

**Q&A: Rear Adm. Joseph A.
DiGuardo Jr., Commander, Navy
Expeditionary Combat Command**



Rear Adm. Joseph A. DiGuardo Jr. U.S. NAVY

Rear Adm. Joseph A. DiGuardo Jr. serves as commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command. A native of Fallston, Maryland, he received his commission and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science in history. He commenced explosive ordnance disposal training in February

1995. He also holds a Master of Science in national security strategy from the National War College. He is a designated EOD officer with qualifications as a special operations officer, master EOD technician, surface warfare officer, naval parachutist, basic diving officer and combat craft patrol officer.

DiGuardo's sea duty and operational assignments include officer in charge, Special Boat Unit 12; auxiliary and electrical officer, USS Frederick (LST 1184); OIC, EOD Mobile Unit 8 Detachment, Bahrain; special projects officer, Joint Special Operations Command; executive officer, EOD Mobile Unit 2; deputy director, Counter Improvised Explosive Devices Task Force, U.S. Central Command; commanding officer, EOD Mobile Unit 11; and commodore, Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces Central, Task Force 56, where he was made an honorary chief petty officer. He has completed eight combat deployments in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and commander, U.S. 5th Fleet.

His shore assignments include OIC, Navy Counter IED Center of Excellence, Joint IED Defeat Organization; director, Navy Warfare Group, OPNAV N515; branch head, Navy Expeditionary Combat, OPNAV N957; vice deputy director, Global Operations (J39), Joint Chiefs of Staff; and director, Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Fusion Cell, U.S. Special Operations Command.

DiGuardo responded to questions from Senior Editor Richard R. Burgess.

How is NECC affected by the end of U.S. participation in the war in Afghanistan and reduction of presence in Iraq and Syria?

DIGUARDO: There are really two sides to this coin. First, for things like force design and force employment, we're taking a look across the entirety of NECC to ensure we're adjusting our

force as necessary to continue operating in support of integrated all-domain American naval power. Adaptability has always been a key component of our expeditionary forces, and it's one of the main reasons our men and women are so good at what they do. As the big picture shifts and our mission sets change, we're being very calculated and deliberate in how we build in timing, scalability, tempo and flexibility to ultimately deliver a more agile force for our Navy and the joint force and a more capable, less predictable one to our adversaries.

The other side of that coin is that while we understand the need to adjust to the new mission priorities, we cannot forget that many of our men and women had vital roles in places like Iraq and Afghanistan over the past two decades. It's always going to be a part of them. It's essential that we remind them that just because our role in a conflict has ended, it doesn't mean the work they did to get there was done in vain. I wrote a letter to our force reminding them of that fact shortly after the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

It said we believe oppression and tyranny must always be fought against, because their defeat, whether it lasts two weeks or 20 years, is a worthwhile endeavor. That is what we saw in Iraq and Afghanistan, where we were joined by a coalition of more than 40 other nations – all in pursuit of freedom – for us and for others.

How is NECC affected by the new emphasis on high-end capabilities to counter China and Russia?

DIGUARDO: Our “what and why” have not changed ... the “where and how” is evolving based on the environment and changes to Navy strategy.

Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces exist to conduct and support fleet operations by dominating in the littorals and reinforcing maritime lethality. NECF will clear the

battlespace of hazards; secure critical maritime terrain, sea lines of communication and resources; build infrastructure, awareness, logistics chains and partnerships; and protect the fleet, facilities and joint, allied and partner forces.

The Maritime Sustainment Vector model aligns the logistics enterprise with standing and developing naval concepts related to DMO [distributed maritime operations]. These vectors are core activities which provide a framework to inform the development of a more agile and resilient logistics force – one that better enables the Navy to compete in ways that are sustainable and integrated with the joint force, allies and partners in a high-end maritime conflict. NECF employs smaller, less detectable, less expensive and more risk-tolerant logistics platforms to enable the transfer of sustainment from afloat and shore based expeditionary nodes to warfighting forces in the contested environment.

NECF performs the “Rs” required for effective DMO in contested and austere areas enabling integrated American naval power to keep the fight forward.

