

# Navy Opens Second Triton UAV Forward Deployment Site



Caption: NAVAL AIR STATION SIGONELLA, Italy (March 2, 2024) – Capt. Ronald H. Rumfelt, Jr., commanding officer, Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19 “Big Red” (left), Vice Adm. Daniel “Undra” Cheever, commander, Naval Air Forces (center), and Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, commanding officer, Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella (right), participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the inaugural deployment of VUP- 19’s second forward-deployed detachment, and the opening of a new MQ-4C Triton hangar at NAS Sigonella, Italy, March 2, 2024 (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication 2nd Class Jacquelin Frost)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy squadron that operates the MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle

has opened its second deployment site, with this one located at Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, Sicily.

During March 2 ceremonies at Sigonella, the commanding officer of Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19), Capt. Ronald H. Rumfelt Jr., was joined by Vice Adm. Daniel “Undra” Cheever, commander, Naval Air Forces, and Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, commanding officer, of NAS Sigonella in a ribbon cutting for the new hangar on the station that will support the Triton aircraft operating from the station, according to an NAS Sigonella release.

Home-based at NAS Jacksonville, Florida, Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19) brought the Triton to its Initial Operational Capability status last summer with the establishment of an orbit at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam. The squadron had maintained two Tritons – equipped with the baseline Integrated Functional Capability (IFC) 3 configuration – on an Early Operational Capability deployment in Guam from May 2020 until March 2023. The Tritons provided MISR&T (maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and tracking) for the U.S. 7th Fleet while developing the concept of operations and the tactics to refine the Triton’s operations. The detachment operated from Guam; Naval Air Facility Misawa, Japan; and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

VUP-19 since has received newer versions in the IFC 4 configuration, which are equipped with a more capable sensor suite that will allow them to replace the Navy’s fleet of EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft.

From Sigonella, also a rotational site for squadrons of the Navy’s P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, the Tritons will provide the U.S. Sixth Fleet with MISR&T support.

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# HII Hosts Naval Leaders at Ingalls Shipbuilding



PASCAGOULA, Miss., March 04, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII (NYSE: HII) announced that Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Christopher Mahoney joined U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss, for a visit to the company’s Ingalls Shipbuilding division today.

While in Pascagoula, Franchetti, Mahoney and Wicker toured the shipyard’s facilities and met with Ingalls leadership for an overview of the ships under construction and the investments being made within the shipyard. During the visit, the group toured guided missile destroyers *USS Zumwalt* (DDG 1000) and *Ted Stevens* (DDG 128), amphibious assault ship *Bougainville* (LHA 8), and amphibious transport dock *Richard M. McCool Jr.* (LPD 29).

“We were honored to host Adm. Franchetti, Gen. Mahoney and



Sen. Wicker and showcase the hard work being accomplished by our dedicated shipbuilders every day,” Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. “As we continue to invest in our people, facilities and processes, we can best position ourselves to fully support the needs of our Navy and Marine Corps partners.”

A photo accompanying this release is available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-hosts-naval-leaders-at-ingalls-shipbuilding>.

Adm. Franchetti, who was sworn in as the nation’s 33rd chief of naval operations in November 2023, also met with crewmembers of ships currently at Ingalls. This visit marked CNO’s first trip to Ingalls Shipbuilding as chief of naval operations and was part of a series of visits to Gulf Coast shipyards.

“It’s been just over two years since McCool’s launch, and because of each and every one of you, this ship will be ready and fiercely capable in this decisive decade and for the many decades that follow,” said Franchetti to the shipyard workers, industry members and ship’s crew aboard *Richard M. McCool Jr.* “I want each of you to know that I am proud of you, and I’m proud of all that you are doing to ensure our Navy remains the most powerful Navy in the world.”

During the visit, the group had the opportunity to see first-hand the work taking place in support of the Navy and Marine Corps.

“The importance of these shipyards cannot be overstated,” Mahoney said. “Manufacturing and production is essential to a strong economy and America’s maritime advantage relies on the ships that carry our Marines and Sailors around the globe. Both of those things are on display here – on these lines with these hard working men and women. It was great to meet some of them and hear their stories. Their work is critical to our

National Defense.”

