The (Other) Manhattan Project: Forgotten Island Had Front-Row Seat to Military History

The base is all that remains of the once-grand House of Taga. *Photo Credit: Nicholas Monck*

On a historical impact per square mile basis, few places on earth rival the island of Tinian. Almost completely forgotten today, this small, isolated speck of land in the Northern Mariana Islands – located about 125 miles north of Guam – has been the site of some of the most consequential events in human discovery, construction and annihilation.

Since first being inhabited 5,000 years ago, Tinian has served

as a stopping point for explorers and a launch pad for invaders. Though now often relegated to a footnote in history, Tinian's story offers vital lessons to the U.S. Navy as it reorients for an era of great power competition and works to counter an increasingly aggressive China in the Indo-Pacific.

One of the earliest oceanic landmasses to be inhabited, seafaring people, likely originally from Southeast Asia, traveled thousands of miles across the open ocean in outrigger canoes and arrived in the Mariana Islands around 3000 BC. Their settlements on Tinian are some of the oldest prehistoric sites in the United States and its territories. The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan is believed to have spotted Tinian during his 1521 circumnavigation of the globe. Magellan elected to bypass Tinian and instead landed on Guam after spending nearly 100 days at sea. Because of a misunderstanding of the size of the globe, he had expected the passage from South America to Asia to take three or four days and his crew was dehydrated and starving when they finally reached the Mariana Islands. The crossing was so treacherous that Antonio Pigafetta, the expedition's official chronicler, wrote "I believe that nevermore will any man undertake to make such a voyage."

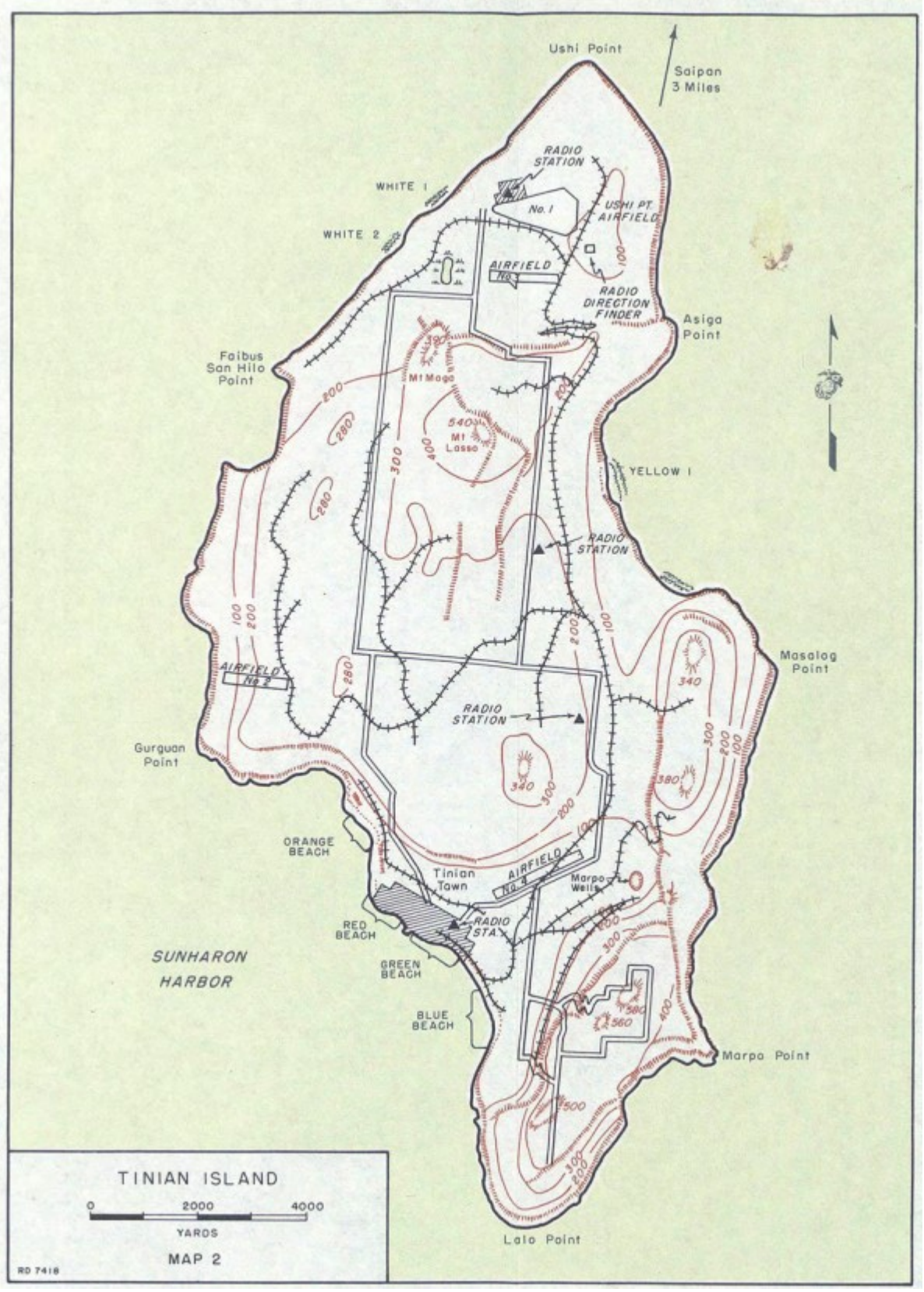
Despite the hardships of the initial voyage, Spanish explorers returned within five years and the 1529 Treaty of Zaragoza eventually placed the islands within Spain's sphere of control. Permanent Spanish settlement, however, did not begin until 1664, led by Jesuit priests and soldiers who arrived in Guam in 1668. Two priests traveled onward to Tinian, likely becoming the first Europeans to step foot there, but their presence inflamed tribal conflicts that forced a retreat five years later. Spain eventually secured the Mariana Islands in 1698 and forcibly removed the native population of the northern islands to Guam. Consequently, Tinian remained largely uninhabited for over a century, save for brief occupations by the crews of passing English warships in 1742

