

# USCGC Reliance Returns to Florida After 60-day Operation Vigilant Sentry Patrol



Coast Guard Cutter Reliance (WMEC 615) deck crew members handle line during towing operations with the cutter's small boat, Oct. 11, 2024, while at sea in the Windward Passage. Reliance's crew completed a 60-day patrol in the Seventh Coast Guard District area of responsibility to conduct maritime safety and security missions. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Sarah Kaleta)

From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, Nov. 7, 2024

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Reliance (WMEC 615) returned to their home port in Pensacola, Oct. 28, following a 60-day patrol in the Windward Passage.

Throughout their deployment in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of responsibility, the crew's primary missions were to protect the safety of life at sea and deter dangerous and unlawful migrant ventures bound for the United States. Deployed in support of the Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) initiative Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS), Reliance's crew worked alongside additional Coast Guard and partner assets to dissuade maritime migration and enforce immigration laws on the high seas.

While on patrol, Reliance's crew interdicted four overloaded and unsafe vessels, ultimately saving the lives of 441 Haitian and Dominican migrants, including many infants and children.

During two hazardous and similar cases, Reliance's crew located the unseaworthy migrant voyages in the dark of night and evacuated nearly 200 migrants from each vessel. Crew members moved the migrants to safety while preventing their grossly overloaded vessels from capsizing. After transferring the migrants from their unsafe vessels aboard the cutter, the crew provided humanitarian aid and care until the migrants could be safely repatriated to their countries of origin.

Of note, this was an historic patrol for the Coast Guard's oldest medium endurance cutter; after 60 years in service, this was Reliance's first patrol with a fully mixed-gender crew. Reliance recently completed a project to provide onboard accommodations for female enlisted crew members, increasing opportunities for female Coast Guard members to serve afloat.

"I am extremely proud of and have been continually impressed by our crew during my first deployment onboard Reliance," said Cmdr. Aaron Kowalczyk, commanding officer of Reliance. "Their tireless effort and relentless compassion for the Coast Guard's humanitarian mission was inspiring and ultimately resulted in saving hundreds of lives while deterring illicit

maritime migration. As Reliance enters her seventh decade of service, the ship and especially this crew remain 'Semper Paratus – Always Ready' for the next mission.”

Established in 2003, HSTF-SE is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-led interagency task force charged with directing operational and tactical planning, command and control, and functions as a standing organization to deter, mitigate and respond to maritime mass migration in the Caribbean Sea and Florida Straits.

OVS is the 2004 DHS plan that provides the structure for deploying joint air and surface assets and personnel to respond to irregular maritime migration in the Caribbean corridor of the United States. Its primary objectives are to protect life at sea while deterring and dissuading mass maritime migration alongside our federal, state, and local partners.

Reliance is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter with a crew of 77. The cutter's primary missions are counter-narcotics and migrant interdiction operations, living marine resources protection, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.go CoastGuard.com) to learn about active duty, reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

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## **Navy to Commission Future USS**

# John Basilone



From the Navy Office of Information, Nov. 7, 2024

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John Basilone (DDG 122) will be commissioned, Saturday, Nov. 9, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. EST in New York.

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy, will deliver the commissioning ceremony's principal address. Remarks will also be provided by Admiral Daryl Caudle, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Lieutenant General Roberta Shea, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic; Commander, United States Marine Corps Forces Command; and Commander, Marine Corps Forces Northern Command, The Honorable Zach Iscol, Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management, Ms. Diane Hawkins, Niece of Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, and Charles F. Krugh, President of General Dynamics Bath Iron Works. The ship's sponsors are Ryan Manion and Amy Looney, the president and vice president of the Travis Manion

Foundation, which empowers veterans and families of fallen heroes to develop character in future generations.

“Gunnery Sergeant Basilone’s relentless valor on the battlefields of Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima represented the best America has to offer and are exemplary of the Sailors and Marines serving today,” said Secretary Del Toro. “USS John Basilone (DDG 122) will be named after one of the most decorated Marines in our Nation’s history and will pay tribute to his legacy and the countless others who have served our country with distinction.”