Refuel: Fuel fleet units to ensure agility in force projection through distributed maritime operations.

Rearm: Rearm fleet units to ensure persistent lethality in the distributed maritime fight.

Resupply: Sustain fleet units to keep them on station in the distributed maritime fight.

Repair: Rapidly repair battle damage to fleet units and critical infrastructure to return them to the fight.

Revive: Sustain force end-strength preventing injury and illness through Force Health Protection measures and rapidly triage, diagnose, treat and evacuate or return medical casualties to the force.

Rebuild: Replace or reinforce infrastructure for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations.

How do the new Expeditionary Advance Base Operations and Distributed Maritime Operations concepts affect the roles of NECC?

DIGUARDO: The chief of naval operations' NAVPLAN says there are six critical elements for successful DMO. They are repair, resupply, refuel, rearm, revive and rebuild. The NECF has a significant role in delivering each of these in the austere environments of the ANB [advance naval base] and EAB [expeditionary advance base].

Our ability to integrate with our Marine Corps teammates and provide essential support and expertise to the EABO model has been on display a lot in the last year through a variety of exercises and experiments.



Rear Admiral Joseph DiGuardo, commander Navy Expeditionary Combat Command talks with Marines at the Expeditionary Advanced Base entry control point during Fleet Battle Problem (FBP) 22-1. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Kim Martinez*

What changes, if any, are affecting the Naval Construction Battalions and the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Force?

DIGUARDO: Across the board, we're making the force more lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile and responsive as 2022 National Defense Strategy describes and CNO NAVPLAN implements.

As EABO and ANB continues to evolve, it's becoming clearer to those operating in the battlespace just how essential NECF is in reinforcing DMO lethality.

Our role at the last tactical mile, ensuring logistics nodes are sustained through things like airfield damage repair and port damage repair efforts, is where our support of the fleet and joint force is so important. Our ability to adapt to complex and austere environments, scale the size of our necessary forces and remain agile to evolving mission requirements is something consistent across our force.

Our Seabees within the Naval Construction Forces and logistics experts at Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group are essential to building the infrastructure necessary to enable and sustain operations forward.

In recent wars, EOD provided critical support to operations on land. Is that focus changing more in the direction of maritime operations?

DIGUARDO: We're always going to adapt to any new requirement, and today with strategic competition driving a greater need for emphasis in the maritime environment, that's where we're putting a lot of our focus.

Maritime traffic is increasing, new sea lanes are opening and

with our adversaries getting more creative and autonomous in how they can disrupt that environment, the need for Navy EOD is greater than ever.

Operating in the maritime arena, and all the nuances and complexities that come with it, though, are nothing new to us. That's what sets Navy EOD apart – we are uniquely qualified to understand those challenges, overcome them and do our part to reinforce maritime lethality.

Our expeditionary mine countermeasures capability is increasingly important to the fleet and provides a fast, scalable and adaptable option for clearing threats away from our ships and forces. This is one area where this particular skillset allows us to use the enduring EOD knowledge to remove old threats in the maritime arena, but learn about, develop and introduce emerging technologies that will better equip us in the high-end fight ahead.

All that said, the Navy still owns a role as the Joint Service EOD executive agent, so we have responsibilities across the entirety of Department of Defense. We are also mindful not to forget the hard lessons learned while operating in Iraq and Afghanistan. While much of our focus for Navy EOD may be in the maritime environment for the foreseeable future, we have a responsibility to ensure proficiencies across the full spectrum of operations.

How is the new 40-foot patrol boat an improvement over the boats it is replacing? How many are being procured?

DIGUARDO: The current platform was a speed to fleet procurement that was not fully suited for the missions performed and has reached end of useful service life.

When looking at a replacement, there was a need for a platform specifically designed to meet the needs of our mission requirements.

These boats and our operators serve a significant role for our force and for the fleet in operating at sea, in harbors, rivers, bays and across the littorals while conducting maritime expeditionary security operations across all phases of military operations.

