

# Navy Announces Commissioning Date, Location for the Future USS Cleveland



Cmdr. Bruce Hallett, commanding officer of the Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship USS Cleveland (LCS-31) and Command Master Chief Carla Bellamy take a group photo with the Cleveland Legacy Foundation and active duty service members after revealing the ships crest with Friday, April 5, 2024.

From U.S. Fleet Forces Command, 14 April 2026

The U.S. Navy will commission the future Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship USS Cleveland (LCS 31) on May 16, 2026, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Cmdr. Bruce Hallett, commanding officer of the Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship USS Cleveland (LCS-31) and Command Master Chief Carla Bellamy take a group photo with the Cleveland Legacy Foundation and active-duty service members after

revealing the ship's crest with Friday, April 5, 2024.

The commissioning marks the completion of the final Freedom-variant Littoral Combat Ship construction phase, a sustained acquisition effort between the Navy and industry partners for two decades.

The sponsor of LCS 31 is Robyn Modly, the wife of former Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly. In keeping with Navy tradition, Modly will give the order during the ceremony to "man our ship and bring her to life!" At that moment, the commissioning pennant will be hoisted, and USS Cleveland will officially enter the fleet.

The ship's motto, "Forge a Legacy," honors Cleveland's industrial history and the strength of its citizens. The ship's crest features an anvil and a red stripe, symbolizing the city's steel manufacturing roots, and sixteen rays of sun representing USS Cleveland as the sixteenth Freedom-class ship. It is the fourth U.S. Navy ship to bear its name.

Following its commissioning, LCS 31 will be homeported at Mayport, Florida. Littoral combat ships are fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in both near-shore and open-ocean environments, countering 21st-century coastal threats. LCS ships integrate with joint, combined, manned, and unmanned teams to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence missions around the globe.

The commissioning ceremony for the future USS Cleveland (LCS 31) will be livestreamed at <http://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/37601>. The webcast is scheduled to begin at 9:45 a.m. EST, and the ceremony begins at 10 a.m. EST on May 16.

The mission of Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSP) is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control

the sea and project power ashore.

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# U.S. to Blockade Ships Entering or Exiting Iranian Ports



From U.S. Central Command, April 12, 2026

TAMPA, Fla. – U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces will begin implementing a blockade of all maritime traffic entering and exiting Iranian ports on April 13 at 10 a.m. ET, in accordance with the President's proclamation.

The blockade will be enforced impartially against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, including all Iranian ports on the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. CENTCOM forces will not impede freedom of navigation for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz to and from non-Iranian ports.

Additional information will be provided to commercial mariners through a formal notice prior to the start of the blockade. All mariners are advised to monitor Notice to Mariners broadcasts and contact U.S. naval forces on bridge-to-bridge channel 16 when operating in the Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz approaches.

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## **Philippine, U.S. Forces Kick Off Most Expansive Balikatan Exercise to Date**



From the I Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military will conduct the 41st iteration of Exercise Balikatan across the Philippine archipelago from April 20 to May 8.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty, more than 17,000 personnel from the Philippines, United States, Australia, Japan, Canada, France, and New Zealand will train shoulder-to-shoulder, and an additional 17 nations will participate as part of the international observer program.

“Balikatan is the embodiment of our nation’s commitment to a strong and credible defense posture” said Philippine Army Maj. Gen. Francisco F. Lorenzo Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines Education and Training Command Commander. “This exercise is a prime opportunity for the Armed Forces of the Philippines to accelerate our modernization and enhance our capabilities as a vanguard of regional peace. Training shoulder-to-shoulder with our oldest ally and our many partners ensures our forces are prepared to face any challenge, together.”

The exercise will feature cutting-edge training across the air, land, sea, space, and cyber domains. Key events include:

- AFP and U.S. forces will sharpen their ability to command and control by establishing parallel exercise joint task forces to navigate a challenging training scenario.
- Field training exercises throughout the Philippines will culminate in capstone events to rehearse warfighting skills in maritime security, coastal defense, and the integration of combined and joint fires.
- Dynamic maritime sustainment and distributed logistics through ship-to-shore equipment offloads and movements. Prior to the start of Balikatan 2026, the AFP and U.S. forces rehearsed equipment and supply offload from maritime prepositioning force shipping at Port of Cagayan de Oro that was transported and distributed across Luzon. Supplies and equipment movement and distribution will continue throughout the exercise in support of the training.
- Ships from four countries will participate in a multi-day multilateral maritime exercise along the west coast of the Philippines conducting deck landing qualifications, live-fire gunnery, anti-submarine warfare, and search and rescue training.
- Humanitarian and civic assistance activities including engineering and construction projects and community health engagements at five locations across the archipelago to directly benefit Filipino communities and

strengthen humanitarian assistance preparedness.