The ship honors U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone, who received the Medal of Honor for his heroism during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. He was killed in action during the February 1945 invasion of Iwo Jima and was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. Basilone is the only enlisted Marine to be honored with both the Navy Cross and the Medal of Honor. DDG 122 will be the second ship named in honor of Basilone.

“Marines are known for their perseverance and loyalty to one another. Perhaps no Marine exemplified these traits better than Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, the only enlisted Marine in World War II to be awarded both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross,” said 20th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Carlos Ruiz. “As a true Marine Corps legend, it is fitting that this highly capable warship, led by an equally exceptional crew, will bear his name.”

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy’s surface fleet. These highly capable, multi-mission ships conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence to national security. Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers provide a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface, and subsurface environments.

Flight IIA DDGs host dual helicopter hangars, allowing for expanded anti-submarine, anti-surface, and anti-air warfare

capabilities through integrated operations with helicopter squadrons.

The ceremony will be live-streamed at <http://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/35147>. The link becomes active approximately ten minutes prior to the event at 9:50 a.m. EST.

Media may direct queries to the Navy Office of Information at (703) 697-5342. More information on the littoral combat ship program can be found at: <https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Fact-Files/Display-FactFiles/Article/2169871/destroyers-ddg-51/>.

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## **EP-3E Aries II Completes Final Flight in U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations**



Photo By [Petty Officer 1st Class Macadam Weissman](#)  
From [Commander, Naval Air Forces](#), Oct. 29, 2024

U.S. 5TH FLEET AREA OF OPERATIONS – After nearly six decades of service, the EP-3E Aries II, a multi-intelligence reconnaissance aircraft, completed its final flight in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, Oct. 29.

A detachment from the “World Watchers” of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ) 1 completed their final mission with their EP-3E ahead of their redeployment from the region.

The EP-3E Aries II served as a key intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) asset in the maritime patrol and reconnaissance force (MPRF). The aircraft provided fleet and theater commanders near real-time tactical signals intelligence and full-motion video intelligence. The crew fused the collected intelligence along with other information for a variety of uses, including indications and warnings, information dominance, battle-space situational awareness,

suppression of enemy air defenses, destruction of enemy air-defense, anti-air warfare and anti-submarine warfare applications.

“It’s amazing to think of the number of folks who have been part of the EP-3 heritage over the last 55 years,” said Lt. Cmdr. Justin “Gump” Roberts, the VQ-1 detachment officer-in-charge. “Success in this platform has solely been because of our hard-working maintenance team while on deck and our aircrew’s superior ISR while on station. It’s an honor to be part of a legacy that’s bigger than sum of its parts.”

Lt. Bradford “Chad” Holcombe, the aircraft commander, said VQ-1’s history speaks for itself and that he is “tremendously grateful” to be part of that history.

“From my first day at VQ-1, it’s been obvious to see the pride each member has in the platform, the mission, and most importantly the effort it takes to execute wherever and whenever we’re asked,” he said. “Flying the last mission flight is a privilege.”

Capt. Dennis “Rudy” Jensen, Commodore of Task Force 57, has been around the P-3 since 1979.

“My father was a P-3 pilot during the Cold War, and I’ve flown the variants of the same aircraft since 2002. Few other airplanes are as ‘time-tested & mother approved’ as the P-3,” Jensen said. “Its longevity and ability to operate from remote locations in austere environments for over half a century is a testament to those who designed, built, maintained and operated it. Much like the ever changing platforms onboard the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, the mission systems inside the EP-3E have evolved over time. The ability to evolve has enabled the EP-3E to remain viable and effective through today.”

The transition from the EP-3E to the P-8A Poseidon and MQ-4C Triton platforms has been carefully planned to avoid capability gaps. These platforms offer enhanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, with greater range, endurance and the ability to operate in more complex environments.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses approximately 2.5 million square miles of water space and includes the Arabian gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean, and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal, and the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb.