and 1765.

In April of 1898, following the sinking of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor, the U.S. declared war on Spain. The cruiser USS Charleston, under the command of Captain Henry Glass, was dispatched from California to Manila to support Commodore George Dewey's Asiatic Squadron in its attack on the Spanish-held Philippines. While resupplying in Honolulu, Glass received orders to detour to Guam and "use such force as may be necessary to capture the port of Guam, making prisoners of the governor and other officials and any armed force that may be there. … These operations at the Island of Guam should be very brief and should not occupy more than one or two days."

When Glass reached Guam on June 20, 1898, he found the island only lightly defended. The Spanish, unaware war had been declared, mistook his cannon fire on the fort at Santa Cruz as a military salute. Hopelessly outmatched, the Spanish governor surrendered without bloodshed the next day to two junior officers and four soldiers from the Charleston who had been sent ashore by Glass. The island was left under the authority of Francisco "Frank" Portusach, the only American citizen then residing in Guam, and the Charleston sailed onward to Manila.

While Spain ceded Guam to the U.S. in the Treaty of Paris, Tinian and the northern islands were left under Spanish rule in an apparent American oversight. Having lost the principal island, Spain saw little reason to keep the rump of its Micronesian possessions and quickly sold the lossmaking islands to Germany for 25 million pesetas (equivalent to $160 million in 2026). Nonetheless, they continued under the local control of Spanish landowners and the number of German nationals throughout the entire Mariana territory never reached double digits.



Landing Beaches and Japanese development on Tinian by 1944. *Image credit: U.S. Marine Corps*

Japan Takes Over

At the start of World War I, Japan captured the German-held Marianas pursuant to a secret agreement with Britain.

Following the war, the League of Nations formally appointed Japan to manage the islands as part of the South Seas Mandate. Under Japanese administration, Tinian was transformed into “Sugar Island,” featuring a massive sugar-plantation economy, 40 miles of railroad track and a mill capable of producing 1,200 tons of processed sugar daily.

In the opening days of World War II, Tinian remained relatively peaceful and was not garrisoned by the Japanese military. By 1943, American military leaders recognized the strategic importance of capturing Tinian to establish heavy bomber bases for the strategic bombing of the Japanese home islands. This objective was incorporated into Operation Forager, a massive undertaking involving 535 ships and 125,000 combat troops. Before the invasion could begin, the U.S. Navy neutralized the Japanese fleet in the decisive Battle of the Philippine Sea, famously known as the “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot,” where American pilots, submariners and gunners destroyed approximately 476 Japanese aircraft in two days.

Even with the Japanese fleet in shambles, Tinian still possessed formidable natural obstacles to a successful amphibious assault. The island was almost completely surrounded by cliffs ranging from six to 100 feet in height. Only one beach, near the main town in the southwestern part of the island, was large enough to support a full-scale landing. Two much smaller beaches in the north were judged too narrow to support a major invasion. The Japanese, once they belatedly realized the strategic vulnerability an American-held Tinian presented to their home islands, concentrated their defenses on the larger southern beach, fortifying it with mines and entrenched gun positions with interlocking fields of fire.