Wicker echoed Mahoney’s statements saying, “I will always showcase our skilled Mississippi shipbuilders and the impressive work they do along the coast. The Navy, Marine Corps, and world benefit from what comes out of our shipyards. As one of Mississippi’s U.S. Senators and the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I look for every opportunity to advance our state’s national defense contributions.”

Since 2015, HII has invested nearly \$1 billion in the Ingalls Shipbuilding infrastructure, facility and toolsets enabling shipbuilders to improve product flow and process efficiency, and enhance product quality. Additionally, HII continues to invest in and expand local talent pipelines in order to meet the current and future needs of our nation’s military.

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**US Coast Guard Cutter Forward  
returns home to Virginia  
after lifesaving deployment**



March 4, 2024

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Forward (WMEC 911) returned to their homeport in Portsmouth, Sunday, following a 75-day patrol of the Windward Passage.

During the patrol, Forward's crew intercepted five unlawful migrant voyages and rescued 33 migrants from one vessel taking on water. Forward provided essential life-saving equipment, to include personal flotation devices and dewatering equipment, to the migrants aboard.

Patrolling in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS), within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility, Forward's crew deterred illegal migration. By conducting routine patrols of the Windward Passage, Forward was able to maintain safety of life at sea and protect U.S. maritime borders.

"We often encounter unseaworthy vessels making attempts to

illegally enter U.S. waters,” said Cmdr. Staci Rutsch, commanding officer of Forward. “The Coast Guard’s overt presence in this region is essential to deter dangerous and life-threatening migrant ventures. Our extensive Coast Guard presence in the area significantly decreased the number of migration events. The crew did an outstanding job, around the clock, ensuring that these illegal and unsafe ventures were detected and expeditiously intercepted. Once again, the Coast Guard stands out as the partner of choice for preventing loss of life at sea while protecting the homeland.”

OVS is the 2004 Department of Homeland Security plan that provides 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 the safety of life at sea while deterring and dissuading mass maritime migration alongside our federal, state, and local partners.

Additionally, Forward’s crew conducted interactions with valued partners and the local community during a port call to the Dominican Republic. Forward hosted Dominican Republic navy leadership aboard the cutter and discussed ongoing relationships within the region. Forward’s crew also participated in a community relations project held at a local orphanage in Maimon, Dominican Republic. The crew donated toys and home items as well completed renovation and restoration projects, building stronger relationships between partners.

Forward is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter’s primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

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# HII Completes Acceptance Trials On Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29)



PASCAGOULA, Miss., March 04, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII’s (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division announced today the successful completion of acceptance trials in the Gulf of Mexico for amphibious transport dock *Richard M. McCool Jr.* (LPD 29), the final Flight I transition ship before Ingalls moves into serial production of the LPD Flight II line.

“We have had a successful trial and it is only through the efforts of our shipbuilders and our dedicated Navy and industry partners that we now move solely into the Flight II ships,” Ingalls Shipbuilding President Kari Wilkinson said. “Our team remains fully committed to delivering these important assets to the Navy-Marine Corps team.”



The Ingalls' Test and Trials team spent several days with the U.S. Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey running the ship at full power and through steering maneuvers. The team will now complete final finish work on the *San Antonio*-class ship in preparation for delivery to the U.S. Navy in weeks ahead.

Photos and video accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-completes-acceptance-trials-on-richard-m-mccool-jr-lpd-29/>.

"Congratulations to our shipbuilders on accomplishing this milestone and getting the ship ready for delivery," Ingalls Shipbuilding Ship Program Manager Davianne Stokes said. "The LPD 29 team has worked very hard to make these sea trials a success, and I couldn't be more proud of how they have prevailed."

Ingalls Shipbuilding has delivered 12 *San Antonio*-class ships and currently has three LPDs under construction, including *Richard M. McCool Jr.* (LPD 29), the final transition ship; *Harrisburg* (LPD 30), the first Flight II LPD; and *Pittsburgh* (LPD 31). Ingalls was also awarded in March 2023 a modification contract for the procurement of the detail design and construction of *Philadelphia* (LPD 32), the 16th ship in the *San Antonio* class and the third LPD Flight II.