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## **Bollinger Shipyards Delivers FRC 1158 John Witherspoon to U.S. Coast Guard**



Photo credit: Bollinger Shipyards  
From Bollinger Shipyards

LOCKPORT, La., – (November 7, 2024) – Bollinger Shipyards (“Bollinger”) today announced the delivery of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) John Witherspoon at Coast Guard Sector Key West. This is the 58th Fast Response Cutter (FRC) delivered under the U.S. Coast Guard’s current program and the 184th vessel built by Bollinger for the U.S. Coast Guard over a 40-year partnership and will be homeported in Kodiak, Alaska.

“We are honored to deliver John Witherspoon to the U.S. Coast Guard, continuing our proud tradition of providing high-quality, mission-ready vessels,” said Bollinger President & CEO Ben Bordelon. “The FRC platform has proven itself time and again as a cornerstone of the Coast Guard’s fleet, excelling in a wide range of operational conditions. We’re confident John Witherspoon will serve its crew well in their mission of

defending our nation's national security interests over a vast and challenging area of responsibility."

The John Witherspoon will be homeported in Kodiak, Alaska. This vessel is the fourth FRC to join the fleet in Alaskan waters, reinforcing maritime security and bolstering the U.S. Coast Guard's ability to respond swiftly to emerging threats and protect vital infrastructure.

The Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget to Congress includes procuring two more FRCs to provide increased Coast Guard presence and engagement with allied countries in the Indo-Pacific region. As negotiations on federal appropriations continue, the future of the FRC program holds significant weight for both national security and the economy. The House of Representatives has approved funding for four additional Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) in its defense appropriations bill, providing a boost to the U.S. Coast Guard's fleet expansion. However, the Senate has yet to reach a consensus on future funding levels for the FRC program, leaving the long-term prospects for the program and the over 600 jobs that it supports in Lockport, La. uncertain.

Bordelon continued, "With over 600 jobs at our Lockport facility hanging in the balance, we're not just building ships – we're supporting families and communities throughout South Louisiana. Congress has long supported the FRC program for its essential role in defending our coastline, but also for the livelihoods it sustains in our community. We are hopeful that these efforts will continue to receive robust bipartisan, bicameral support as Congress finalizes appropriations."

Each FRC is named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. This vessel is named after Captain John Witherspoon, who served as commanding officer of cutters Mallow, Valiant, and Dependable. Notably, he was the first African American officer to command a shore unit when he assumed command of the Houston/Galveston Vessel