Following the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the Japanese on Tinian did not have to wait long for the expected invasion. The U.S. 4th Marine Division landed on Chulu Beach in Tinian’s northwest corner on July 24, 1944. Before the landing, the decision to use the northern beaches was the subject of

fraught controversy between the Marines and Navy. Vice Admiral Richmond Turner, in charge of the Forager invasion fleet, believed them too small to support the invasion force and flatly refused to land troops on them. Marine Lieutenant General Holland Smith, who led the ground element, characteristically retorted, “You’ll land any goddamned place I tell you to.” The Marines won and Smith ultimately was vindicated. By Aug. 1, the island had been declared secure. Admiral Raymond Spruance, 5th Fleet commander, described the invasion as “probably the most brilliantly conceived and executed amphibious operation of World War II.”

Even in the midst of the seven-day battle, Navy Seabees began developing Tinian for offensive operations. The island was roughly the shape and size of the island of Manhattan, so geographical place names were borrowed and streets were laid out similar to New York City’s grid. The former Japanese townsite near the southwestern end of the island became “the Village” after Greenwich. The two major roads which ran the length of the island were named Broadway and 8th Avenue. A large undeveloped area in the center was called Central Park.

The Seabees constructed two massive runway complexes with six 8,500-foot runways, creating the world’s busiest airfield by 1945. Between March and August 1945, daily bombing raids of more than 100 planes would be launched from the island. Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya and Yokohama would all be decimated by Tinian-based planes of the XXI Bomber Command. The greatest destruction, though, occurred on Aug. 6, 1945, when the B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay took off from Runway Able and dropped the first nuclear weapon used in combat on Hiroshima. Three days later, Bockscar, another B-29 bomber, would do the same to Nagasaki, killing a combined 200,000 people and bringing an end to the most devastating war ever waged.

Following Japan’s surrender, the military rapidly withdrew from Tinian, turning the island into a ghost town virtually overnight. In 1977, the Northern Mariana Islands approved a

constitution and established itself as a commonwealth in "political union" with the U.S. The federal government maintained control of the majority of Tinian's acreage via a lease agreement that made the land available for the military's use. These days, the single gas station on the island closes early on Sunday afternoons and only a handful of passengers pass through the cavernous, partially abandoned, airport terminal each day.

The bomb pit that held the "Little Boy" bomb before it was loaded onto the Enola Gay. *Photo credit: Nicholas Monck*

Lessons for Today

Even as it continues to be reclaimed by nature, Tinian still offers pertinent lessons to today's military leaders. A confrontation with the People's Republic of China, much like Japan 80 years ago, will require a complex system of forward bases to stage equipment and personnel. American military planners have noted "the Chinese concept of defending along a

first island chain and a second island chain is eerily reminiscent of Japan's defensive strategy in World War II."

The difficulty of defending remote forward bases across the Pacific remains as true today as 1941. Just as the Japanese Combined Fleet was able to launch a surprise attack against Pearl Harbor and capture Guam, the Philippines and Wake Island in World War II's opening days, China's DF-26 intermediate-range "Guam Killer" ballistic missile and DF-ZF hypersonic missile threaten United States bases in Guam, Japan and South Korea. With thousands of missiles and aircraft capable of targeting Guam, completely blocking a surprise attack has been described as "infeasible." In the days, hours or minutes before an attack, high-value assets will need to be dispersed to survive the initial barrage of missiles. Once again, Tinian may prove essential to control of the battlespace in the Western Pacific.

In his April 2023 remarks to the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral John Aquilino, then-commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, listed "distributed force posture" as his number one priority because it "supports all elements of the joint force, enables our ability to seamlessly operate with our allies and partners, and demonstrates U.S. commitment to a stable and peaceful security environment … a widespread and distributed force posture west of the IDL [International Date Line] gives us the ability to more easily exercise and operate with our partners, increases survivability, reduces risk and sustains the force with a network of stores, munitions, and fuel to support operations in a contested environment." Expanding the Department of Defense's footprint on Tinian is a core component of fulfilling that theater mission.

The successful landing on Tinian also demonstrated the importance of integrated Navy and Marine Corps operations that included land, air and even long-range ground artillery components. Eight decades ago, strong inter- as well as intra-service operational capabilities were necessary to defeat the

Japanese. These cooperative capabilities remain essential to the Department of Defense's ability to project power across the Pacific. A small Marine unit equipped with long-range anti-ship missiles placed on Tinian or another Mariana Island could control thousands of square miles of waterspace, denying the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army Navy the ability to conduct blue water operations in the Western Pacific.

Much like WWII began with Japan's attempt to decapitate the U.S. Pacific Fleet, the next battle for control of the Indo-Pacific may start with attacks on critical naval installations in Guam, Okinawa and Japan. Building dispersed, survivable infrastructure in places like Tinian will be decisive in preventing a first strike from eliminating the U.S. Navy's ability to effectively operate in the South China Sea, the Sea of Japan or the Philippine Sea. In Europe, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought a return to trench warfare not seen for over a century. In the Pacific, an island-hopping campaign, much like Admiral Chester Nimitz's, Admiral William Halsey's, and General Douglas MacArthur's during World War II, may be required to secure supply lines to regional partners and maintain forward bases during the next conflict. Once again, Tinian could be the linchpin to American control of the Western Pacific.

