

Netherlands, U.S. naval forces conduct South China Sea operations



USS Mobile and HNLMS Tromp conduct a Replenishment At Sea with USNS Wally Schirra. (U.S. Navy photo)

By Lt. j. g. Rebecca Moore, May 22, 2024

SOUTH CHINA SEA – The Netherlands and United States’ navies conducted bilateral operations in the South China Sea, May 22.

Participants included U.S. Navy Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Mobile (LCS 26), Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ship USNS Wally Schirra (T-AKE 8) and Royal Netherlands Navy De Zeven Provinciën-class frigate HNLMS Tromp (F803).

“The Netherlands is one of our oldest, continuous bilateral

relationships, stemming from the 18th century. I look forward to any opportunity to work together with partners and allies, especially at sea,” said Capt. Sean Lewis, commodore, Destroyer Squadron 7. “We share a deep commitment to maintaining stability and free use of vital sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific.”

The bilateral operation provided a valuable opportunity to improve allied interoperability and conduct complex scenarios to improve combined readiness.

“We’re fortunate to work together with allies and to have them provide replenishment to us. Operating together fortifies our existing relationship with our partners from the U.S.,” said Cmdr. Yvonne van Beusekom, Commanding Officer HNLMS Tromp. “We look to continue coordination between our nations to promote regional peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”

The U.S. Navy regularly participates with allies and partners in high-end maritime exercises and operations, which have continued to grow in scale, scope and complexity, to create combined operations that enhance interoperability, boost deterrence and demonstrate shared resolve.

“We are fortunate to work with friends at sea in the region. Consistent collaboration makes us better as a crew and more capable as a joint force,” said Cmdr. David Gardner, commanding officer for Mobile. “Bilateral operations like these strengthen bonds with our Royal Netherlands Navy partners and deepen our understanding of how to operate together.”

During the operation, Commander, Destroyer Squadron 15 acted as a facilitator between DESRON 7 and the Netherlands. Multilateral operations improve interoperability between allied navies and support a free and open Indo-Pacific. These evolutions demonstrate the strength of regional partnerships,

interchangeability and cooperation.

As the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed DESRON in Southeast Asia, DESRON 7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of littoral combat ships rotationally deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility, functions as Expeditionary Strike Group 7's Sea Combat Commander and builds partnerships through training and exercises and military-to-military engagements.

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

U.S. Pacific Fleet Announces 29th RIMPAC Exercise



From Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs

SAN DIEGO – Approximately 29 nations, 40 surface ships, 3 submarines, 14 national land forces, over 150 aircraft and

more than 25,000 personnel will participate in the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise scheduled June 26 to Aug. 2, in and around the Hawaiian Islands.

RIMPAC 2024 is the 29th exercise in the series that began in 1971. As the world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC combines force capabilities in a dynamic maritime environment to demonstrate enduring interoperability across the full spectrum of military operations.

The theme of RIMPAC 2024 is "Partners: Integrated and Prepared." To promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, Exercise RIMPAC is the premier joint and combined maritime exercise, utilizing and preserving a world class maritime training environment. With inclusivity at its core, RIMPAC fosters multi-national cooperation and trust, leverages interoperability, and achieves respective national objectives to strengthen integrated, prepared, coalition partners.

This year's exercise includes forces from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, 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 2024 will be led by Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, who will serve as the Combined Task Force (CTF) commander. For the first time in RIMPAC history, a member of the Chilean Navy, Commodore Alberto Guerrero, will serve as deputy commander of the CTF. Rear Adm. Kazushi Yokota of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force will serve as vice commander. Other key leaders of the multinational force will include Commodore Kristjan Monaghan of Canada, who will command the maritime component, and Air Commodore Louise Desjardins of Australia, who will command the air component.

During RIMPAC, integrated and prepared partners train and operate together in order to strengthen our collective forces and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. RIMPAC 2024 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.