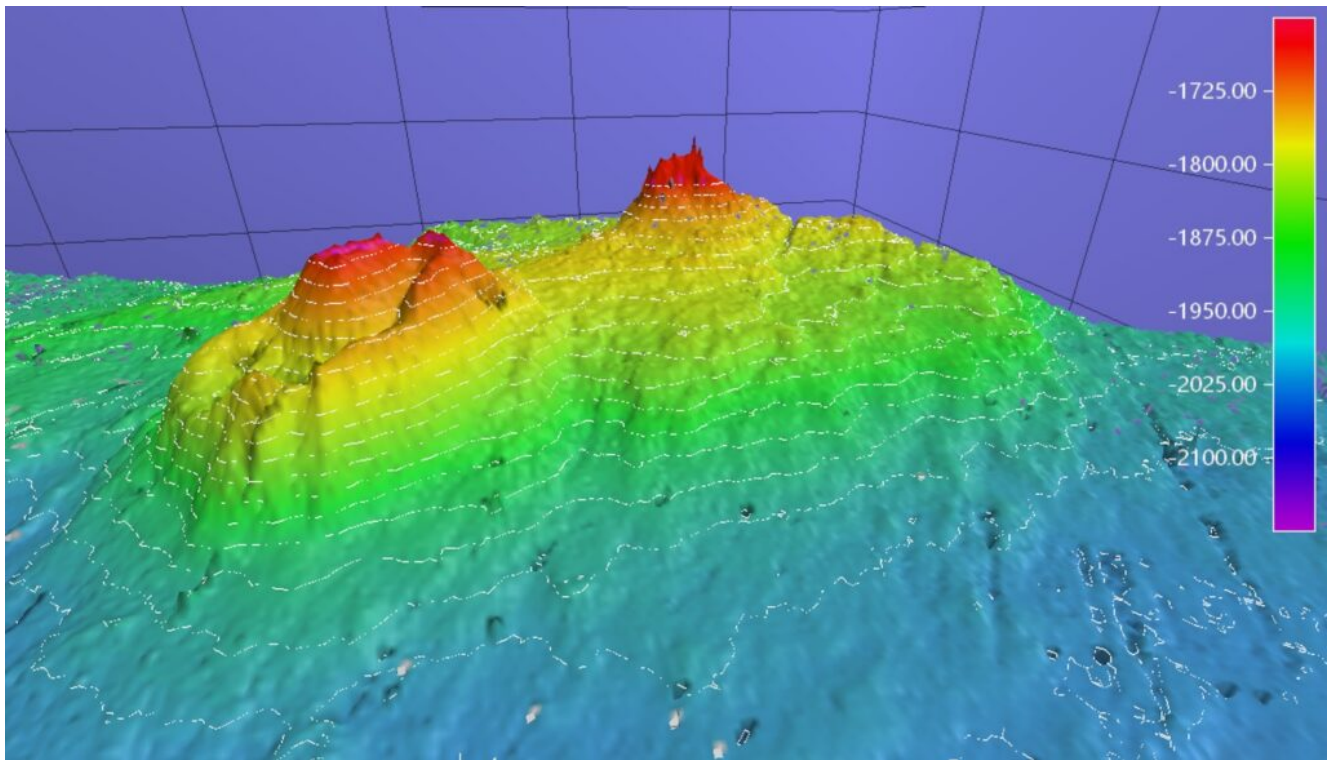
Traffic Service. Upon taking command of Mallow in 1982, Witherspoon became the second ever African American officer to command a Coast Guard cutter. His legacy is further honored through the Captain John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award, which recognizes officers who exemplify inspirational leadership, mentorship, and dedication to Coast Guard values. Captain Witherspoon upheld the highest traditions of the Coast Guard as an inspirational role model and mentor for Coast Guard men and women.

## **ABOUT THE FAST RESPONSE CUTTER PLATFORM**

The FRC is an operational “game changer,” according to senior Coast Guard officials. FRCs are consistently being deployed in support of the full range of missions within the United States Coast Guard and other branches of our armed services. This is due to its exceptional performance, expanded operational reach and capabilities, and ability to transform and adapt to the mission. FRCs have conducted operations as far as the Marshall Islands – a 4,400 nautical mile trip from their homeport. Measuring in at 154-feet, FRCs have a flank speed of 28 knots, state of the art C4ISR suite (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), and stern launch and recovery ramp for a 26-foot, over-the-horizon interceptor cutter boat.

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# **USCGC Healy Crew and Science Teams Discover Volcano-Like Underwater Feature**



Bathymetric data of volcano-like feature discovered by science teams aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) on the continental slope along Northern Alaska during the Healy's Phase 1 Arctic 2024 Fall Deployment supporting Alaskan Arctic Coast Port Access Routing Study and Opportunistic Mapping Initiative (Image courtesy of NOAA)

From U.S. Coast Guard 17th District, Nov. 7, 2024

NOME, Alaska – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) and embarked science teams completed the first two phases of the icebreaker's 2024 Arctic Fall deployment Sunday and continue operations offshore of western and northern Alaska.

Healy's crew and the science teams conducted multiple scientific and seafloor mapping missions, which resulted in the discovery of a subsea volcano-like feature during the first phase.

The first two phases featured a collaboration between the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the University of New Hampshire.

The interagency science mission to the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas north of Alaska combined oceanographic buoy deployments with a coordinated mapping effort to survey uncharted waters and acquire depth data along a portion of the Alaskan Arctic Coast Port Access Route Study (AACPARS) corridor, a Coast Guard-proposed preferred vessel route from Utqiagvik, Alaska, to the demarcation point of the border between U.S. and Canada.