Today, Tinian is virtually abandoned and difficult to get to. A skeleton of its former self, trees sprout through the roof of the old Japanese Communication Building, visitors can drive on the weed-strewn Runway Able, and only the foundations remain of the Army hospital's vast wards. The island has become a living legacy to the millennia of people who have gone before us and a haunting reminder of the human and environmental impact of war. The lessons Tinian offers – of exploration, human endurance, and sacrifice – aren't just for history books, but continue to offer value to today's, and tomorrow's, Navy.

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Military Law at the United States Naval Academy. He has previously been stationed in Hawaii and Guam. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Naval Academy, the Department of the Navy, the Department of Defense or the U.S. government. This article previously appeared in the February-March issue of Seapower *magazine.*

CGC Forward interdicts suspected drug smugglers in Eastern Pacific Ocean

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Forward's Over-the-Horizon cutter boat approaches a Self-Propelled Semi-Submersible in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, February 24, 2026. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Southwest District, March 11, 2026

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – Coast Guard Cutter Forward (WMEC 911)

delivered a decisive blow to maritime criminal networks by intercepting a self-propelled semi-submersible (SPSS) vessel during a routine patrol on February 24 in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

A maritime patrol aircraft detected the vessel and reported the location to Forward watchstanders. Forward's crew rapidly deployed its over-the-horizon cutter pursuit boat and an embarked MH-65 aircraft from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) to intercept the suspicious vessel.

Despite repeated verbal commands issued by the boarding team, the SPSS failed to comply or stop their vessel. The boarding team successfully gained access to the vessel, secured positive control, and apprehended four suspected narco-terrorists. All personnel were safely evacuated to the cutter as the SPSS experienced flooding and subsequently sank.

SPSS vessels are commonly used by maritime criminal networks to transport large quantities of drugs in the Eastern Pacific. The Coast Guard routinely interdicts these vessels as part of ongoing counterdrug operations in the region.

"SPSS vessels are purpose-built to move large quantities of illicit, dangerous cargo," said Cmdr. Andrew Grantham, commanding officer of the Forward. "This interdiction of an SPSS of over 70 feet, prevented a potential 17,600 lbs of cocaine—more than 6 million lethal doses—from reaching U.S. shores. Stopping this vessel demonstrates the exceptional skill and dedication of the Forward crew, the HITRON, Joint Interagency Task Force South, and Coast Guard District Southwest at imposing significant costs on transnational crime organizations."

The Coast Guard is committed to deterring criminal activity and enhancing maritime security through disrupting illicit smuggling activity at sea before it can reach U.S. shores.

Coast Guard Cutter Forward is a 270-foot Famous-class medium-endurance cutter that conducts counterdrug, migrant interdictions and search and rescue missions throughout the Western Hemisphere. Link to provide more information on the Forward: **History**

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star completes Operation Deep Freeze 2026 mission, departs Antarctica

USCGC Polar Star escorts the motor vessel Stena Polaris, the largest fuel tanker ever to reach McMurdo Station, through the ice-covered Ross Sea during Operation Deep Freeze 2026, Jan. 21, 2026. Pacific Air Forces operates on a 24-hour basis to provide the U.S. National Science Foundation complete joint operational and logistic support for Operation Deep Freeze.

(U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Madelyn Greene)
From U.S. Coast Guard Northwest District, March 11, 2026

SOUTHERN OCEAN – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) departed McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, on March 1, after operating for 55 days below the Antarctic Circle and traveling 14,000 miles in support of Operation Deep Freeze 2026.

The cutter marked its 50th year of commissioned service on Jan. 17 **while breaking free a cruise ship trapped in pack ice** during a six-hour evolution. The Australian-owned cruise ship Scenic Eclipse II contacted the Polar Star for assistance after encountering denser ice than expected, roughly eight nautical miles from McMurdo Station. The Polar Star's crew conducted two close passes to break the vessel free, then escorted it approximately four nautical miles to open water.

A few days later, the Polar Star and its crew finished establishing a seven-mile channel through fast ice, **creating a navigable route for vessels to reach McMurdo Station**. Shortly after its establishment, the Polar Star escorted the 600-foot fuel tanker Stena Polaris into and out of Winter Quarter's Bay through the brash ice-filled channel to deliver more than 6 million gallons of fuel to McMurdo Station.

"I am so proud of how this crew, once again brought their best energy and worked together through every single challenge this year's mission presented," said Capt. Jeff Rasnake, commanding officer of the Polar Star. "Despite the heavy toll Operation Deep Freeze exacts on each individual, mentally and physically, our spirits remain high as we point our compass north and start our journey home."