They defend and protect high value units, critical maritime infrastructure, ports, and harbors both inland and on coastal waters against enemies as well as conduct operational plan level missions and sustained day-to-day security in all force protection threat levels. The initial contract is for 56 boats, which could grow to 120 over the next 10 years.

Why does the Navy plan to remove its Mark VI patrol boats from service?

DIGUARDO: The Navy analyzed the Mark VI's ability to compete against a near-peer adversary as part of the strategic alignment analysis that is the beginning of the POM [program objective memorandum] process for every fiscal year. Navy ship procurement focuses on a force structure that aligns with the demands of the National Defense Strategy, and the Navy determined the savings from divesting of Mark VI could be better invested in higher priority platforms better suited for competition with a near-peer adversary.

Why did the Navy retire its riverine boat force?

DIGUARDO: Like many of the other topics we've discussed, this was just part of the ongoing refinement of our Navy Expeditionary Combat Force to maximize the efficiency of our warriors and their ability to deliver in the high-end fight.

This particular mission set with the riverine force was generated to support Marine Corps operations as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and as that requirement wound down, we took those proficiencies, the lessons we learned from it, and applied them in a way that was more relevant to battlespace we were transitioning into.

Our Maritime Expeditionary Security Forces continue to play an essential role every day in anti-terrorism/force protection operations across the globe and in support of our fleets.

What would be needed to reconstitute the riverine force if needed?

DIGUARDO: If ever asked to reconstitute a riverine mission, it would require the equipment, training, and methods we used to generate the Riverine force for Iraq. We have done so before and could do so again. However, we do not anticipate this and remain focused on our MESF core missions.

How are unmanned systems being used by NECC?

DIGUARDO: We are increasingly utilizing unmanned systems across our force. This is done to modernize the technology that our warfighters are familiar with, but also to enhance their capabilities they bring to the fight.

Clearing the battlespace of explosive, physical and security hazards is one of our main lines of operation. Unmanned technology extends our organic sensor range, increases our area coverage and improves our detect-to-engage sequences at the front of those efforts, while mitigating risk to our operators.

Much of our effort has been in in the underwater realm in support of expeditionary mine countermeasure operations with things like UUVs [unmanned underwater vehicles] and ROVs [remotely operated vehicles], but we continue to explore platforms outside of that and other mission areas for application of that technology.



Master Chief Culinary Specialist Dexter Baird, senior enlisted leader assigned to Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 11 (MSRON-11), Commander, Task Group 68.6, currently deployed to Camp Lemonnier, says goodbye to members of the Djiboutian navy following a six-week professional maritime orientation course, Oct. 14, 2021. The course, initiated by MSRON-11, was designed around basic line handling, man overboard, engineering, seamanship, lifesaving, and nautical terminology. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jonathan Word*

With that said, we're always exploring opportunities to experiment with and identify potential areas of unmanned aerial and surface technology that would effectively integrate into our force.

What role, if any, does NECC have in training foreign forces in operation of patrol boats, EOD operations and other expertise?

DIGUARDO: One of SECNAV's enduring priorities is for us to strengthen strategic partnerships, and we're certainly doing that.

Although the Navy divested from the Maritime Civil Affairs and Security Training Command in the early part of the last decade, and even without a specific command coordinating those efforts within NECC, our men and women continue to build partner capacity through subject matter expertise exchanges and exercises with partner nation forces around the world.

These exchanges are effective, and the relationships and partnerships that result are truly authentic. There's a photo from late last year where we had Maritime

Expeditionary Security Squadron 11 conducting a six-week professional maritime orientation course to the Djiboutian navy, and the photo shows one of their guys hugging our master chief at the end of it. There was gratitude and joy, but more importantly, a relationship.

That photo is validation of the importance of those types of exchanges. Not only that, but now there are 15 more Djiboutian sailors with a better level of technical aptitude in an extremely critical part of the world.

And our EOD take advantage of some of those same training and interoperability opportunities to continue our partnership initiatives and the long-term benefits that come from doing them.

What aspect of NECC do people find the most surprising?