During the mission's first phase, the science party discovered a volcano-like feature rising 500 meters from the seabed, approximately 1,600 meters below the surface at its shallowest depth. Upon further review of water column data collected at the site, the science team detected a potential gas plume rising from just above the feature to near the water's surface. The feature poses no risk to navigation as it is well below navigable draft of the largest modern vessels.

"Although data analysis is ongoing, these findings are exciting and offer insight into what may exist beneath the ocean's surface, much of which is unknown in this region," said Capt. Meghan McGovern, commanding officer of NOAA Ship Fairweather and currently embarked with the Healy mapping team. "The coordination and partnerships during this mission fill critical gaps in the region for all waterway users and provide a foundation for safe navigation in the Arctic."

McGovern and a NOAA team from the Fairweather, an Alaska-based hydrographic survey vessel, joined the science party aboard Healy to support mapping coastal waters using Healy's multibeam echo sounders for obtaining bathymetric data to provide highly accurate depths and detailed images of the sea floor and objects along the AACPARS corridor.

Healy hosted postdoctoral researchers and junior faculty members from a variety of institutions during the second phase

of the Arctic deployment supporting the U.S. NSF-funded Polar Early Career Scientist Training project, with contributions from NOAA and the Coast Guard providing training and research opportunities in the operational areas of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas and within the marginal ice zone.

The time underway provided ten early career polar scientists and their mentors with at-sea training and hands-on experience for the researchers to gain the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to plan, implement, and lead future interdisciplinary scientific expeditions on U.S. Arctic vessels.

These early career scientists conducted multidisciplinary research, including mapping to fill critical bathymetric gaps and scientific sampling across various disciplines. They also developed skills in shipboard leadership, coordination, and execution.

“It’s an honor supporting such diverse research missions in the northern high latitudes while working towards enhancing navigation safety in a region where soundings are sparse,” said Healy’s Commanding Officer Capt. Michele Schallip. “As scientific interest in the Arctic Ocean Basin grows, Healy is on the front-line providing access to the scientific community facilitating Arctic research opportunities while inspiring future chief scientists. Our crew remains committed to ensuring we are ready to meet the challenges unique to operating in the austere environment to see completion of these vital missions.”

Homeported in Seattle, Healy is the Coast Guard’s only icebreaker specifically designed to support research. It provides high-latitude U.S. presence and scientific access to areas too challenging for most research vessels to reach.

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# GA-ASI and US Navy Fly MQ-20 Avenger Using MD-5 GCS to Perform Command Autonomy Maneuvers



From General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.

SAN DIEGO – 07 November 2024 – On November 5, 2024, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) used its MQ-20 Avenger Unmanned Aircraft System to perform commanded autonomy maneuvers as part of a demonstration with the U.S. Navy (USN). The USN used its MD-5 Ground Control Station (GCS) with Lockheed Martin's MDCX™ autonomy platform to command and control the jet-powered UAS. Working collaboratively with the USN and Lockheed Martin, the GA-ASI team successfully executed the flight demonstration over a Proliferated Low Earth Orbit (PLEO) datalink.

The USN's Unmanned Carrier Aviation program office PMA-268 used GA-ASI's MQ-20 as a surrogate to demonstrate how its Unmanned Carrier Aviation Mission Control Station (UMCS) can command a variety of unmanned aircraft. The MD-5 GCS was operated from the USN's test facility at Patuxent River, Maryland, while the MQ-20 was flown out of GA-ASI's Desert Horizon flight operations facility in El Mirage, California.

This flight was the first time a GA-ASI UAS completed bi-directional communications using the UMCS operation codes while performing autonomous behavior. The procedure was completed using the PLEO datalink.

"This effort was a prime example of industry partners and government agencies working together to perform important new capabilities," said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. "The team efficiently and safely demonstrated aircraft flight control from another government agency's control station. Using GA-ASI's Tactical Autonomy Core Ecosystem (TacACE) software, the team not only executed airborne commands, but did so in a safe, controlled environment."

