, marked by numerous milestones and contributions to naval strategy. The ship’s accomplishments highlight the flexibility and utility of the Littoral Combat Ship platform in tackling modern challenges.

Successful tests for Hugin LDUUV to U.S. Navy



Kongsberg Discovery successfully completes acceptance testing of a HUGIN Superior Autonomous Underwater Vehicle system for the Defense Innovation Unit and U.S. Navy.

From KONGSBERG

Only one year after being awarded a 24-month frame contract for Large Diameter Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (LDUUV) by the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), KONGSBERG completed acceptance testing and delivery of the first HUGIN Superior Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) for this customer.

This final testing was completed at the beginning of the year in Norway. The vehicle will now go on to provide real-world operational relevance and enhance the undersea capabilities of the U.S. Navy.

The completion of this effort is a testament to DIU's commitment to fulfilling its mission of accelerating the adoption of commercial technology for national security. In the last year, the DIU team performed a rigorous technology assessment which culminated in the order and delivery of a highly capable HUGIN AUV system in a short time.

"KONGSBERG is excited to be expanding our relationship with the U.S. Navy and provide the cutting-edge capabilities that come standard with our HUGIN Superior AUV system. We applaud the DIU team for enabling this transfer of capability to the warfighter at an accelerated pace and look forward to valuable operator feedback and continued partnership to further evolve our product line," said Rich Patterson, Vice President of Sales, Uncrewed Platforms Division.

KONGSBERG's HUGIN Superior is a proven AUV system that has been in active use by both commercial and military customers since 2019. It provides immediate operational capability for Subsea and Seabed Warfare (SSW), Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (IPoE), Mine Countermeasures (MCM), and inspection of critical undersea infrastructure at delivery with no required modifications. With full ocean depth design, an endurance of over 70 hours, a navigational accuracy of <0.04% of distance travelled, and multiple mapping and imaging sensors, it leads the large AUV market in reliability and capability.

KONGSBERG has an extensive history of developing AUVs. From the first HUGIN dive in 1993 to the record-breaking multi-week mission of HUGIN Endurance last summer, HUGIN continues to be the gold standard of AUVs on the market. HUGIN is tightly integrated with KONGSBERG acoustic sensors, autonomy, navigation, and battery technology resulting in a finely tuned system that produces the highest quality data.

Leonardo DRS Gets $45M Navy Commitment to Bolster US Submarine Industrial Base

ARLINGTON, Va., Feb. 24, 2025 – Leonardo DRS, Inc. (NASDAQ: DRS) announced today that it has received a $45 million U.S. Navy Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) investment commitment through contracts with HII's Newport News Shipbuilding. The investment is expected to expand the capabilities of DRS's new, 140,000 square-foot naval propulsion manufacturing facility currently under-construction in Goose Creek, South Carolina, and includes capital equipment and other infrastructure enhancements.

The $45 million SIB investment will serve as a catalyst for a 40,000 square-foot expansion of the facility in support of capabilities critical to current and future U.S. Navy nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers. This investment builds on several Navy funded engineering contracts, including Newport News Shipbuilding, and from General Dynamics Electric Boat previously issued to Leonardo DRS. These contracts, combined with internal investments, will strengthen steam turbine system design, manufacture, integration, and test capabilities, including steam turbine generators.

"This significant investment is the result of extensive collaboration between Leonardo DRS, the U.S. Navy, and our shipbuilding customers. said Jon Miller, senior vice president and general manager of the Leonardo DRS Naval Power Systems business unit. "It signifies the depth of our combined resolve to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our nation's submarine industrial base with respect to capacity

needed to deliver critical capability on-time and on-budget for the warfighter.”

The Leonardo DRS purpose-built facility is expected to open in 2026 and will grow the company’s naval propulsion capability and streamline its support of the Columbia Class submarine program. The company is currently producing the Columbia Class electric propulsion system components, including the main propulsion motor, the main propulsion drives, and main propulsion controller, and other components in addition to similar systems for international allied navies. The facility will support electric drive for next-generation naval platforms and enables an expansion of DRS’s organic capability. It represents a significant expansion in the company’s ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Navy and enhances the nation’s submarine industrial base.

GA-ASI Advances Unmanned Sub-Hunting with Test of New Air-Dropped Sensors

From GA-ASI

SAN DIEGO – 25 February 2025 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) continues to expand the role of

unmanned aerial systems, demonstrating the first-ever Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capability on an MQ-9B SeaGuardian®. In a groundbreaking test from January 20-30, 2025, a company-operated MQ-9B SeaGuardian successfully deployed and tested anti-submarine sensors using multiple pre-production Sonobuoy Dispensing System (SDS) pods.