In late January, the cutter spent five days moored at McMurdo Station, where crew members helped onload 300,000 gallons of

fuel.

After departing, the Polar Star removed the 4,200-ton floating ice pier from Winter Quarters Bay into McMurdo Sound during a joint operation with the National Science Foundation. This cleared the bay for the arriving vessel Plantijngracht to conduct cargo operations via a U.S. Army Modular Causeway System. Shifting ice floes necessitated the Plantijngracht requiring an escort from the Polar Star to reach the protected waters in Winter Quarters Bay.

After cargo operations were complete and the Plantijngracht departed, the Polar Star conducted its fifth and final escort of the season to bring the tug Rachel through lingering late-season pack ice to deliver the new NSF Discovery Pier to McMurdo Station.

"The delivery of the new NSF Discovery Pier is a landmark achievement that will significantly enhance the logistical support for the U.S. Antarctic Program for years to come," said Cmdr. Samuel Blase, the Polar Star's executive officer. "This multi-year effort culminated this year with the remarkable trek of the pier from Oregon to the McMurdo Sound, and teamwork between the Coast Guard, National Science Foundation, U.S. Navy Seabees, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the New Zealand Antarctic Program, and Tug Rachel for its installation."

The Polar Star departed Seattle in November for its 29th deployment to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze.

Operation Deep Freeze provides logistical support for the U.S. Antarctic Program, which is managed by the National Science Foundation. The mission includes strategic and tactical airlift, airdrop, aeromedical evacuation, search and rescue, sealift, seaport access, bulk fuel supply, cargo handling, and other transportation requirements. These efforts enable

continuous critical scientific research in one of the most remote regions on Earth.

The Polar Star and its crew also demonstrated its continued support to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) efforts by safeguarding resources and U.S. national interests through monitoring activity on the high seas in the Antarctic region.

The Polar Star is the United States' only surface asset capable of providing year-round access to both Polar Regions. It is a 399-foot heavy polar icebreaker commissioned in 1976, weighing 13,500 tons and is 84 feet wide with a 34-foot draft. The six diesel and three gas turbine engines produce up to 75,000 horsepower.

Navy Accepts Delivery of Ship to Shore Connector, LCAC 115

By Team Ships Public Affairs, March 11, 2026

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Navy accepted delivery of Ship to Shore Connector (SSC), Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) 115 from Textron Systems on March 10.

The delivery of LCAC 115 comes after completion of Acceptance Trials conducted by the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey, which tested the readiness and capability of the craft to effectively meet its requirements.

With delivery complete, the craft will transition for fleet integration, crew training, and certification in preparation

for operational employment.

LCAC 115 increases the Navy’s capacity to move personnel, vehicles, and equipment across contested littoral environments, directly supporting distributed maritime operations and global crisis response.

“LCAC 115 represents the continuation of Amphibious capability being delivered to the Fleet,” said Capt. Chris Causee, program manager, Amphibious Assault and Connectors Programs, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships. “Our focus is accelerating the transition from delivery to readiness for operational employment. Each additional connector strengthens the Navy-Marine Corps team’s ability to maneuver, sustain, and respond decisively in complex environments.”

The SSC program restores critical over the beach maneuver capability essential to amphibious operations. Textron Systems is in serial production for LCACs 116-129.

SSC retains the dimensions and well deck compatibility of the legacy LCAC while delivering capabilities with designs for improved reliability and maintainability. Fully compatible with well deck equipped amphibious ships, the craft carries a 60-to-75-ton payload and transports weapon systems, vehicles, cargo, and assault personnel across open ocean and over the beach.

As a Department of War acquisition program, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, and auxiliary ships, including special mission ships, sealift ships, and support ships.

Statement of USS Gerald R. Ford on Shipboard Fire

By Commander U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs | March 12, 2026

MANAMA, Bahrain – On March 12, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) experienced a fire that originated in the ship's main laundry spaces. The cause of the fire was not combat-related and is contained.

There is no damage to the ship’s propulsion plant, and the aircraft carrier remains fully operational.

Two Sailors are currently receiving medical treatment for non-life-threatening injuries and are in stable condition. Additional information will be provided when available.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group is currently operating in the Red Sea in support of Operation Epic Fury.

‘Let Foreign Yards Build U.S. Navy Auxiliary and Service Ships Now’

Military Sealift Command's newest fleet replenishment oiler, USNS Lucy Stone (T-AO 209), slides down the rails, and into the San Diego Bay, following its christening at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego in 2024. *Photo credit: Military Sealift Command Pacific | Sarah Cannon*

There is much current discussion about having foreign shipyards build U.S. Navy warships as a way to increase production and fleet numbers. That sounds good on paper, but if the target is combatant ships, then there will be significant challenges.