U.S. Coast Guard Visit to Republic of Palau Strengthens Maritime Navigation and Cooperation



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam personnel and Marine Transportation leadership observe the installation of fixed ATON from the government of Japan being installed in Palau on May 14, 2024. The team completed a vital weeklong mission in the Republic of Palau, setting the stage for future collaboration and bolstering safe maritime navigation and security. This visit, in response to a request from Palau Marine Transportation, focused on an Aids to Navigation (ATON) Subject Matter Expert Exchange (SMEE). (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, May 20, 2024

KOROR, Republic of Palau – On May 14, 2024, the U.S. Coast Guard completed a vital weeklong mission in the Republic of Palau, setting the stage for future collaboration and

bolstering safe maritime navigation and security.

This visit, in response to a request from Palau Marine Transportation, focused on an Aids to Navigation (ATON) Subject Matter Expert Exchange (SMEE). The exchange laid the foundation for a future SMEE planned for later in the year, including personnel from the 225-foot sea-going buoy tender, USCGC Hickory (WLB 212).

Palau, a nation consisting of approximately 340 islands and renowned for its maritime heritage and strategic location in the Pacific, plays a crucial role in regional maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship. With its vibrant tourism industry and commitment to marine conservation, Palau's efforts are vital for the economic and ecological health of the region.

Lt. Anna Maria Vaccaro and Lt. Jay DeInnocentiis led the U.S. Coast Guard SMEE team. They met with Palau Marine Transportation leadership and ATON technicians to discuss the fixed and floating ATON constellation in Palau. The team also reviewed the equipment storage and set-up for fixed and floating aids. They went to sea with the marine transportation team to inspect the aids on the reef and observed the establishment of a fixed aid.

Palau requested U.S. Coast Guard assistance with establishing four additional fixed aids in locations challenged by the rapid depth changes and strong currents. A microbeacon barge, a type of barge equipped with microbeacon technology which often is used for shallow water ATON positioning and coastal navigation, is the most suitable asset for this task due to the channel's bathymetry. The barge is provided by the U.S. Coast Guard and will be delivered by USCGC Hickory upon the buoy tender's arrival back to the Western Pacific. The Palauan team plans to use the microbeacon barge for servicing coastal aids to navigation in shallow waters.

In addition to the SMEE, Capt. Nicholas Simmons, U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam commander, and Capt. Robert Kistner, the incoming commander, traveled to Palau for brief yet impactful introductions and to express gratitude for the support received during Capt. Simmons' tenure as commander.

Strategic Importance of ATON

The strategic relationship between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Republic of Palau is vital for ensuring maritime safety, security, and prosperity in the Pacific region. The ATON system is crucial for safe navigation, preventing maritime accidents, and ensuring the smooth flow of marine transportation. This system supports economic activities, fisheries, and the overall security of maritime routes, which are essential for Palau and its partners.

"The economic and environmental value of ATON in maintaining a safe and efficient maritime transportation system cannot be overstated," said Capt. Simmons. "Our collaboration with Palau Marine Transportation demonstrates our commitment to enhancing maritime safety and supporting our partners in the Pacific. It has been a privilege to be in Palau, and I am profoundly grateful for the exceptional relationship and hospitality extended to us."

Trip Highlights

- **Leadership Engagement:** Lt. Vaccaro and Lt. DeInnocentiis met with senior leaders at Palau Marine Transportation to discuss the ATON constellation. They observed the implementation of fixed aids provided by the government of Japan and witnessed the installation of a fixed aid on the reef.
- **Promotion Ceremony:** They observed the promotion ceremony of a U.S. Naval colleague Cmdr. Brendan Kruse, COFA Security

Cooperation Officer, further supporting Department of Defense relationships in the region.