“Our alliance with the Philippines has been a cornerstone of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific for 75 years,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Christian Wortman, I Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General. “Balikatan 2026 is a powerful demonstration of our ironclad commitment to that alliance. By training together with our friends and partners using the most advanced systems, we are not just enhancing our shared capabilities; we are forging the trust and readiness required to secure a prosperous and peaceful future for the region.”

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**Textron Aviation Defense  
Awarded Five-Year Sustaining  
Engineering and Program  
Management Contract for  
Beechcraft T-6 Texan II  
Fleet**



Textron Aviation Defense continues to support sustainment of more than 700 Beechcraft T-6 Texan II aircraft under a renewed five-year SEPM contract  
From Textron Aviation Defense Inc.

WICHITA, Kan. (Apr. 13, 2026) – [Textron Aviation Defense](#) LLC, a [Textron Inc.](#) (NYSE: TXT) company, today announced that it has been awarded a five-year U.S. government contract valued at over \$150,000,000 to provide Sustaining Engineering and Program Management (SEPM) services for the fleet of U.S. Air Force, Navy and Army T-6A, T-6B and T-6D aircraft.

First awarded in 2021, the action extends systems engineering and program management services for an additional five years, covering sustaining and systems engineering, program management and support for maintenance, repairs, modifications and integrity programs. The modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to \$510,000,000 ceiling, from \$240,000,000 ceiling. Work will be performed in Wichita, Kansas.

This follow-on SEPM contract reflects the U.S. Government T-6 Joint Program Office's continued confidence in our team and our ability to keep the T-6 Texan II fleet mission-ready, Travis Tyler, president and CEO, Textron Aviation Defense

"This follow-on SEPM contract reflects the U.S. Government T-6 Joint Program Office's continued confidence in our team and our ability to keep the T-6 Texan II fleet mission-ready," said Travis Tyler, president and CEO, Textron Aviation Defense. "Our focus remains on sustaining aircraft availability and supporting our customers as they train the next generation of military pilots."

### **About the Beechcraft T-6 Texan II**

The Beechcraft T-6 Texan II is the world's premier military flight trainer. Backed by nearly 100 years of experience delivering more than 255,000 aircraft worldwide, the Texan II's low acquisition, operating and sustainment costs enable global air forces to fast-track pilot production. With an installed base that more than quadruples its closest competitor, the family of Beechcraft T-6 Texan II aircraft has been the world's number one integrated training system (ITS) for more than 20 years. The Texan II capitalizes on an active production line with an industry-leading Manufacturing Readiness Level (MRL) rating of 10 as well as a proven supply chain.

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**Australia, Philippine, U.S.**

# forces conduct multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity



Sailors assigned to Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) uses the ship's 60-ton crane to lift an excavator from the Philippine Navy 3rd Naval Combat Engineer Battalion onto Ashland as part of multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Royal Australian Navy in Manila, Philippines, April 9, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 John B. Hetherington) From By Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, April 12, 2026

SULU SEA – The combined forces of Australia, the Philippines

and the United States conducted a multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone, April 9-12, 2026. This activity demonstrated a collective commitment to strengthening regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Sailors assigned to Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) uses the ship's 60-ton crane to lift an excavator from the Philippine Navy 3rd Naval Combat Engineer Battalion onto Ashland as part of multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Royal Australian Navy in Manila, Philippines, April 9, 2026. The U.S. Navy routinely operates with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and partners and allies through MCAs to continually develop, exercise and enhance multi-domain tactical interoperability to uphold peace and security in the region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John B. Hetherington)

As the fifth MCA of 2026, these regular at-sea events strengthen the interoperability of our respective military doctrines, tactics, techniques, and procedures. This multilateral MCA focused on critical maritime skills, including communication drills, maritime domain awareness activities and supporting equipment offload from Manila to Puerto Princesa, Philippines.