First, U.S. Code (10 USC 8679 of 1993 states, "no vessel to be constructed for any of the armed forces, and no major component of the hull or superstructure of any such vessel, may be constructed in a foreign shipyard," unless a presidential waiver in the interest of national security is granted. Even with such a waiver in hand, every nation builds ships to their own standards and reaching commonality, even among close allies, has been historically difficult. The recent Constellation-class frigate debacle exemplifies some of the difficulties that foreign shipbuilders have faced in getting a ship to the U.S. Navy standard, even when such ships are being constructed in the United States. And few if any recent foreign built surface combatants have been actually tested in combat.

Fortunately, there is a U.S. market where foreign shipbuilders can immediately have impact, and that is the long list of badly needed auxiliary and service vessels that the U.S. Navy has also neglected building over the last 40 years; to include tenders, repair ships, hospital vessels, icebreakers and command ships. Building these units will allow foreign shipbuilders to develop the necessary experience to later compete for other U.S. Navy designs but the challenges with combatant warships will persist.

National standards for warship construction vary, and even relatively close allies such as those in NATO have experienced

challenges in creating common warship designs. Several attempts have been made over the last 60 years to create a common frigate design which all NATO nations might embrace.

The first of these began with a 1968 working group to build a common antisubmarine warfare frigate for the alliance. There were numerous arguments, however, over what systems the NATO frigate would incorporate, and which nations would provide them. The proposed "Type 70" NATO frigate became eight different national designs, with Belgium, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, and the United States all pursuing different specifications. The 1990s saw another attempt to create a common NATO frigate, which also foundered on differing weapons outfitting and missions. Begun in January 1988, eight nations (U.S., U.K., Spain, France, Italy, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands,) again tried to combine their national frigate requirements. The United States dropped out early in the process, with the U.S. Surface Combatant Force Requirement Study stating there was no need for a new U.S. frigate design, leaving the FFG-7 Oliver Hazard Perry class to soldier on into the 2010s. The British, French and Italians formed the "Horizon" program that ultimately produced air defense destroyers rather than low-end frigates, with the British breaking off of the group to produce what ultimately became the Type 45 destroyer.

Learning Priorities and Concepts

Getting navies to agree on common components is hard, and even when one navy buys another navy's ship, with a supposedly agreed design, the results can still be mixed. In the early 1990s the U.S. purchased the Italian navy's Lerici-class coastal mine hunter design, which became the Osprey class in U.S. service. While there is anecdotal evidence the ship's Voith Schneider propeller system, a major change from the Italian parent design, was not well received by U.S. Navy Sailors and officers, the ships were built and commission as planned and served well until retired (with less than 10

years’ service in some cases) in the mid-2000s to make way for the planned mine warfare capabilities of the littoral combat ship.

The problems of the Constellation-class frigate, and its alleged 85% deviation from its Italian/French FREMM design, are well known and need not be belabored. The FREMM has been a very successful design for the Italian, French, Tunisian and Algerian navies, but the vast number of changes imposed on the design by the U.S. Navy hints at the very different idea of what elements of ship design characterize a U.S. frigate. U.S. Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) representatives would need to monitor every step of design and construction as they do for ships built in the United States. It would take time for each side (foreign shipbuilder and NAVSEA) to learn the other’s priorities and operating concepts. The practicalities of that level of oversight are likely to make current standards impossible to guarantee.

Classification would be another issue even with a presidential waiver to build overseas in hand. Will large numbers of foreign shipbuilders need U.S. background checks and/or security classification to work with a U.S. surface combatant build? If no, would large numbers of U.S. workers need to move to foreign yards, probably with appropriate language expertise to work within an unfamiliar foreign shipyard environment? Such special considerations would need advanced coordination before any shipbuilding takes place and are likely to involve increased costs. Overlay the complexities of Union acquiescence and the difficulties fall into sharper focus.

The habitual relationships developed during associations between U.S. shipbuilders and the U.S. Navy contribute to generally a smooth building organization, notably in mature U.S.-design aircraft carrier, submarine, destroyer and amphibious vessel building programs. Regardless of other shipbuilding challenges with the littoral combat ship and the Constellation-class frigate, U.S. warships have performed to

design in naval combat in the Red Sea and other parts of the globe.

While there has not been sustained, high end naval warfare since 1945, few navies other than the United States Navy have engaged in anything approaching World War II combat. U.S.-built ships such as the Perry-class frigates Stark and Samuel B. Roberts, and the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers Cole, Fitzgerald and John S. McCain, all suffered significant battle or collision damage and survived to be repaired and rejoin the active fleet. Expert U.S. Navy damage control provided by well-trained, brave, and resolute U.S. Navy Sailors contributed to the saving of all these ships, but so too did their robust construction and durability in operations. Any foreign-built, U.S. Navy combatants would need to equal these high standards. Could they?