- Community Participation: Lt. Vaccaro participated in Palau National Police Week's 5K Walkathon and candlelight vigil.
- Key Introductions: Capt. Kistner met with critical partners in Palau, including National Security Coordinator Ms. Jen Anson, U.S. Embassy Palau Charge d'Affaires Mr. Andrew McLean, and U.S. Maritime Advisor to Marine Law Ms. Jennifer Ketchum (USCG Ret.). The team toured the Port of Malakal, the Joint Operations Center, and visited the PSS Remeliik II, a Guardian-class patrol boat in the service of Palau's Division of Maritime Law Enforcement, built and provided by Australia.

Future Support

The Service tentatively plans an ATON SMEE accompanied by the Hickory and crew for late 2024 to further engage with Palauan partners and establish a realistic timeline for servicing aids in Palau. This continued partnership underscores the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to supporting maritime navigation and security in the region, reinforcing the positive impacts and legacy of reliability.

"Our continued collaboration with the Republic of Palau is a testament to the strong strategic partnership we share," said Capt. Kistner. "By working together, we can enhance Palau's maritime transportation system and build local capacity, ensuring the safety and security of its waters and contributing to the stability of the broader Pacific region. We are deeply grateful for Palau's cooperation and support in this mission."

The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team focuses on maritime safety, security, and stewardship in Oceania. With a primary presence in Guam and Saipan and over 300 members across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the team maintains a strong U.S. presence in

the Micronesia sub-region and adjacent areas, closely tied to local communities.

HII Launches “Build It” Campaign to Highlight Shipbuilder Support for U.S. Navy



NEWPORT NEWS, Va., May 21, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – As New York City hosts the annual Fleet Week in celebration of the nation’s sea services, HII (NYSE: HII) – the nation’s largest military shipbuilder and a sponsor of the Intrepid Museum’s commemoration of the event – is launching a hiring campaign to spotlight the contributions and rewards of building ships for the U.S. Navy.

The HII “Build It” campaign is dedicated to the men and women who partner with the U.S. Navy to build ships critical to the national defense. Shipbuilders value the mission and pride in ship construction, steady advancement and job security, and comprehensive benefits such as health coverage and professional development opportunities.

“The breadth of our workforce at HII is astonishing,” said Xavier Beale, vice president of human resources at HII’s Newport News Shipbuilding. “From the craftsmen and women in our shipyards who build the most powerful ships in the world with their own hands, to the nuclear engineers who enable safe nuclear power and propulsion, all the way to the cyber and data scientists who build the tools that deliver decision advantage: It’s a workforce for our 21st century national defense.”

In addition to Newport News Shipbuilding, which is the nation’s only builder of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and one of two builders of nuclear-powered submarines, HII’s divisions include Pascagoula, Mississippi-based Ingalls Shipbuilding that delivers amphibious ships, destroyers and cutters, and McLean, Virginia-based Mission Technologies, which builds technologies and solutions that connect and strengthen an all-domain force.

Imagery accompanying this release is available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-launches-build-it-campaign-to-highlight-shipbuilder-support-for-u-s-navy/>.

HII’s Build It campaign targets workers of all ages and skill levels, and highlights paid training and development at its shipyards for those who require it.

Russell Dawson, 36, was accepted into the century-old Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School right out of high school. Since graduating in 2010, Dawson has supported aircraft carrier and submarine programs at the shipyard, moved up the

ranks and is currently working on the *Columbia*-class program, the Navy's top acquisition priority. "I've always wanted to serve my country," Dawson said. "I see my work as a shipbuilder doing just that. It's an honor to help build the greatest ships for our Navy."

From an apprentice to a master shipbuilder who has worked over 40 years at the company, HII shipbuilders contribute daily to national security. Stan Brazell, manager of quality receipt and inspection at Ingalls Shipbuilding, began his career in 1991 as an outside machinist apprentice and over the course of his career has worked on almost every ship program at Ingalls, including the construction of USS *Bataan* (LHD 5). "I view this job as my way of serving our country," Brazell said. "While I may not be wearing combat boots, I do wear work boots, and those boots have allowed me to contribute to building freedom."