"We embrace any chance to conduct at-sea operations with our allies, Australia and the Philippines, and reinforce our commitment to security in the region," said Cmdr. Adam Peebles, commanding officer of U.S. Navy Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48). "These exercises provide an opportunity to strengthen our bonds, hone our skills and interoperability, and demonstrate the resilience of our crews. Our Sailors are dedicated to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific and deterring aggression."

MCAs are conducted in a manner consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety, navigational rights, and freedoms of all nations.

Participating units included Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Toowoomba (FFH 156) with an embarked MH-60R helicopter; Philippine Navy Rajah Sulayman-class offshore patrol vessel BRP Rajah Sulayman (PS 20) with an embarked AW109 helicopter; Philippine Air Force FA-50 fighter jets, A-29B Super Tucano, C-208B Grand Caravan EX aircraft, a Sokol search and rescue helicopter; Philippine Coast Guard Teresa Magbanua-class patrol vessel BRP Melchora Aquino (MRRV 9702); and U.S. Navy's Ashland.

The U.S., along with our allies and partners, upholds the right to freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and international airspace, as well as respect for maritime rights under international law.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.

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**USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr.  
Commissioned**



NORFOLK, Va.— U.S. Marine Corps retired Col. Harvey C. Barnum Jr., a Medal of Honor recipient, delivers remarks during the commissioning ceremony of Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) in Norfolk, Virginia, April 11, 2026. The U.S. Navy named the warship in Barnum's honor for his extraordinary heroism during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Ellen Guo)

NORFOLK, Va. – The U.S. Navy commissioned the future USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) on April 11, 2026, in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer is the first ship to bear the name of Medal of Honor recipient, U.S. Marine Corps Col. Harvey Curtiss “Barney” Barnum Jr. The ship honors Barnum's gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life beyond the call of duty during the Vietnam War.

On Dec. 18, 1965, then-1st Lt. Barnum assumed command of his company after the commander was mortally wounded. With two armed helicopters under his control, he moved fearlessly through deadly fire to lead air attacks against the enemy's

well-entrenched positions while directing one platoon in a successful counterattack on key positions. Having cleared a small area, he requested and directed the landing of two transport helicopters to evacuate the deceased and wounded. He then assisted in seizing the battalion's objective. He is among the few living namesakes to witness his ship's commissioning.

The sponsor of DDG 124 is Barnum's wife, Martha Hill. Since the ship's keel laying ceremony in 2021, Barnum and Hill have maintained a close relationship with the crew. In keeping with Navy tradition, she gave the order during the commissioning to "man our ship and bring her to life!" At that moment, the crew hoisted the commissioning pennant, and USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. became a warship and enter the fleet.

DDG 124 is homeported at Naval Station Norfolk.

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet. DDG 124 is a Flight IIA destroyer equipped with Aegis Baseline 9, which provides Integrated Air and Missile Defense capabilities, increased computing power, and radar upgrades that improve detection range and reaction time against modern air warfare and Ballistic Missile Defense threats. These highly capable, multi-mission ships provide a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface, and subsurface environments.

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**Austal USA Hosts Mr.**

# Christopher Miller, PAE Maritime



From Austal USA

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA welcomed Mr. Christopher Miller, in his new role as Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE) Maritime, at the company's Mobile, Ala. ship manufacturing facility yesterday. His visit began with status updates from senior leadership on the company's Navy surface ship and submarine module production programs.

Austal USA's leadership team also discussed human resources initiatives on employee retention and training, specifically plans for the company's apprenticeship program to be the largest of its kind in Alabama. Apprenticeship opportunities are offered in the areas of fabrication, pipe welding, pipe fitting, electrical, and fitout and a new program teaching

apprentices to design ships is in development.

Mr. Miller then toured Austal USA's advanced ship manufacturing facility, including its highly automated steel panel line. He also received a guided ship tour of Billy Franks Jr. (T-ATS 11) and Lansing (EPF 16), both of which are preparing for sea trials this summer.

"We were proud to host Mr. Miller today and to demonstrate how committed our talented workforce is to the success of the defense maritime industrial base," stated Austal USA interim President Gene Miller. "It's obvious, as you tour one of the most modern shipyards in the nation and witness all our ongoing activity, that Austal USA is focused on the future and all the promise it holds for our industry. We value opportunities like this visit, to strengthen collaboration, support program success, and highlight the skill and dedication of our hard-working team."