Hybrid Methods

This is not to suggest foreign yards could not make contributions to U.S. warships. There are some hybrid methods through which vessels can be partially built in foreign shipyards and then moved incomplete to a U.S. naval or civilian shipyard for final outfitting of government-furnished equipment. Australia's Landing Ship, Helicopter Dock (LHD) Canberra class of two ships (Canberra and Adelaide) were built as a joint project between Navantia shipbuilding (Spain) and then-Tenix Defence (now part of BAE Systems) from 2007-2015. Navantia produced the hull of the ship and associated machinery up to the flight deck, while BAE systems completed what was termed the "Australianization" of the ships and its supply chain systems after the hulls were moved from Spain to Australia via heavy-lift vessel.

Sweden similarly had its new intelligence gathering ship HSwMS Artemis partially built in the Polish Nauta shipyard, but the vessel was delivered earlier than planned due to business issues within the Polish yard and finished by Sweden's only

naval yard operated by Saab Kockums, with assistance from Polish shipworkers working at the Swedish yard. While this was not the intended plan to complete the vessel, it is an example of primary construction by a foreign yard that was finished in the vessel's own flag state.

These examples illustrate the challenges of building combatant ships of any navy in a foreign shipyard. It's not "mission impossible," but there are enormous challenges to overcome before such construction can take place. In the meantime, the United States Navy has significant requirements for its long-neglected service fleet and combat logistics force that can be met by foreign shipyards. The U.S. has purchased logistics vessels from other nations in the past, and much of the construction of tenders, repair ships, hospital vessels, and command ships could, like the Australian LHD vessels, be built largely in foreign yards and then outfitted as U.S. or Military Sealift Command ships in U.S. shipyards. Those ship types are good starting points for foreign yards seeking U.S. navy – specifically Military Sealift Command – business.

USS Mustin to forward-deploy to Japan

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin (DDG 89) transits San Diego Bay past Point Loma, Feb. 23, 2026. The ship departed Naval Base San Diego and will forward deploy to Yokosuka, Japan, as part of a scheduled rotation of forces in the Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo by Mark D. Faram)
From Courtesy Story, March 11, 2026

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin (DDG 89) will forward deploy to Yokosuka, Japan, as part of a scheduled rotation of forces in the Pacific. This move will be a permanent change of station for the crew and family members.

Mustin will replace Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls (CG 62), which will depart Yokosuka and shift to San Diego.

The forward presence of Mustin supports the United States' commitment to the defense of Japan, enhances regional deterrence and ensures we maintain combat credible force ready to operate in a contested environment. Mustin will

directly support the Defense Strategic Guidance to posture the most capable units forward in the Indo-Pacific Region.

The United States values Japan’s efforts to strengthen its defense capabilities and its hospitality in hosting U.S. forces forward deployed there. The U.S.-Japan alliance is important to upholding deterrence and preserving peace in the Indo-Pacific region. These forward deployed forces, along with their counterparts in the Japan Self-Defense Forces, make up the core capabilities needed to improve coordination and upgrade the alliance for effective denial defense and joint warfighting.

The Department’s peace through strength approach is rooted in credible military power, forward-postured forces, and sustainable alliances deter aggression and preserve peace. By positioning the most capable ships forward, this posture rapidly brings our most capable ships with the greatest operational capability to bear in the event of a crisis.

Maintaining a forward deployed naval force capability with the most advanced ships supports the Department’s priority of preserving combat credible forces forward to deter aggression and ensure peace through strength in the Indo-Pacific region.

Navy Announces Commissioning of the Future USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr.

ATLANTIC OCEAN (July 15, 2025) – U.S. Marine Corps Col. (Ret) Harvey C. Barnum Jr. , a Medal of Honor recipient, poses for a photo during sea trials aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer Pre-Commissioning Unit Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124), July 15. The ship is named in honor of Barnum, who received the Medal of Honor for valor during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Navy Photo by Neil Boorjian)
From Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, 11 March 2026

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

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

On Dec. 18, 1965, then-1st Lt. Barnum assumed command of his company after the commander was mortally wounded. His actions

stabilized decimated units and ultimately led to a successful counterattack against key enemy positions. With two armed helicopters under his control, he moved fearlessly through enemy fire to lead air attacks against the enemy's well-entrenched positions while directing one platoon in a successful counterattack on the key enemy positions. Having cleared a small area, he requested and directed the landing of two transport helicopters to evacuate the deceased and wounded. He then assisted in the seizure of the battalion's objective. He is among the few living namesakes to witness the commissioning of his ship.