The Build It campaign will appear on social media, digital and display advertising, and local television. HII expects it will complement a current national advertising campaign launched by the U.S. Navy, which is aimed at energizing a movement to attract workers in support of shipbuilding and the national defense. Examples of videos in support of HII's campaign are:

[Build It: Preshus](#)

[Build It: Kevin](#)

[Build It: Grant](#)

[Build It: Quadale](#)

Engaging Future Shipbuilders

Throughout the year HII is proud to play a role in fostering a culture of innovation, growth and community engagement by investing in initiatives that support and inspire the leaders of tomorrow. For example, HII recently partnered with the Tall Ship Providence Foundation in Alexandria, Virginia, on an upcoming educational video series for fourth graders about the

history of shipbuilding. The series emphasizes the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and the ongoing significance of shipbuilding to the nation. HII believes that the video series and the foundation's continued educational efforts will inspire young talent to explore career opportunities in shipbuilding. Watch a preview of the video titled "How to Build a Ship: Who Builds Ships" [here](#).

For information about employment opportunities and careers at HII, including shipbuilding, visit [HII.com/careers](https://www.hii.com/careers).

SECNAV Del Toro Awards Navy Unit Commendation to USS Carney



From SECNAV Public Affairs, May 19, 2024

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro awarded a Navy Unit Commendation (NUC) to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Carney (DDG 64) for “outstanding performance against terrorist forces during their nearly eight-month deployment.”

Secretary Del Toro presented the NUC to Carney’s crew when they [returned to Naval Station Mayport, Fla., May 19, after being deployed for more than seven months](#) to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe – Africa and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command areas of operation.

“Carney was deployed forward, deterring our adversaries, protecting our national interests, defending the rules-based international order, and promoting peace,” said Secretary Del Toro. “I, and all Americans, am immensely proud of these

Carney Sailors. They represent the best of the Department of the Navy and indeed our Nation.”

The NUC is awarded to any ship, aircraft, or other unit of the Navy or Marine Corps that has distinguished itself by outstanding heroism in action against enemy forces and is the second highest unit award in the Department of the Navy, behind the Presidential Unit Citation.

Following the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks in Israel, USS Carney operated alongside the Gerald R. Ford and Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Groups in the Red Sea, defending commercial shipping lanes, innocent merchant mariners, and American, allied, and partner vessels against drone and missile attacks launched by the Iranian-aligned Houthis in Yemen.

In all, USS Carney conducted 51 engagements against Houthi weapons, including land attack cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, and unmanned systems, and two defensive strikes that destroyed 20 targets.

Additionally, USS Carney, alongside USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51), successfully engaged Iranian ballistic missiles fired at Israel on April 13 in a retaliatory strike.

While in Mayport, Secretary Del Toro also addressed families on the pier, thanking them for their support throughout USS Carney’s deployment.

“I recognize that their service is only possible through the support provided by the military families – the foundation of our Armed Forces,” said Secretary Del Toro. “Thank you, to all of you, for your unwavering support, love, and encouragement for your Carney Sailor and the Navy.”

During their deployment, USS Carney operated in the U.S. Fifth and Sixth Fleet Areas of Operations, and participated in military operations Spartan Shield, Cobalt Shield, Inherent

Resolve, Poseidon Archer, and Pandora Throttle. As outlined in the NUC, Carney “protected vital global commerce through two strategic maritime chokepoints, defended key allies and partners, deterred aggression, and forged partnerships founded on trust and unity of effort against violations of international law. In self-defense, they destroyed many unmanned aerial vehicles, anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, land attack cruise missiles, and small boats, and they provided crucial naval presence in the region at a pivotal moment in history.”

Read Secretary Del Toro’s [full remarks online](#).

AUSTAL USA Christens 19th LCS – FUTURE USS PIERRE



From Austal USA, May 18, 2024

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA celebrated the christening of the company’s 19th Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship (LCS)

today – the future USS Pierre (LCS 38). Ship sponsor Larissa Thune Hargens executed the ceremonial bottle break over the bow of Pierre witnessed by an audience of over four hundred excited guests.