DIGUARDO: NECC's relevancy to current fight. It is not all about carriers, submarines and airplanes. Those are essential components of American naval power, but for NECC, our people are our weapons system. Much of what they do is in support of those larger platforms, but NECF do so through operations forward, in austere environments, while integrated with the joint force, allies and partners, or in concert with our Marine and Coast Guard teammates.

The fleet needs our Navy Expeditionary Combat Forces to close

the last tactical mile so those vital platforms never run out of fuel, ammunition or other needed supplies. They need us to clear, secure, build and protect across the spectrum of operations.

We're already doing that, but what might come as a surprise is how widespread that support is. In 2021

alone, we had more than 5,300 NECF Sailors deployed forward to 55 countries, supporting 64 requirements generated by six geographic and two functional combatant commands. That is enabling DMO lethality.

Our forces clear, secure, build and protect for the fleet and joint force. NECC is uniquely qualified to deliver at the time and point of need, often exclusive capabilities, to support integrated American naval power.

Textron Systems Selected for Continued U.S. Navy Expeditionary Sea Base UAS Operations



The Aerosonde unmanned arial surveillance vehicle Buck G returns to the Expeditionary Sea-Base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4) from a 10- hour night surveillance in the Atlantic Ocean, Sept. 26, 2020. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Sgt. Megan Roses*

HUNT VALLEY, Md. – Textron Systems Corp. has been awarded a contract valued up to \$18.3 million including all options by the U.S. Navy's Naval Air Systems Command to provide continued unmanned aerial systems operations support for the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4), the company said June 2.

The one-year base contract includes two 12-month options and two six-month options, for a total potential performance period of four years. The company was originally selected to support the ESB 4 in 2018.

Under this contract, Textron Systems will continue to deploy its Aerosonde UAS to provide maritime operations aboard the ESB 4. The company's personnel work alongside Sailors to provide on-demand Aerosonde UAS operations to support a

variety of maritime missions.

“Our shipboard customers need UAS solutions that can deliver actionable data from multiple mission payloads without sacrificing valuable space on deck,” said Wayne Prender, senior vice president, Air Systems. “It’s equally important that we create a strong support ecosystem to keep availability and reliability rates high as operational tempo demands. In continuing to support our ESB 4 customer, we maintain our focus on setting the bar higher and higher in all these areas to keep our Sailors informed and out of harm’s way.”

Textron Systems’ UAS operators also support U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers with the Aerosonde UAS, as well as multiple DoD and international customers with land-based contractor owned, contractor operated activities.

Boeing Teams with Canadian Industry to Offer P-8A Poseidon



Boeing and Canadian industry partners plan to collaborate to provide the P-8A Poseidon for the Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft requirement. *BOEING*

OTTAWA, Ontario – Boeing and several Canadian industry partners announced June 1 their intent to collaborate to provide the capability and sustainability of the proven P-8A Poseidon for the Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft requirement.

Team Poseidon, consisting of CAE, GE Aviation Canada, IMP Aerospace & Defence, KF Aerospace, Honeywell Aerospace Canada and Raytheon Canada, forms the cornerstone of a Canadian P-8 industrial footprint. The team builds on 81 Canadian suppliers to the platform and to more than 550 Canadian suppliers across all provinces contributing to Boeing's annual CAD \$5.3 billion in economic benefit to Canada, supporting more than 20,000 Canadian jobs.

The Boeing P-8A is a proven military off-the-shelf solution with nearly 150 aircraft delivered to five nations to date. The P-8 will improve Canada's capability to defend its northern and maritime borders while ensuring interoperability with NORAD and NATO allies. As a leading platform for reducing the environmental impact of military aircraft, the P-8 can

operate on a 50% blend of sustainable aviation fuel today with aspirations to move toward 100% with investment in new technology.

“As a dedicated partner of Canadian industry for more than a century, Boeing is proud to bring together a world-class team of companies in support of our P-8 offering to Canada,” said Heidi Grant, president, Business Development, Boeing Defense, Space & Security and Government Services. “Together, we will bolster Canada’s aerospace and defense industry through a 100% Industrial and Technical Benefits commitment if awarded the CMMA contract.”