The demonstration was part of an effort to advance technology for future Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA). GA-ASI initiated the demonstration between PMA-268 and Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works to demonstrate connectivity between the Navy's UMCS and GA-ASI's MQ-20 Avenger. MQ-20 is a jet-powered platform used extensively as a CCA surrogate test bed for autonomous UAS technology development. GA-ASI was recently selected for the U.S. Air Force's [CCA](#) program.

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# VCNO Visits Shipyards, Navy Leadership in Northeast Focused on Readiness



VCNO Adm. Jim Kilby tours General Dynamics Bath Iron Works.  
(General Dynamics Bath Iron Works)

From the Navy Office of Information, Nov. 6, 2024

WASHINGTON – Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jim Kilby visited the Northeast with a focus on Navy readiness and maintenance, Oct. 29-Nov. 1, 2024.

Kilby spent time at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, including time aboard USS Hartford (SSN 768), which is undergoing an engineering overhaul at the facility, engaging with the submarine's leadership and the crew.

Electric Boat is the prime contractor and lead design yard for the Navy's Virginia-class fast-attack submarines. Following

Electric Boat, Kilby toured Naval Submarine New London and participated in a ribbon cutting at a new AI & Machine Learning Lab for the Undersea Warfighting Development Center. UWDC leads undersea superiority and enables the combat lethality and desired effects generated from, and within, the Undersea Domain.

SUBASE New London supports 16 fast attack submarines and is home to more than 70 tenant commands and their 9,500 active duty, reserve and civilian personnel. Kilby spent time at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, with shipyard and labor leadership, civilian personnel and Sailors assigned to the base and submarine crews. Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is America's leader for attack submarine maintenance, repair, and modernization.

Kilby ended his Northeast visit in Bath, Maine, with General Dynamics Bath Iron Works. The shipyard specializes in the design, building and support of the Navy's surface combatants and is the lead designer and builder of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. Kilby reviewed operations with the leadership of Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Bath, the Navy's on-site technical, contractual and business authority overseeing the design and construction of six ship classes at three private shipyards including Bath Iron Works.

During his visits, Kilby discussed Quality of Service for the Sailors assigned to the base and shipyard workers; including childcare, parking, quality food options and unaccompanied housing. Kilby also discussed the important role shipyards play in executing the CNO's Navigation Plan 2024.

"We should all see ourselves, uniformed and civilian, in CNO's NAVPLAN," said Kilby. "Every one of us plays a part, large or small, in the execution – whether from taking care our people to getting our ships out of maintenance on time – we all have a role." While at Bath Iron Works, he addressed the crew of the future USS John Basilone (DDG 122) prior to the ship's

sail away.

“You should all be extraordinarily proud to be a part of the namesake John Basilone,” said Kilby. “He was a true American hero, a relentlessly brave Marine and warfighter and I’m looking forward to seeing this ship bear his name and welcome you into the fleet next month.”

A sail away is a ship’s final departure from the construction yard for its homeport or commissioning site. It signifies the end of the new construction period and the beginning of its life preparing to perform the mission it was designed to undertake.

The future USS John Basilone (DDG 122) is a Flight IIA Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer and named for Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone, who received the Medal of Honor for his heroism during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. He was killed in action during the February 1945 invasion of Iwo Jima and was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. Basilone is the only enlisted Marine to be honored with both the Navy Cross and the Medal of Honor. The ship is scheduled for commissioning in New York City, Nov. 9, 2024.

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## **HII Names Kari Wilkinson to Lead Newport News Shipbuilding**



## Jennifer Boykin to Retire; Brian Blanchette to Lead Ingalls Shipbuilding

From HII, Nov. 6, 2024

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., Nov. 06, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII (NYSE: HII), the nation’s largest military shipbuilder, announced today that its Board of Directors has elected Kari Wilkinson to serve as president of the company’s Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) division, effective Jan. 1, 2025. She will succeed Jennifer Boykin, who is retiring from her position at year’s end after 37 years with the company.

The president of NNS, which is HII’s largest division, oversees more than 26,000 shipbuilders who design, build, and maintain the world’s most complex ships: nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered submarines.