Hargens, a native of South Dakota, graduated from Bethel University, in Saint Paul, Minn., with a bachelor's degree in political science and history. Since graduating, Hargens has held several positions with the University of Sioux Falls in South Dakota and currently owns her own LLC, Red Writer, where she does freelance marketing and social media.

The call to serve runs deep in Hargens' family. Her grandfather was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight in Fighting Squadron 18 (VF-18) on the USS Intrepid (CV-11) during World War II and her father is U.S. Senator John Thune. Hargens has continued that tradition by serving with a non-profit incentive program that helps limited-income pregnant women.

Key speakers at the ceremony included Vice Admiral Morley, USN, Commander Naval Sea Systems Command; Rear Admiral Anderson, USN, Program Executive Office Ships; U.S. Senator John Thune representing South Dakota; and Austal USA President Michelle Kruger.

“One of my proudest moments since joining Austal USA, was looking out into the audience today and seeing the many talented Austal USA employees and other Navy and industry guests who are responsible for the success of the LCS program,” stated Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. “Austal USA has grown from a small commercial shipyard to a large, advanced defense ship manufacturer primarily thanks to the Indy-variant LCS program. Christening this ship, the last Austal USA-built LCS, makes me a bit nostalgic but I know, for this company and the great team we've assembled, the future is bright and limitless.”

LCS 38 is the second ship named in honor of the capital city of South Dakota, a region with a rich American culture that includes a great history of service to the Navy and Marine Corps. The first USS Pierre, a World War II PC class submarine chaser, was commissioned in 1943 and decommissioned in 1958. Pierre (LCS 38) is the last Independence-variant LCS to be christened. Following delivery, she will join her sister ships homeported in San Diego and deploying to the INDO-PACOM region.

“It is truly an honor for PEO USC to have led the construction of this remarkable class of ships,” said Rear Adm. Kevin Smith, Program Executive Officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC). “Built by an industry team lead by Austal USA, the Littoral Combat Ship stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence in naval shipbuilding. As we christen the USS Pierre, we also celebrate the extraordinary crews that will sail this ship, employing the capabilities and versatility of the Littoral Combat Ship class, which will continue to play a pivotal role in safeguarding our nation’s interests now and for years to come.”

The LCS is a fast, agile, mission-focused platform designed to operate in near-shore environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. In November 2023 the Navy reported it had six Independence-variant LCS deployed in the Pacific throughout 2023, including the record-breaking 26-month overseas deployment of USS Charleston (LCS 18). The Austal USA-built LCS variant is also providing support to the Navy’s unmanned programs with USS Oakland (LCS 24) operating as a mothership for the Unmanned Surface Division 1 vessels Ranger, Mariner, Seahawk and Sea Hunter; the large flight decks support unmanned drones, like the MQ-8C Fire Scout. Integration of the mine countermeasures (MCM) mission package placed aboard USS Canberra (LCS 30) signifies additional capabilities planned for Independence-class ships.

Navy Announces Commissioning Date for the Future USS Richard M. McCool Jr



[By Karli Yeager](#), Naval Surface Forces Public Affairs, 20 May 2024

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – The U.S. Navy has approved the commissioning date for the future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29).

The Navy will commission Richard M. McCool Jr., an amphibious transport dock, September 7, 2024 at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Pensacola, Florida.

The naming of LPD 29 honors U.S. Navy Capt. Richard M. McCool Jr., who was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1945 for the

heroism he displayed after his ship was attacked by kamikaze aircraft in the Battle of Okinawa. Despite suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, he led efforts to battle a blazing fire on his ship and rescue injured sailors. LPD 29 will be the first of its name.