*San Antonio*-class ships can support a variety of amphibious assault, special operations, or expeditionary warfare missions, operating independently or as part of Amphibious Readiness Groups (ARGs), Expeditionary Strike Groups, or joint task forces. These capabilities allow the U.S. Navy to protect America's security abroad and promote regional stability and preserve future peace.

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# Navy Announces Flag Officer Assignments

ARLINGTON, Va.—The secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations announced on March 1 the following assignments:

Rear Adm. Anthony C. Carullo will be assigned as director, Warfare Development, N72, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Carullo is currently serving as director, Plans and Policy, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

Rear Adm. Carl A. Lahti will be assigned as commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, Norfolk, Virginia. Lahti is currently serving as commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Japan; and commander, Navy Region Japan, Yokosuka, Japan.

Rear Adm. Daniel P. Martin will be assigned as commander, Naval Safety Command, Norfolk, Virginia. Martin is currently serving as director, Maritime Operations, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Rear Adm. Milton J. Sands will be assigned as commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, San Diego, California. Sands is currently serving as chief of staff, U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

Rear Adm. Christopher J. Sweeney will be assigned as director, Warfare Integration, N9I, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Sweeney is currently serving as director, Warfare Development, N72, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. James P. Waters III will be assigned as commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Millington, Tennessee. Waters is currently serving as director, Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division, N13, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations,

Arlington, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Susan BryerJoyner, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as director, Warfare Integration Directorate, N2/N6I, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. BryerJoyner is currently serving as deputy director, Command, Control, Communications, and Computers/Cyber, J-6, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Thomas R. Buchanan, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as director, Plans and Policy, J5, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. Buchanan is currently serving as commander, Submarine Group Ten, Kings Bay, Georgia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Jennifer S. Couture, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as director, Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division, N13, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Arlington, Virginia. Couture is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group Eleven, Everett, Washington.

Rear Adm. (lower half) William R. Daly, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as director, Surface Warfare Division, N96, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Daly is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group Fifteen, San Diego, California.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Erik J. Eslich, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as director, Maritime Operations, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Eslich is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group Twelve, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Patrick J. Hannifin, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as director of operations, J3, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii. Hannifin is currently serving as commander, Task Force Seven Zero; and commander, Carrier Strike Group Five,

Yokosuka, Japan.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Gregory C. Huffman, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as commander, Joint Task Force-Micronesia, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Apra, Guam. Huffman is currently serving as U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Representative, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau; commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Marianas; and commander, Joint Region Marianas, Apra, Guam.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Elizabeth S. Okano, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as commander, Naval Information Warfare Systems Command, San Diego, California. Okano is currently serving as program executive officer for Integrated Warfare Systems, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Carlos A. Sardiello, selected for promotion to rear admiral, will be assigned as commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Southern Command; and commander, U.S. Fourth Fleet, Jacksonville, Florida. Sardiello is currently serving as commander, Carrier Strike Group One, San Diego, California.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Eric J. Anduze will be assigned as director, Joint/Fleet Operations, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia. Anduze is currently serving as deputy commander, Combined Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Africa.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Brian H. Bennett will be assigned as deputy director, Special Operations and Counter Terrorism, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. Bennett is currently serving as assistant commander-Operations, Joint Special Operations Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, Fort Liberty, North Carolina.