The P-8A Poseidon offers advanced anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and search and rescue capability, and is the only in-service, in-production multi-mission aircraft that meets all CMMA requirements. The P-8 also has the added distinction of strengthening the connection between national security and environmental stewardship.

Built on the proven 737 Next-Generation airframe, P-8’s 86% commonality with more than 4,000 in-service 737NGs delivers lower life-cycle sustainment costs due to large economies of scale.

Navy Successfully Completes First Flight Test of Mission Computer Alternative on the

T-45



The Navy's Air Combat Electronics program office (PMA-209) successfully completed first flight test of the Mission Computer Alternative in a T-45, at Naval Air Station Patuxent River on March 30. Pictured are PMA-209 team members (from left) Bill Brown, Michael Kay, Jason Bean, Jeff Boyce, Kelly Pruitt, Jeff Williamson, Brandon Patz, Richard Boecher and Tom Adams. *U.S. NAVY*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy's Air Combat Electronics program office (PMA-209) recently completed the first test flight of the T-45 trainer aircraft's Mission Computer Alternative, intended to improve readiness for the legacy system, the Naval Air Systems Command said May 31.

PMA-209 collaborated with the Naval Undergraduate Flight Training Systems program office (PMA-273), which manages the T-45 aircraft, and Air Test Evaluation Squadron (VX) 23 to

execute the March 30 flight at Patuxent River and test out the design replacement for the existing Mission Display Processor.

“The flight was flown successfully, proving MCA is on the right track,” said Lt. Alex Mensing, VX-23 test pilot. “We know what needs to be improved and will continue to work together to bring an accurate and reliable system to the fleet.”

PMA-273 sought out MCA as a mission computing solution primarily to address the potential obsolescence issues the Navy may face on an aging platform. They plan to leverage the MCA to support additional capabilities such as required navigation performance/area navigation.

The MCA is a Hardware Open Systems Technologies-conforming mission computer that drastically reduces schedule for regular hardware and software updates associated with mission computing. It can be economically and rapidly adapted to support platform requirements and processing needs. The system is on track to provide required navigation performance/area navigation in the near future.

“The Navy developed this mission computer technology using OA standards, bringing the government one step closer to getting much needed capabilities and functionality to the fleet cheaper and faster,” said Capt. Margaret Wilson, PMA-209 program manager.

The Navy will leverage investments made during the MCA’s development to support and minimize development cost of future MCA iterations, and lower the hardware and software logistics lifecycle funding footprint by using common, commercial-off-the-shelf hardware and software development designed to OA standards.

Fairbanks Morse Defense Acquires Research Tool & Die

BELOIT, Wis. – Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD), a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, has acquired Research Tool & Die (RT&D), a privately owned manufacturer of marine electrical-systems hardware based in Carson, California.

RT&D products secure and support cables and wires throughout naval ships. This acquisition adds to FMD's expanding portfolio of turnkey solutions.

"Over the last few years, FMD has broadened the scope of our product offerings to our valued customers through the acquisition of best-in-class marine manufacturers like Research Tool & Die," said FMD CEO George Whittier. "The global mission to defend our nation's freedom is nonstop and requires a service partner who is up to the task, and RT&D puts FMD in an even better position to meet the needs of our customers while we support the mission of our military and marine partners."

Founded in 1944, RT&D is a supplier of critical electrical hardware to the United States Navy and Canadian Navy. The company operates from two manufacturing facilities on its campus in Carson, California. It designs and manufactures its hardware products, including wireways, cable trays, racking systems, and light supports, and sells its products directly to naval shipyards.

"FMD has a prestigious reputation as a top-of-the-line defense contractor for clients that RT&D also serves," said RTND President Kevin Perrault. "This merger makes perfect sense."

Our companies are forward-thinking and well-positioned to provide top-tier parts and services to our customers.”