Richard M. McCool Jr. is co-sponsored by Shauna McCool and Kate Oja, granddaughters of the ship's namesake. As the co-sponsors, McCool and Oja lead the time-honored Navy tradition of giving the order during the ceremony to "man our ship and bring her to life!" At the moment, the commissioning pennant is hoisted and Richard M. McCool Jr. becomes a proud ship of the fleet.

Richard M. McCool Jr. will be the Navy's 13th San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship.

Amphibious transport docks are used to transport and land Marines, their equipment, and supplies by embarked Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) or conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles (AAV) augmented by helicopters or vertical take-off and landing aircraft (MV-22). These ships support amphibious assault, special operations, or expeditionary warfare missions and serve as secondary aviation platforms for amphibious operations.

Houthi strike M/T Wind in Red Sea

From U.S. Central Command, May 18, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 1 a.m. (Sanaa time) May 18,

Iranian-backed Houthis launched one anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) into the Red Sea and struck M/T Wind, a Panamanian-flagged, Greek owned and operated oil tanker. M/T Wind most recently docked in Russia and was bound for China.

The impact of the ASBM caused flooding which resulted in the of loss propulsion and steering. A coalition vessel immediately responded to the distress call by M/T Wind, but no assistance was needed. The crew of M/T Wind was able to restore propulsion and steering, and no casualties were reported. M/T Wind resumed its course under its own power.

This continued malign and reckless behavior by the Iranian-backed Houthis threatens regional stability and endangers the lives of mariners across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

May 19 U.S Central Command Update

From U.S. Central Command, May 19, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 9:35 p.m. (Sanaa time) May 18, Iranian-backed Houthis launched one anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) from a Houthi-controlled area in Yemen over the Gulf of Aden. There were no injuries or damages reported by U.S., coalition, or merchant vessels.

This continued malign and reckless behavior by the Iranian-backed Houthis threatens regional stability and endangers the lives of mariners across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Navy Establishes Unmanned

Surface Vessel Squadron Three



NAVAL BASE CORONADO (May 15, 2024) – Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft (GARC) from Unmanned Surface Vessel Squadron 3 (USVRON 3) operate remotely in San Diego Bay ahead of the unit’s establishment ceremony. The 16-foot GARCs built by Maritime Applied Physics Corporation enable research, testing, and operations that will allow integration throughout the surface, expeditionary, and joint maritime forces. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Claire M. DuBois)

By Karli Yeager, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs – May 17, 2024

SAN DIEGO – Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSP) established Unmanned Surface Vessel Squadron (USVRON) Three at Naval Base San Diego during a ceremony, May 17.

USVRON Three will oversee a fleet of small, unmanned surface vessels (sUSV) known as Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft (GARC).

During the ceremony, Capt. Derek Rader assumed command of the newly established USVRON Three.

“Our Sailors are the essential key for integration of unmanned surface vessels in the Navy and joint construct,” said Rader. “This will be accomplished through experimentation with the fleet testing and doctrine drafted by operators you see today, who embody and execute the warfighting that we need to achieve to enable the full potential of unmanned systems.”

USVs, including the GARCs, will provide additional warfighting capability and capacity to augment the Navy’s traditional combatant force, providing commanders with a greater range of capabilities and employment options to increase the Fleet’s tactical and strategic advantages. The goal for USVs is to provide the fleet with operations in conjunction with carrier strike groups, surface action groups, or even independently.

Manufactured by the Maritime Applied Physics Corporation, GARCs are 16-foot USVs that enable research, testing, and operations that will allow integration throughout the surface, expeditionary, and joint maritime forces.

Commander, Naval Surface Forces U.S. Pacific Fleet Vice Adm. Brendan McLane delivered the keynote speech at the ceremony.

“With challenging obstacles to overcome, we have put the right team in place at USVRON Three, and I believe we have done just that,” McLane said. “The Navy is placing unmanned systems in the hands of 400 of our most talented warfighters to help integrate, scale, experiment, and employ these systems.”