Rear Adm. (lower half) George Bresnihan will be assigned as



commander, Defense Logistics Agency – Energy, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Bresnihan is currently serving as director, Logistics Directorate, J-4, U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Maximilian Clark will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Eleven, Everett, Washington. Clark is currently serving as assistant chief of staff, J-3, Joint Forces Command, Naples, Naples, Italy.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Adan G. Cruz will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Three, Bremerton, Washington. Cruz is currently serving as deputy director for Politico-Military Affairs (Middle East), J-5, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Thomas J. Dickinson will be assigned as program executive officer for Integrated Warfare Systems, Washington, D.C. Dickinson is currently serving as commander, Naval Surface Warfare Center; and commander, Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Kavon Hakimzadeh will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Two, Norfolk, Virginia. Hakimzadeh is currently serving as director, Joint/Fleet Operations, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Ian L. Johnson will be assigned as commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Japan, and commander, Navy Region Japan, Yokosuka, Japan. Johnson is currently serving as commander, Navy Region Southeast, Jacksonville, Florida.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Kevin M. Kennedy will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Fifteen, San Diego, California. Kennedy is currently serving as assistant commander for Career Management, PERS-4, Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tennessee.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Christopher A. Kijek will be assigned

as director, Learning to Action Board, Washington, D.C. Kijek is currently serving as commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Group, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Brett W. Mietus will be assigned as commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Group, Norfolk, Virginia. Mietus is currently serving as director, Navy Culture and Resilience Office, N17, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Arlington, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Andrew T. Miller will be assigned as director, Plans and Operations, U.S. Naval Forces Europe – Sixth Fleet; deputy commander, Sixth Fleet; and commander, Submarine Group Eight, Naples, Italy. Miller is currently serving as commander, Undersea Warfighting Development Center, Groton, Connecticut.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Thomas Moninger will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Twelve, Norfolk, Virginia. Moninger is currently serving as director, Plans, Policy and Integration, N5, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Gregory D. Newkirk will be assigned as commander, Task Force Seven Zero; and commander, Carrier Strike Group Five, Yokosuka, Japan. Newkirk is currently serving as deputy director for Operations, National Joint Operations Intelligence Center, Operations Team Two, J-3, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Chase D. Patrick will be assigned as commandant, National War College, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. Patrick is currently serving as director of Maritime Headquarters, U.S. Naval Forces Europe/Africa/Sixth Fleet, Naples, Italy.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Frank A. Rhodes IV is assigned as deputy director for Operations, National Joint Operations Intelligence Center, Operations Team Two, J-3, Joint Staff,

Washington, D.C. Rhodes recently served as executive assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Mark A. Schafer will be assigned as commander, Special Operations Command South, U.S. Southern Command, Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida. Schafer is currently serving as commander, Special Operations Joint Task Force – Central, Doha, Qatar.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Alexis T. Walker will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group Ten, Norfolk, Virginia. Walker is currently serving as commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Millington, Tennessee.

Rear Adm. (lower half) David P. Walt will be assigned as commander, Expeditionary Strike Group Two, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Walt is currently serving as deputy director for Resources and Acquisitions, J-8, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Todd S. Weeks will be assigned as program executive officer, Strategic Submarines, Washington, D.C. Weeks is currently serving as program executive officer, Undersea Warfare Systems, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Robert E. Wirth will be assigned as commander, Submarine Group Ten, Kings Bay, Georgia. Wirth is currently serving as deputy director, Strategic Targeting and Nuclear Mission Planning, J-5N, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael S. Wosje will be assigned as commander, Carrier Strike Group One, San Diego, California. Wosje is currently serving as chief of staff, Strike Force NATO, Lisbon, Portugal.

Capt. Frankie J. Clark, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as director, Navy Culture and

Force Resilience Office, N17, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Clark is currently serving as executive assistant to the commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Capt. David G. Duff, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as director, Plans, Policy and Integration, N5, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Duff is currently serving as commanding officer, USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), Norfolk, Virginia.

Capt. Brian A. Harding, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as commander, Naval Information Warfighting Development Center, Norfolk, Virginia. Harding is currently serving as information warfare commander, Carrier Strike Group Three, Bremerton,

Washington.

Capt. Jeffrey L. Heames, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as assistant commander for Career Management, PERS-4, Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tennessee. Heames is currently serving as director, Surface Warfare Officer Career Management and Distribution Division (PERS-41), Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tennessee.