Austal USA has delivered 34 ships to the Navy over its 25-year history. The company has 11 ships under construction. Three ships are preparing for sea trials within the next couple of months and construction will soon begin on the fifth Navy Landing Craft Utility vessel and the third Coast Guard Heritage-class Offshore Patrol Cutter; two of three programs benefitting from serial production.

Mr. Miller's tour ended with a glimpse of the progress being made on Austal USA's new state-of-the-art 390,000 square-foot module manufacturing facility (MMF 3) that will be dedicated to submarine module production. Phase 1 of MMF 3 will be operational this summer.

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# HII Hosts PAE Maritime Christopher Miller at Ingalls Shipbuilding



From HII

PASCAGOULA, Miss., April 09, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII (NYSE: HII) hosted Christopher Miller, the U.S. Navy’s portfolio acquisition executive for maritime (PAE Maritime), at its Ingalls Shipbuilding division Wednesday. During the visit, Miller met with company leadership and received updates on current ship programs, facility investments and Ingalls’ expanding production capacity to support the Navy’s current and future fleet requirements.

“Ingalls is fully committed to our partnership with the Navy and the Marine Corps and our shared mission to strengthen the fleet with urgency,” Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Blanchette said. “The skill and determination our shipbuilders apply to every destroyer and amphibious ship are essential to that mission, and we were honored to show Mr. Miller firsthand

the commitment they bring to accelerating the Navy's needs."

HII has invested more than \$1 billion in infrastructure, facilities and advanced tools at Ingalls to prepare for next-generation shipbuilding requirements. These investments, combined with the shipyard's expanding distributed shipbuilding network across the Gulf Coast, ensure Ingalls is ready to support the Navy's "Golden Fleet" of advanced surface combatants while continuing to deliver destroyers and amphibious assault ships.

The visit marked Miller's first trip to Ingalls since assuming the PAE Maritime role in March 2026. In addition to meeting with leadership, he toured several areas of the shipyard, including amphibious transport dock *Harrisburg* (LPD 30), currently under construction.

"The critical work happening at Ingalls reflects the strength and technical expertise of our nation's shipbuilding industrial base," Miller said. "As the Navy prepares for future demands, our industry partners and their experienced workforce are pivotal to delivering the platforms and capacity needed. The maritime industry is critically important to our national defense and I am committed to supporting the industrial base efforts needed to deliver at speed and scale."

Miller also visited HII's Newport News Shipbuilding division at the end of March, where he met with leadership and toured construction progress on aircraft carrier programs at the shipyard. Together, the visits reinforced the shared commitment between HII and Navy leadership to deliver the platforms that strengthen the fleet, advance future capability and ensure sailors and Marines have the ships they need.

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# Virginia Senators Encourage Navy to Work with Virginia's Ship Repair Industry to Balance Delayed Workloads



From the office of Senator Mark R. Warner, D-Virginia

WASHINGTON – In light of the extended deployment of Virginia-based Navy ships, including the USS *Gerald R. Ford*, U.S. Sens. Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine (both D-VA) sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of the Navy John Phelan encouraging him to use the appropriate tools and authorities to ensure ship repair workloads in the Commonwealth remain level, and that the Navy works with industry to prepare for upcoming maintenance demand. The *Ford's* near historic deployment, emergency repairs, and compressed maintenance cycle have disrupted the ship's scheduled servicing, which also impacts Virginia's skilled tradespeople who repair and modernize ships.

The senators began, "We write to request, in light of the Navy's surge of deployments in the Caribbean and to the Middle East, that your Department utilize all appropriate tools and authorities to manage resulting maintenance needs, and work with industry to appropriately align demand with repair yard planning and capacity."

The senators encouraged the Navy to coordinate closely with industry to balance foreseeable demand and award contracts for known but stalled maintenance periods to mitigate delays that may result from the changes to operational schedules. The Navy should work with industry on the planning, ship checks, purchasing long-lead time materials, and any prefabrication efforts to ensure ships get back into operations quickly.