USVRON Three will also incorporate the newest rating, the robotics warfare (RW) specialist into their teams. The rating was announced in February by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). They will enable Robotic Autonomous System (RAS) operations and maintenance at the tactical edge and be the subject matter experts for computer vision, mission autonomy, navigation autonomy, data systems, artificial intelligence,

and machine learning on the RAS platforms.

USVRON Three will report to Surface Development Group (SURFDEVGRU) One, under the direction of Commodore Shea Thompson.

“There are currently no boundaries, and we have an incredible opportunity to determine what right looks like within our sphere of influence,” Thompson said. “And the SURFDEVGRU One and USVRON Three teams are manned by like-minded surface warriors who are making considerable strides in validating small USV capability while laying out a clear path to achieving full operational capability by a timeframe that matters”

The mission of USVRON Three is to deliver the most formidable, unmanned platforms in the maritime domain. The squadron will be a cornerstone in building the foundational knowledge required to operate and maintain sUSV and will spearhead the development of TTPs for sUSV operations and sustainment. USVRON 3’s motto is “Victory Through Ferocity.”

SURFDEVGRU 1 is responsible for the maintenance, training, and manning oversight for unmanned surface vessels (USV), Zumwalt-class guided missile destroyers, and the future USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002).

The mission of 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.

USS Leyte Gulf Returns From Final Deployment



The guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55) returns to Naval Station Norfolk, May 17, 2024, marking their final deployment. Leyte Gulf deployed to the 4th Fleet area of responsibility, seizing 6,470 kilograms of illicit-drugs, a semi-submersible, and conducted theater security cooperation visits. Constructed in 1985 and commissioned in 1987, Leyte Gulf is named after the decisive World War II battle in the Philippine Sea. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Manvir Gill)

By MC2 Porsha Thompson, 17 May 2024

NORFOLK, Va. – The guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, May 10, 2024, marking their final deployment.

Leyte Gulf departed Norfolk, Jan. 28, 2024, to conduct maritime interdiction and theater security operations in the

U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations.

“The crew of Leyte Gulf is a model for maritime teamwork,” said Vice Adm. Doug Perry, Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet. “They partnered with Navy air assets and Coast Guard interdiction teams, showcasing 2nd Fleet’s ability to extend our presence and maintain homeland defense in other fleets. This is a profound final chapter for one of the Navy’s finest ships, and their crew should be proud of all they accomplished.”

During their final deployment, Leyte Gulf embarked the “Valkyries” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50 and partnered with U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 404.

The Leyte Gulf team performed maritime interdiction operations and disrupted 4,100 kilograms of cocaine. They detected and seized a self-propelled semi-submersible containing 2,370 kilograms of illicit drugs, which was later destroyed during a sinking exercise. The LEDET boarded and took positive control of three vessels during interdiction operations and removed 15 narcotics traffickers from the narcotics trade.

“I admire the resiliency of the crew aboard Leyte Gulf,” said Perry. “Their commitment to the mission in the South Atlantic enhances maritime security through sustained naval presence.”

Leyte Gulf operated with regional partners in the 4th Fleet area and conducted theater security cooperation visits. These combined efforts aimed to strengthen maritime partnerships, enhance U.S. maritime posture, and deter threats of illicit drug trafficking.

Named after one of World War II’s largest naval battles, “The Battle of Leyte Gulf” was fought in 1944 in the Philippine Sea. It was a decisive battle that pushed back Japanese naval forces. The ship, which would be forever known as Leyte Gulf, was constructed in 1985 and commissioned in 1987.

“This ship is full of history. Each period brings its own far-off journeys, along with generations of Sailors who have manned the helm,” said Capt. Nathan Diaz, the commanding officer of Leyte Gulf. “Our last deployment was full of Sailors who made their own mark on the story of this great warship. Though our namesake comes from a battle long ago, the U.S. is still performing with a level of combat expertise and professionalism that we’ve always had as we protect the homeland.”

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime forces ready to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.