U.S. Coast Guard Seizes Heroin Shipment in Gulf of Oman



Personnel from U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter Glen Harris (WPC 1144) recover bags of illegal narcotics discarded by a fishing vessel interdicted in the Gulf of Oman, May 31. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter seized 310 kilograms of heroin worth an estimated U.S. street value of \$11 million from a fishing vessel while conducting patrols in the Gulf of Oman, May 31, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said June 2.

USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144) was operating as part of Combined

Task Force 150, one of four task forces under the Combined Maritime Forces.

The fast response cutter arrived in the U.S. 5th Fleet region in January and operates from Bahrain where Combined Maritime Forces is headquartered with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet.

Combined Maritime Forces is the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. The U.S.-led international naval force has 34 member nations, which have increased regional patrols to locate and disrupt unlawful maritime activity.

U.S. Navy Announces 28th RIMPAC Exercise



Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022 senior leadership and staffs pose for a group photo onboard Naval Base Point Loma, Feb. 18. The weeklong conference brought the RIMPAC senior leadership and staffs from seven RIMPAC partner nations together for detailed planning in advance of the world's largest maritime exercise, scheduled to be held this summer in both Hawaii and San Diego. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication 2nd Class Kevin F. Johnson*

SAN DIEGO – Twenty-six nations, 38 surface ships, four submarines, nine national land forces, more than 170 aircraft and approximately 25,000 personnel will participate in the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise scheduled June 29 to Aug. 4, in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California, Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs, said May 31.

RIMPAC 2022 is the 28th exercise in the series that began in 1971.

As the world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity designed to foster and sustain cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's interconnected oceans.

The theme of RIMPAC 2022 is "Capable, Adaptive, Partners." Participating nations and forces will exercise a wide range of capabilities and demonstrate the inherent flexibility of maritime forces. These capabilities range from disaster relief and maritime security operations to sea control and complex warfighting. The relevant, realistic training program includes amphibious operations, gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air defense exercises, as well as counter-piracy operations, mine clearance operations, explosive ordnance disposal and diving and salvage operations.

This year's exercise includes forces from Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico,

Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Hosted by Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, RIMPAC 2022 will be led by Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, who will serve as Combined Task Force commander. Royal Canadian Navy Rear Adm. Christopher Robinson will serve as deputy commander of the CTF, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Rear Adm. Toshiyuki Hirata as the vice commander, and Fleet Marine Force will be led by U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Joseph Clearfield. Other key leaders of the multinational force will include Commodore Paul O'Grady of the Royal Australian Navy, who will command the maritime component, and Brig. Gen. Mark Goulden of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who will command the air component.

During RIMPAC, a network of capable, adaptive partners train and operate together in order to strengthen their collective forces and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. RIMPAC 2022 contributes to the increased interoperability, resiliency and agility needed by the joint and combined force to deter and defeat aggression by major powers across all domains and levels of conflict.

Navy Announces Flag Officer Assignments

ARLINGTON, Va. – The secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations announced June 1 the following assignments:

Rear Adm. Frederick W. Kacher will be assigned as vice director for operations, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. Kacher is currently assigned as assistant deputy chief of

naval operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy, N3/N5B, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) John V. Menoni, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as assistant deputy chief of naval operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy, N3/N5B, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Menoni is currently serving as commander, Expeditionary Strike Group Two, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael J. Steffen, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia. Steffen is currently serving as commandant, Naval District Washington, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Rick Freedman will be assigned as director, Education and Training, Defense Health Agency, Falls Church, Virginia. Freedman is currently serving as director, Medical Systems Integration and Survivability, N44, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Patrick S. Hayden will be assigned as director, Readiness and Logistics, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, Naples, Italy. Hayden is currently serving as deputy director, Logistics, Fleet Supply and Ordnance (N4), U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Jonathan E. Rucker, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as program executive officer, Attack Submarines, Washington, D.C. Rucker is currently serving as major program manager, Program Executive Office, Columbia, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Darin K. Via will be assigned as deputy chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery; deputy surgeon general of the Navy; and director, Medical Resources, Plans and Policy Division, N0931, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Via is currently serving as commander, Naval

Medical Forces Atlantic, with additional duties as director, Tidewater Market, Portsmouth, Virginia.