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

Following its commissioning, DDG 124 will be homeported at Naval Station Norfolk.

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

The commissioning ceremony will stream on the Defense Video Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) at www.dvidshub.net/webcast/37421. The live stream will begin at 9:50 a.m. EST, and the ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. EST on April 11.

The mission of Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSP) is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore. For more news from Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, visit https://www.surfpac.navy.mil/.

Civilians Warned to Avoid Ports Used by Iranian Forces

From U.S. Central Command, March 11, 2026

TAMPA, Fla. – On March 11, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) is issuing a warning to civilians that the Iranian regime is using civilian ports along the Strait of Hormuz to conduct military operations that threaten international shipping.

This dangerous action risks the lives of innocent people. Civilian ports used for military purposes lose protected status and become legitimate military targets under international law.

CENTCOM urges civilians in Iran to immediately avoid all port

facilities where Iranian naval forces are operating. Iranian dockworkers, administrative personnel, and commercial vessel crews should avoid Iranian naval vessels and military equipment.

Iranian naval forces have positioned military vessels and equipment within civilian ports serving commercial maritime traffic.

Although the U.S. military also cannot guarantee civilian safety in or near facilities used by the Iranian regime for military purposes, American forces will continue taking every feasible precaution to minimize harm to civilians.

Issued Warning Message:

U.S. forces urge civilians in Iran to immediately avoid all port facilities where Iranian naval forces are operating. Iranian dockworkers, administrative personnel, and commercial vessel crews should avoid Iranian naval vessels and military equipment. The Iranian regime is using civilian ports along the Strait of Hormuz to conduct military operations that threaten international shipping. This dangerous action risks the lives of innocent people. Civilian ports used for military purposes lose protected status and become legitimate military targets under international law.

U.S. Coast Guard Authenticates Keels for First

Three Waterways Commerce Cutters

A rendering of the future U.S. Coast Guard Waterways Commerce Cutters Allen Thiele, Fred Permenter, and Samuel Wilson. The new "Chief Petty Officer Class" cutters will honor the legacy of senior enlisted leaders and strengthen the Coast Guard's inland fleet capabilities. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy rendering Birdon Group)

From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard authenticated the keels for future Coast Guard cutters Allen Thiele, Fred Permenter and Samuel Wilson on Friday in Bayou La Batre, Alabama.

In a special proceeding, the keels for three cutters were authenticated simultaneously, a departure from the traditional single-vessel ceremony. Keel authentication is a time-honored maritime tradition in which the ship's sponsor welds their initials onto a ceremonial plate that is permanently affixed to the cutter, signifying the foundation of the vessel.

"Today marks a monumental step forward in the modernization of

our inland fleet," said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Phillip Waldron. "The new fleet has been designated the 'Chief Petty Officer's Class' and the crews onboard who carry out critical missions on behalf of the Nation will honor the legacy of the senior enlisted leaders whose names they bear."

The "Chief Petty Officer Class" designation for these cutters highlights the close involvement of the chief petty officer community, many of whom were in attendance.

All three cutter sponsors attended the ceremony. They are Delia Corbley, sponsor for future cutter Allen Thiele and daughter of the cutter's namesake; Kristin Permenter Melvin, sponsor for future cutter Fred Permenter and granddaughter of the cutter's namesake; and Barbara Wilson, sponsor for future cutter Samuel Wilson and widow of the cutter's namesake.

Master Chief Petty Officer Allen Thiele, a boatswain's mate, served in the Coast Guard from 1958 to 1990 and was selected as the fifth master chief petty officer of the Coast Guard.

Chief Petty Officer Fred Permenter, a boatswain's mate, was awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal in 1952 following the rescue of four of five crew members when St. George's Reef Light Station's motor launch capsized as it was lowered in heavy seas.

Chief Petty Officer Samuel Wilson, a boatswain's mate, was awarded the Coast Guard Medal of Extraordinary Heroism in 1979 during the rescue of 81 crew members from the Japanese Fishing Vessel Ryuyo Maru No.2 that ran aground on St. Paul Island, Alaska.

The cutters are the first three of 30 future WCCs that will replace the Coast Guard's legacy inland tender fleet, which will strengthen the Coast Guard's capabilities to facilitate commerce vital to economic prosperity, strategic mobility, and maritime dominance. The WCC fleet will will play

a critical role in controlling, securing, and defending America’s ports and waterways. and maintaining the United States’ 12,000-mile marine transportation system. This critical waterway network supports more than $5.4 trillion in annual economic activity and millions of American jobs.

Acquisition of the WCC fleet is supported by funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act – the largest single funding commitment in Coast Guard history – which included $162 million to accelerate production rates and deliver three cutters ahead of schedule. The first Waterways Commerce Cutter is expected to be completed in 2027.