“I have asked Jennifer to stay on in an advisory capacity through March to support a seamless transition to Kari,” HII CEO and President Chris Kastner said. “You will not find a more loyal advocate than Jennifer for her shipbuilders and the Hampton Roads community. Kari’s leadership has steered Ingalls Shipbuilding into its next phase of growth, having secured

serial production contracts for both the destroyer and amphibious ship programs. She is a tremendous leader and now brings her great energy and expertise to Newport News.”

Wilkinson becomes the 21<sup>st</sup> president of NNS, which was founded in 1886. She has served as president of HII’s Ingalls Shipbuilding division since 2021, where she has overseen the U.S. Navy’s amphibious assault and surface combatant ship programs, and the division’s 11,000 shipbuilders. The two shipyards make HII the largest industrial employer in both Virginia and Mississippi.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-names-kari-wilkinson-to-lead-newport-news-shipbuilding/>.

“Leading shipbuilders in the critical work we do for the nation has been and will continue to be the greatest honor of my life,” Wilkinson said. “I join the Newport News team with deep respect for its nuclear culture, commitment to safety, and an exceptional legacy further strengthened by Jennifer and the NNS team. I am fully committed to advancing our mission in support of our sailors, their families, and for all of us who depend on them for freedom and security.”

Under Wilkson’s leadership Ingalls Shipbuilding secured the recent \$9.6 billion multi-ship procurement contract for construction of three *San Antonio-class* (LPD 17) amphibious ships, and contract modification for the next *America-class* (LHA 6) large-deck amphibious ship.

Elected to succeed Kari as executive vice president of HII and president of Ingalls Shipbuilding, overseeing all programs and operations, is Brian Blanchette, who has served as vice president of quality and engineering at Ingalls since May 2021. Blanchette joined Ingalls in 1996 and has served in a range of roles including in technical and design engineering, program management and business development.

“I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to lead Ingalls Shipbuilding and its dedicated shipbuilders,” Blanchette said. “Throughout my 28-year career at Ingalls, I’ve had the privilege of working with and learning from remarkable people at every level. My focus will be to build on my predecessors’ success, particularly Kari’s, and to carry forward our strong shipbuilding legacy and honor our commitment to our nation by delivering the quality ships our service members depend on.”

Jennifer Boykin will retire from HII having steered its largest division through a period of remarkable growth and change. Highlights of Boykin’s legacy include:

Widely credited for leadership and continuous production through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Led the transformation from digital design to digital construction first on *Enterprise* (CVN 80) and for the *Columbia*-class submarine program.

Guided the company’s achievement of the first two-ship aircraft carrier procurement in over 30 years for *Enterprise* (CVN 80) and *Doris Miller* (CVN 81).

Secured with our teaming partner the largest shipbuilding contract in U.S. Navy history for *Virginia-class* submarines.

Known throughout Hampton Roads for her deep community engagement and commitment to diversity within the workforce and leadership team.

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## **VAW-123 Sends their Last E-2C**

# Hawkeye to the Boneyard



TUCSON, Ariz. – An E-2C Hawkeye aircraft assigned to Airborne Command & Control Squadron (VAW) 123 prepares to land Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, the largest aircraft boneyard in the world in Tucson, in September 2024. VAW-123 transferred two of their four E-2C Hawkeye aircraft to the boneyard. This event was part of the squadron's transition to the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye to be completed in mid-2025. (Photo courtesy U.S. Navy)

[By Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic Public Affairs](#), Nov. 4, 2024

TUCSON, Ariz. – Airborne Command & Control Squadron (VAW) 123 transferred two of their four E-2C Hawkeye aircraft to the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, the largest aircraft boneyard in the world in Tucson, in September.

This event was part of the squadron's transition to the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye to be completed in mid-2025.

VAW-123's other two E-2C were transferred to VAW-120 Fleet Replacement Squadron to be used for training the next generation of Hawkeye pilots. For more than 50 years, the E-2C has provided the Navy's command and control capabilities.

Lt. Terrance Lawrence, assigned to VAW-123, was one of the pilots chosen to deliver an E-2C to the boneyard. The squadron first received the E-2C in November 1973. Since then, this platform has been used for sea and land-based military operations, search and rescue missions, drug interdiction, humanitarian efforts and disaster relief.