The senators continued, "Virginia is home to a storied shipbuilding and repair industry, one that has created and sustained many of America's greatest military and merchant ships. Virginia remains an ideal partner for the Navy to build and repair these ships, with capable shipyards and repair facilities, a talented and agile workforce, and a robust industrial base dedicated to keeping the military, maritime industry, and American economy afloat. Please keep the yards

level-loaded and our tradespeople working without fear of layoffs during this significant operational period for our Navy.”

Read the full letter [here](#) and below.

*Dear Secretary Phelan,*

*We write to request, in light of the Navy’s surge of deployments in the Caribbean and to the Middle East, that your Department utilize all appropriate tools and authorities to manage resulting maintenance needs, and work with industry to appropriately align demand with repair yard planning and capacity.*

*This operational tempo has had repercussions on the fleet, with the USS Gerald R. Ford now on a ten-month deployment, missing her original maintenance window and needing emergency repairs after an onboard fire. Deployments approaching historic lengths, compressed maintenance cycles, and ongoing operational demands have disrupted scheduled ship repairs in Virginia, as well as across the country. Not only do these extended deployments impact our servicemembers and their families, but we also note that these disruptions are borne by thousands of skilled tradespeople, regional economies, and the maritime industrial base across the country who repair and modernize our ships and get them ready to fight.*

*We encourage the Navy to be forward leaning in its strategy to manage this foreseeable demand, and work closely with industry to prepare for and balance the workload. To the greatest possible extent, the Navy should be utilizing available authorities and flexibilities to award contracts for known but*

*delayed maintenance periods to mitigate delays that may result from the changes to operational schedules. The Navy should use this time to work with industry on the planning, ship checks, purchasing long-lead time materials, and any prefabrication efforts to ensure these ships get back into operations quickly.*

*Virginia is home to a storied shipbuilding and repair industry, one that has created and sustained many of America's greatest military and merchant ships. Virginia remains an ideal partner for the Navy to build and repair these ships, with capable shipyards and repair facilities, a talented and agile workforce, and a robust industrial base dedicated to keeping the military, maritime industry, and American economy afloat. Please keep the yards level-loaded and our tradespeople working without fear of layoffs during this significant operational period for our Navy.*

*We urge you to continue to coordinate closely with ship repair industry leaders, and please do not hesitate to bring us into conversation to ensure the Navy and Virginia's ship repair industry has the authority, funds, and policies in place to support sustained, balanced, and coordinated ship repairs for the Navy.*

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## **George Whittier Returns as**

# CEO to Lead Fairbanks Morse into New Era of Growth



From Fairbanks Morse Defense

BELOIT, Wis. – Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD) today announced that George Whittier is returning to lead FMD as its Chief Executive Officer.

Across the defense and industrial sectors, Whittier is widely recognized as a trusted and highly respected leader. Having

spent more than a decade at FMD, including six years as its CEO, Whittier is uniquely situated to lead the company through this pivotal period as he brings a deep understanding of the business and its critical role within the defense industrial base.

“Fairbanks Morse has been integral to America’s industrial and defense strength for more than a century, and I am deeply honored to be asked to again lead this remarkable team and company forward,” Whittier said. “The maritime defense sector is where my heart has always been, and I look forward to working alongside our team to build on this legacy, strengthen our role in the American industrial base, and lead the company into its next phase of growth.”

Whittier brings a powerful combination of strategic vision, commercial expertise, and operational discipline, along with extensive relationships across industry and government. Throughout his career, including leadership roles at Precision Castparts Corporation, Regal Beloit Corporation and The Morey Corporation, he has consistently aligned strategy with execution, built high-performing teams and organizations, and delivered sustained growth.

George’s leadership positions the company to move faster, think bigger, and execute with even greater precision. He will play a pivotal role as we scale our operations, strengthen our impact within the defense industrial base, and deliver the next generation of solutions our customers rely on every day.

### **About Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD)**

Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD) builds, maintains and services the most trusted naval power and propulsion systems on the planet. For nearly a century, Fairbanks Morse Defense has been a principal supplier of a growing array of leading marine technologies, OEM parts and turnkey services to the U.S. Navy,

U.S. Coast Guard, Military Sealift Command, and Canadian Coast Guard. FMD stands ready to rapidly support the systems that power military fleets without compromising safety or quality. In times of peace and war, the experienced engineers, sailors and technicians of FMD demonstrate our commitment to supporting the mission and vision of critical global naval operations wherever and whenever needed. FMD is a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management.