Having already proven its ability to track submerged targets, SeaGuardian took this capability further with GA-ASI's newly designed SDS pods. These pods deployed multiple sonobuoys to conduct onboard thermal-depth and acoustic data processing. Using Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording (DIFAR), Directional Command Activated Sonobuoy System (DICASS), and Bathythermograph sonobuoys, SeaGuardian effectively detected, tracked, and analyzed underwater targets while collecting critical acoustic intelligence.

"This demonstration represents a major leap forward in unmanned capabilities and marks a major milestone in proving that an unmanned aircraft can perform end-to-end persistent ASW operations," said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. "The success of this testing paves the way for enhanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities on the MQ-9B SeaGuardian. We look forward to continued collaboration with the U.S. Navy as they explore innovative solutions for distributed maritime operations in the undersea domain."

As part of the development process, GA-ASI successfully deployed multiple DIFAR and DICASS test sonobuoys, precisely correlating ejection speed with stress/strain data. This provided a high-fidelity launch model to refine future deployment capabilities.

Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) AIRWorks played a key role in supporting and overseeing the development, ensuring the system meets emerging warfighter needs. AIRWorks has partnered with GA-ASI in multiple ASW demonstrations, including the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC)

exercise in July 2024.

With strong demand already in place from multiple customers, GA-ASI anticipates increasing interest in the MQ-9B SeaGuardian, given its high-end maritime capabilities at a significantly lower cost than traditional manned maritime platforms.

Truman returns to sea following repairs

By USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) Public Affairs, Feb. 24, 2025

MEDITERRANEAN SEA — The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) is underway conducting routine flight operations in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, Feb. 24, after departing Souda Bay, Greece, on Feb. 23, following completion of an emergent repair availability (ERAV).

“Our ship remains operationally ready to complete deployment with mission and purpose on full display by the entire crew,” said Capt. Chris Hill, commanding officer of Harry S. Truman. “We are out here launching and recovering aircraft, ready to

‘Give ‘em Hell’ with combat credible power.”

The U.S. Navy’s ability to rapidly repair its warships anywhere in the world is a testament to our lethality and the warfighting advantage of relationships with Allies and partners.

Led by Forward Deployed Regional Maintenance Center (FDRMC), Truman completed the five-day ERAV at Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay, Greece. In an all-hands effort, Sailors worked with FDRMC personnel, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, and local industry partner Theodoropoulos Group to assess damage, develop a repair plan, and restore weathertight integrity to the ship following the collision on Feb. 12.

“FDRMC is focused on keeping our forward-deployed naval forces mission-ready across 5th and 6th Fleets, maintaining critical combat readiness for the ships and their Sailors,” said Capt. Mollie Bily, FDRMC commanding officer. “The rapid repair effort on Truman was a testament to our expeditionary maintenance expertise and the exceptional collaboration with our Norfolk Naval Shipyard teammates and industry partners.”

Since deploying, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1 has flown over 5,500 sorties, including two self-defense strikes into Houthi-controlled Yemen territory and a large force strike against ISIS-Somalia targets in Northeast Somalia in coordination with U.S. Africa Command. The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group continues to provide maritime security and regional stability in support of its component commanders.

The carrier strike group includes the flagship USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75); Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1, with eight embarked aviation squadrons; staffs from CSG-8, CVW-1, and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 28; the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg (CG 64); and three Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, USS Stout (DDG 55), USS The Sullivans (DDG 68), and USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109).

HSTCSG’s mission is to conduct prompt and sustained combat operations at sea and maintain a forward presence through sea control and power projection capabilities. For more information, visit DVIDS at https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN75.

Navy CNO Franchetti Fired

Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti presents an award to a Sailor at Naval Support Activity (NSA) Crane, in Crane, Indiana, Feb. 10, 2025. Photo *Credit: U.S. Navy | Senior Chief Petty Officer Elliott Fabrizio*

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth announced he was firing Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti on Friday, the same day as he relieved Air Force General Charles Q. Brown as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to the New

York Times.

According to the Times and other reports, Hegseth said Franchetti and Air Force General James Slife, the service's vice chief of staff, also fired, had "distinguished careers," and "we thank them for their service and dedication to our country."

Franchetti was the 33rd chief of naval operations, the first woman to be CNO and the first woman to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She entered the Navy after earning a degree in journalism at Northwestern University and joining the Naval ROTC program there.

She later commanded the destroyer USS Ross, commanded U.S. Naval forces in Korea, served as commander of the U.S. 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean and director of strategy, plans and policy for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.