Lawrence, a naval aviator since 2021, had not experienced delivering an aircraft to its final resting place.

"It was something that I knew not a lot of other aviators get to do; it is pretty rare that you get to participate in this type of flight," Lawrence said. "This was a special and unique opportunity that does not come up often. I volunteered immediately."

Lt. Avesta Shwany, also of VAW-123, flew the second E-2C and reflected on the experience for her and her crew upon departing Norfolk for the boneyard.

"Getting to be a part of the last crew was incredibly bittersweet," Shwany said. "This aircraft carries a lot of memories to so many aircrew members, especially from this most recent deployment to the Red Sea."

Shwany added that the aircraft had seen combat and played a vital role in many missions.

"Taking this aircraft to the boneyard signified the end of an era, and the beginning of our delta transition. I think everyone was surprised with how emotional we were dropping her off and saying our goodbyes," Shwany said.

Lawrence said he was proud to be the last person to fly the E-2C for his squadron. The aircrew that accompanied both aircraft to Tucson took the opportunity to mark their place in history by ceremoniously signing the inside of the aircraft as a final farewell.

“This aircraft meant a lot,” Lawrence said. “I was sentimental about it, especially after spending nine months flying it in the Red Sea.”

The 10 aircrew who participated in the nearly six-hour flight to the boneyard, took time to tap the side of the aircraft, as they said their farewell before transferring it to the staff at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

“This plane has all of these stories associated with it especially just after deployment,” Lawrence added. VAW-123 was deployed aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group and returned from a nine-month deployment in July 2024.

The crew also had an opportunity to step back in time and witness aviation history.

“We toured the boneyard, which has over 4,000 aircraft stored,” Lawrence said. “I am proud to be one of the last pilots to be part of that aircraft’s history.”

With VAW-123 marking its transition to the E-2D, west-coast based VAW-116 is the only fleet squadron in the Navy flying the E-2C until its scheduled sundown.

Lawrence said he looks forward to flying the E-2D which features a state-of-the-art radar with upgraded capabilities and aircraft systems that improve supportability and increase readiness. The E-2D enhances operational capabilities by increasing time on station allowing for extended range from

the carrier, increased persistence and operational flexibility.

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## **SECNAV Announces Service Life Extensions for 3 Cruisers**



USS Cape St. George (CG 71) (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Susan C. Damman)

From SECNAV Public Affairs, Nov. 4, 2024

WASHINGTON – The Department of the Navy plans to operate three Ticonderoga-class (CG 47) cruisers beyond their expected service life: USS Gettysburg (CG 64), USS Chosin (CG 65), and USS Cape St. George (CG 71). This decision adds 10 years of cumulative ship service life from fiscal year 2026 to 2029.

All three cruisers received extensive hull, mechanical and engineering, as well as combat system upgrades as part of an extended modernization program. USS Gettysburg (CG 64) and USS Chosin (CG 65) completed modernization in fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024, respectively. USS Cape St. George (CG 71) is on schedule to complete modernization this fiscal year.

Like the recently announced service life extension of 12 destroyers, extending these three cruisers will bolster the Fleet as new ships are built.

“As a former cruiser Sailor, I know the incredible value these highly-capable warships bring to the Fleet and I am proud of their many decades of service,” said Secretary Del Toro. “After learning hard lessons from the cruiser modernization program, we are only extending ships that have completed modernization and have the material readiness needed to continue advancing our Navy’s mission.”

The decision follows a successful re-arm at sea demonstration aboard USS Chosin (CG 65) on Oct. 11, 2024. The Transferrable Reload At-sea Mechanism (TRAM) demonstration was the first time the Navy transferred missile canisters from a replenishment ship to a warship while at sea. This transformational logistics capability enables U.S. Navy ships to rearm without needing to pull into port.

The service life extensions align with Secretary Del Toro’s priority of Warfighting Excellence and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti’s Navigation Plan, which prioritizes putting more ready players on the field.