Capt. John W. Hewitt, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as commander, Navy Region Southeast, Jacksonville, Florida. Hewitt is currently serving as chief of staff, Navy Installations Command, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Marcos A. Jasso, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as commander, Logistics Group, Western Pacific; and commander, Task Force Seven Three, Singapore. Jasso is currently serving as director, Maritime Operations Center, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.



Capt. Matthew J. Kawas, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces, U.S. Central Command: deputy commander, Fifth Fleet. Kawas is currently serving as principal military assistant to the deputy secretary of defense, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Justin A. Kubu, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy commander, Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa, U.S. Africa Command. Kubu is currently serving as commander, Amphibious Squadron Seven, San Diego, California.

Capt. Robert E. Loughran Jr., selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy director for Resources and Acquisitions, J-8, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. Loughran is currently serving as branch head, Carrier Strike Aircraft and Weapons, N98, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Philip S. Miller, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as director of Maritime Headquarters, U.S. Naval Forces Europe/Africa/Sixth Fleet, Naples, Italy. Miller is currently serving as branch head, Carriers, N98, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Erin P. Osborne, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy director, J-5, Political-Military Affairs, (Middle East), Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. Osborne is currently serving as executive assistant to the vice chief of naval operations, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Bartley A. Randall, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as assistant commander-operations, Joint Special Operations Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, Fort Liberty, North Carolina. Randall is currently serving as assistant deputy director for Global

Operations, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Capt. Melvin R. Smith Jr., selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy director, Nuclear Operations, U.S. Strategic Command. Smith is currently serving as executive assistant to the commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii.

Capt. Vincent S. Tionquiao, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as deputy director, C4/Cyber Systems, J-6, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. Tionquiao is currently serving as director, Maritime Operations Center, U.S. Fleet Cyber Command/U.S. Tenth Fleet, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Capt. Michael York, selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half), will be assigned as commander, Defense Logistics Agency – Distribution, New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. York is currently serving as director, Fleet Supply Readiness and Operations, N412, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

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## **USCGC Vigilant Assists in Interdicting 1,200 Pounds of Cocaine during Caribbean Deployment**



March 4, 2024

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Vigilant (WMEC 617) returned home to Cape Canaveral, Sunday, following a 60-day patrol in the Central and Eastern Caribbean.

Deploying in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South, Vigilant worked alongside other Coast Guard cutters, Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security units, and international partners to conduct maritime safety and security missions. Vigilant deterred illegal drug smuggling and directly contributed to U.S. Coast Guard and national objectives to combat transnational criminal organizations.

During the patrol, Vigilant's crew responded to a distress signal from a French-flagged sailing vessel. The signal came from two French crew members who were stranded at sea for over

eight days with no means of propulsion and no remaining drinking water. Vigilant was first on scene and provided them with water, shelter, and medical aid until their safe return home was coordinated.

Additionally, Vigilant assisted USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55) in stopping a drug trafficking venture, detaining six suspected drug traffickers, and interdicting 1,200 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated \$15.7 million.

In addition, Vigilant conducted a professional exchange with officials in St. Lucia as well as St. Kitts and Nevis. Vigilant worked to promote regional stability, security and strengthen partnerships. Members of the crew also conducted a community relations project in Basseterre, St. Kitts, where they joined members of the St. Kitts and Nevis Defence Force to paint two classrooms at a local school.

"As always, I couldn't be prouder of our crew and our continued heritage of service," said Cmdr. Jon Potterton, the commanding officer of Vigilant. "We enjoyed a great patrol where we were able to save lives and gain a greater appreciation for our Eastern Caribbean partner nation's cultures and strengthen bonds through training and volunteerism."

Vigilant is a 210-foot Reliance-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter's primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations. The medium endurance cutter is under the command of the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. Based in Portsmouth, Virginia, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. In addition to surge operations, Atlantic Area also allocates ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.