Capt. Luke A. Frost, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as director, Reserve Warfare, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Frost is currently serving as chief of staff, Office of the Chief of Navy Reserve, Washington, D.C.

Navy Orders Two CH-53K Helicopters for Marine Corps



U.S. Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 461 taxi in a CH-53K King Stallion after its first operational flight at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina, April 13. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Elias E. Pimentel III*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has placed an order for two more CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters for the Marine Corps.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded a \$185.7 million contract modification to Sikorsky Aircraft Corp., a Lockheed Martin company, to add two CH-53Ks to low-rate production Lot 6, the Defense Department said May 31.

These two helicopters were in the Marine Corps' fiscal 2022 unfunded priorities list and were added to the 2022 budget appropriation by Congress. Lot 6 originally included nine CH-53Ks under a Feb. 3 contract award for \$685 million.

The King Stallion achieved Initial Operational Capability in April 2022 when Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 received its fourth CH-53K.

The Marine Corps program of record is 200 CH-53Ks to replace the fleet of CH-53 Super Stallion helicopters. The Lot 6 helicopters are expected to be completed by December 2025.

Fagan Succeeds Shultz as Coast Guard Commandant, First Woman to Rise to the Top



Adm. Linda Fagan relieves Adm. Karl Schultz as the 27th commandant of the Coast Guard during a change of command ceremony at Coast Guard headquarters June 1, 2022. Fagan is the first woman service chief of any U.S. military service. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 1st Class Travis Magee*

WASHINGTON – Adm. Linda Fagan succeeded Adm. Karl Schultz on June 1 to become the 27th commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, the first woman to command the service and the first woman to lead any of the U.S. armed services.

In ceremonies at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, President Joe Biden and Homeland Defense Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas spoke in praise of Shultz's performance as commandant and of Fagan's service that influenced her selection as commandant.

Mayorkas noted that Fagan graduated from the sixth class of the Coast Guard Academy to accept women as cadets – the Class of '85 – and was the only woman in the crew of the icebreaker USCGC Polar Star in her first assignment.

"Today is a historic day for the U.S. armed forces and a historic day for the United States," Mayorkas said.

Biden spoke of Fagan's "trail-blazing career," noting that "there are no doors closed to women" and that Fagan's daughter Aileen is now a Coast Guard lieutenant. He also noted that Fagan was one of only 16 women – 8% of her class – commissioned at the Coast Guard Academy, but now 40% of the 1,000 cadets at the academy are women.

"Now we need to keep working to make sure Adm. Fagan may be the first but not the only person [to head a service]," Biden said. "We need to see more women in command at the highest levels of the Coast Guard and across every service in the armed forces."

In her first speech as commandant, Fagan praised Schultz for his leadership and dedication.

"We are truly a more ready, responsive and relevant Coast Guard today as a result of your leadership," she said of Schultz. "It has been a true honor to serve with you."

Fagan collectively thanked the hundreds of people who influenced and mentored her since she decided at age 16 to apply to the Coast Guard Academy, but she singled out one in particular, Adm. Owen Siler, the 15th commandant, who she said had the courage to integrate the Coast Guard Academy in the summer of 1975.

"If it were not for Owen Siler's courage, I do not believe I would not be standing here today," Fagan said. "I want to thank him; I'm wearing his shoulder boards that he wore as 15th commandant."

Speaking of her command ahead, Fagan noted "the demand for Coast Guard missions has never been higher. ... Today we will advance the Coast Guard America needs for tomorrow. Tomorrow looks different and so will we. We will be more adaptive and

connected, generate sustained readiness, resilience and capabilities in new ways to enhance our nation's maritime safety, security and prosperity."

Fagan said her highest priority as commandant will be to "transform our talent management system. We will deliver each of you tools, policy, training and support to succeed across all missions. We will empower you with reliable cutting-edge assets – cutters, boats, aircraft as well as data systems and shore facilities – that you need to remain the world's best coast guard. We will unite people, assets, systems and data in new ways to be a more agile force."