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# SECNAV Del Toro Engages Japanese Shipbuilding Execs



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel meet with executives from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Tokyo, Feb. 28. Secretary Del Toro traveled to the Indo-Pacific to meet with allies and partners to further maritime cooperation, explore opportunities to collaborate with the Republic of Korea and Japan on commercial and Naval shipbuilding, and engage with Sailors, Marines, and Department of the Navy civilians forward deployed to the region. (U.S. Embassy Tokyo photo/released)

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro met with leading Japanese shipbuilding industry executives and toured a shipyard undertaking maintenance and repair of a U.S. Navy oiler, Feb. 28-29.

Discussions were productive and centered on attracting Japanese investment in integrated commercial and naval shipbuilding facilities in the United States.

On Feb. 28, Secretary Del Toro met with Kensuke Namura, President of Namura Shipbuilding and Sasebo Heavy Industries, Masayuki Eguchi, Senior Vice President of Integrated Defense and Space Systems at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and Atushi Etoh, Managing Officer of Japan Marine United, at a lunch hosted by Ambassador Rahm Emanuel in Tokyo.

On Feb. 29, Secretary Del Toro and Ambassador Emanuel toured Mitsubishi's shipyard in Yokohama and spoke with the master of USNS Big Horn (T-AO 198) as it undergoes repairs there.

This is Secretary Del Toro's third visit to Japan as Secretary of the Navy. In addition to his discussions with industry, Secretary Del Toro met with the Japanese National Security Advisor, Minister of Defense, and Head of Navy.

Secretary Del Toro reiterated, "The U.S.-Japan Alliance is the cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. I am here to reaffirm the Department of the Navy's long-standing partnership with the defense forces of Japan, and to strengthen that partnership even further."

As part of his call for a new Maritime Statecraft in his speech to the Harvard Kennedy School on Sept. 26, 2023, Secretary Del Toro observed that the U.S. maritime industry "is ripe with opportunity to partner with a greater number of shipbuilders here in the U.S. and with our closest allies overseas, including Japan and South Korea." In the same speech, he announced his objective to "attract the most advanced shipbuilders in the world to open U.S.-owned subsidiaries and invest in commercial shipyards here in the U.S., modernizing and expanding our shipbuilding industrial capacity and creating a healthier, more competitive

shipbuilding workforce.”

Secretary Del Toro visited Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Palau for engagements in the Indo-Pacific region. The trip was a key step in his Maritime Statecraft efforts to reinvigorate America’s comprehensive maritime power and aligns closely with the Pentagon’s National Defense Industrial Strategy, which calls for venture capital and new ideas to revive the U.S. industrial base.

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## **SECNAV Del Toro Visits Republic of Palau**



KOROR, Republic of Palau (March 1, 2024) – Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro visited the Republic of Palau

Feb. 29 to March 1 for a series of strategic engagements on the expanding relationship with the critically important Compact of Free Association (COFA) state.

During his visit, Secretary Del Toro met with U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Palau Joel Ehrendreich and members of his team, as well as with President Surangel Whipps, Jr., to discuss the expanding relationship with Palau and the United States' critically important defense posture in the region.

"President Whipps has been a marvelous reflection of all the people of Palau and a persistent supporter of the U.S.-Palau relationship, which directly supports a free and open Indo-Pacific region," said Secretary Del Toro. "I can assure you that the United States remains committed to Palau's national security, and I remain one of Palau's strongest advocates in Washington, to include with Congress."

Secretary Del Toro also thanked President Whipps for his support of the U.S. Navy Seabees and U.S. Marines engineering and construction work in Palau, including a runway improvement project in Peleliu by the Marines from the 7th Engineer Support Battalion (ESB). Secretary Del Toro visited the runway project. He also remembered the lives lost by both the U.S. and Japan by laying a wreath at Orange Breach in Peleliu, where the first U.S. invasion of forces landed during World War II, during the Battle of Peleliu. The 80th anniversary of the Battle of Peleliu is this September.

President Whipps thanked the Secretary for the Office of Naval Research funded island resilience data analysis and visualization dashboard, as well as the two Navy funded coordinators to operate it for the Office of the President, which arrived two days before Secretary Del Toro's visit.

"Secretary Del Toro's visit affirms the longstanding friendship and ironclad partnership between the United States and Palau, which includes the efforts of Palauans serving in

the U.S. Navy for decades and still to this day. Now – more than ever – the cooperation between our two countries is contributing to the stability of the region,” said Ambassador Ehrendreich.

Secretary Del Toro’s visit to Palau is part of a series of strategic engagements in the Indo-Pacific to promote the protection of the maritime commons in line with his Maritime Statecraft efforts.

Secretary Del Toro trip to Palau was the third leg of travel through the Indo-Pacific, which included stops in the Republic of Korea and Japan. The trip is an important component in Secretary Del Toro’s Maritime Statecraft efforts to reinvigorate America’s comprehensive maritime power. A whole-of-government effort, Maritime Statecraft aligns closely with the Pentagon’s National Defense Industrial Strategy, which calls for venture capital and new ideas to revive the U.S. industrial base.

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## **U.S. Navy Accepts Delivery of Future LCS USS Kingsville (LCS 36)**





By Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants

March 1, 2024

MOBILE, Ala. – The Navy accepted delivery of the future USS Kingsville (LCS 36) at Austal USA's shipyard in Mobile, Alabama, March 1. Kingsville is the 18th Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) constructed, and is the first ship ever named after Kingsville, Texas.

The LCS class comprises fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that can operate in both near-shore and open-ocean waters to counter 21st-century coastal threats.

Kingsville successfully completed Acceptance Trials on February 1, marking the last significant milestone before a

ship is delivered to the Navy. She will be commissioned later this summer, and will be homeported in San Diego, California.

“The performance of Kingsville during this trial demonstrates a continuation of the standard of excellence in the LCS class as a whole. We are thrilled by the quality of the ship and the performance of our partners at Austal,” said Mr. Jonas Brown, deputy program manager of the LCS (PMS 501) program office, who was aboard LCS 36 throughout the trial events.

The USS Kingsville is a testament to the enduring partnership between Kingsville, Texas, and the Navy. That relationship traces back to 1942 when Naval Auxiliary Air Station Kingsville (NAAS) began serving as an auxiliary field for Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, supporting Navy flight training. In 1968, the airfield evolved into one of three key centers for Navy jet training operations.

Following Kingsville, the future USS Pierre (LCS 38) is the last Independence-variant LCS still under construction at Austal USA, as the LCS production line approaches its planned closure.

The LCS class consists of two variants, Freedom and Independence, designed and built by two separate industry teams. The trimaran-hulled Independence-variant team is led by Austal USA (for the even-numbered ships). The monohull Freedom variant is built by a team led by Lockheed Martin (for the odd-numbered ships).

The Program Executive Office for Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC) and the LCS Program Office (PMS 501) lead the Navy’s efforts to integrate with joint, combined, manned, and unmanned teams to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control and deterrence missions worldwide.



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# HASC Leaders Wittman, Kelly Amplify Pressure on CAPE to Support Cost-Effective 31-Amphib Floor Requirement



Caption: MEDITERRANEAN SEA (Feb. 26, 2024) The Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) transits the Mediterranean Sea during a photo exercise, Feb. 26, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Riley Gasdia)

March 1, 2024

WASHINGTON — Senior leaders of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), Congressman Rob Wittman (R-Virginia) and Congressman Trent Kelly (R-Mississippi) sent a [letter](#) to the

U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)'s Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office to affirm the importance of meeting the congressionally-mandated 31 L-class amphibious ship floor requirement in a cost-effective way.

By providing multiship procurement authority for amphibious vessels in the Fiscal Year 2025 presidential budget request, the DoD can affordably meet this critical requirement, which will enhance U.S. force structure in the Indo-Pacific and provide certainty for the shipbuilding industrial base.

"In the unclassified Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement (BFSAR) and Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan, both released in 2022, the Navy looks to maintain 31 traditional L-class amphibious ships," the senior HASC leaders write. "As the cost assessment arm of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, CAPE should recognize the value of the cost savings generated by multiyear procurement of America class and San Antonio class amphibious ships."

Rep. Wittman serves as chairman of the HASC Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces and Rep. Kelly serves as chairman of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces.

To read the full letter, click [here](#) or scroll below.