

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro Hosts Maritime Industry Roundtable



WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro hosted maritime industry executives from major ship repair companies in the Pentagon, March 18.

The Secretary invited industry leaders to participate in a roundtable discussion focused on surface ship repair and modernization initiatives under the aegis of his efforts on [Maritime Statecraft](#).

Navy and Marine Corps leaders have expressed that repair process improvements are critical to meeting the needs of worldwide combatant commanders.

“The maritime industry is a strategic sector critical to our economic and national security,” said Secretary Del Toro. “As a collective force, our combined structure plays a vital role maintaining the open sea lines of communication that sustain the U.S. and world economy.”

The roundtable featured open and transparent dialogue between government and industry representatives covering issues including maintenance delay days, contract award timelines,

repair yard efficiencies, performance to plan initiatives, maritime training programs, and the impacts of a fiscally constrained environment.

Discussions further revolved around recent successes in surface ship maintenance and modernization, and collaboration on ideas for continued improvement.

For example, 41% of Chief of Naval Operations maintenance availabilities were completed on time in Fiscal Year 2023, up from 37% in FY22. The number of maintenance delay days decreased over the same period – 2,136 in FY23, down from 2,483 in FY22.

In addition to the Secretary, nearly one dozen government representatives attended the roundtable, including leaders across the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and MARAD.

“I launched the Government Shipbuilders Council in November 2023 with these types of discussions in mind – bringing in stakeholders from across the whole of government and fostering a robust dialogue with our partners in industry. This is what Maritime Statecraft is all about,” said the Secretary. “We’re all going to walk out of this room better informed and better able to make the strategic decisions required of each of us.”

March 18 Red Sea Update

SEAPOWERS

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USCENTCOM, March 18, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – On March 18, between [1:00](#) p.m. and [7:40](#) p.m. (Sanaa time) United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed seven anti-ship missiles, three unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and three weapons storage containers in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen in self-defense. It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region.

These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

USMC Conducts First F-35

Landing in Sweden During Exercise Nordic Response



A U.S. Marine Corps pilot lands an F-35B Lightning II jet with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 542, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), at Lulea, Sweden, March 13, 2024. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Orlanys Diaz Figueroa)

Captain Jacob Sugg USMC, Exercise Nordic Response Media Information Center

15 Mar 2024

LULEA, Sweden—Four U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 542, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, and a KC-130J Super Hercules with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 252, 2nd MAW, conducted distributed aviation operations during Exercise Nordic Response 24 at Kallax Air Base in Lulea, Sweden, March 13, 2024.

Exercise Nordic Response, formerly known as Cold Response, is a NATO training event conducted every two years to promote military competency in arctic environments and to foster interoperability between the Marine Corps and allied nations.

The event marked the first time a U.S. F-35 Lightning II jet aircraft landed in Sweden, the first time any F-35 operated at Kallax Air Base, and one of the first training events conducted by Sweden as a NATO member.

“We’re thrilled to welcome the first American F-35 landing here at Kallax air force base, and it’s an F-35B from the U.S. Marine Corps,” said Swedish Brig. Gen. Tommy Petersson, deputy commander of the Swedish Air Force. “For the U.S. Marine Corps of course, it’s a part of the agile combat employment portion in the framework of the exercise we’re conducting together right now, Nordic Response 24.”

The preplanned event provided an opportunity for U.S. Marine Corps aviation platforms to use a Swedish air base and host-nation support to conduct aviation-delivered ground refueling from a U.S. KC-130J Super Hercules to U.S. F-35B JSF aircraft.

“Of course, this is of vital interest for Sweden as a new ally in NATO to further develop our ability for host-nation support, for instance for American assets,” said Petersson.

Distributed aviation operations is a method of generating aviation combat power through the coordinated employment of aviation squadrons, command-and-control agencies, aviation logistics, and aviation ground-support units disaggregated across the battlefield that challenges adversary targeting efforts. The 2nd MAW concept of DAO distributes command and control of aviation forces across echelons of command, pushing authorities to the lowest levels, while keeping forces moving between airfields and air sites. It also integrates and builds interdependencies between the 2nd MAW and its allies and

partners.

“This is an opportunity to work with our Swedish partners to exercise distributed aviation operations,” said U.S. Maj. Gen. Scott Benedict, commanding general of 2nd MAW. “We were able to launch our aircraft into a NATO training strike package, recover them back here in Sweden, refuel them via expeditionary means out of a KC-130, and get them back in the air for another sortie. This is our means to be able to operate in an environment where we are protected because of our mobility.”

Both VMFA-542 and VMGR-252 deployed from their home base of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. VMFA-542 is the first East Coast operational F-35 squadron for the U.S. Marine Corps. Exercise Nordic Response 24 was VMFA-542’s first overseas exercise as an F-35B Lightning II jet squadron and since achieving initial operational capability on Feb. 5, 2024.

During the exercise, VMFA-542 employed its fifth-generation assets in a near-peer adversary training exercise while advancing and sustaining the squadron in core mission-essential tasks of anti-air warfare, active air defense, suppression-of-enemy air defense, and strike capabilities while progressing the squadron toward full operational capability. The squadron integrated with NATO allies across Northern Europe and with United Kingdom and Norwegian F-35 aircraft, showcasing the breadth and diversity of the Joint Strike Fighter program.

Throughout the exercise, VMGR-252 employed its KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft to support Marine Air-Ground Task Force objectives such as providing transportation of cargo, combat-assault transport, aerial refueling, and aviation-delivered ground refueling to both U.S. and allied aircraft. They conducted aviation operations from expeditionary shore-based sites and cold-weather conditions to achieve training

objectives and increase aircrew and loadmaster proficiencies.

Exercise Nordic Response 24 was a two-week exercise that brought together NATO allies and partners for a comprehensive demonstration of military prowess across land, maritime, and aviation domains. Against the backdrop of challenging arctic and mountainous conditions, participating military forces engaged in realistic force-on-force scenarios, showcasing their capabilities in both offensive and defensive operations.

“Our allies and partners have been living in this region for a long time, and they’ve developed similar capabilities themselves,” said Benedict. “As we partner with allies, it enables us to exercise what to do better and to learn from their experience operating here. We’re always better working together; opportunities to enable our concepts and operations alongside partners, while learning, gets the best of both worlds.”

Exercise Nordic Response 24 is a continuation of the record-breaking NATO exercise Steadfast Defender.

B-roll, imagery, and news stories of II MEF Marines participating in Exercise Nordic Response 24 can be found hyperlinked on [the Exercise Nordic Response DVIDS page](#).

Rite-Solutions Awarded \$60 Million NUWC Division Newport

IT Services Contract



MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (March 18, 2024) – Rite-Solutions was recently awarded a \$60.7 million, five-year contract to support NUWC’s Activity Chief Information Officer (ACIO)/Information Technology (IT) division, which is responsible for strategic planning, operations, maintenance, and compliance of the center’s IT systems and infrastructure.

The company will provide IT services in several areas including software engineering, system administration, cybersecurity, client support services/help desk, Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI) support, IT governance and application portfolio management support, and more.

“Cybersecurity touches every one of these areas,” notes Rocky Reeves, Rite-Solutions Sr Vice President and Director of IT Services. Over one-half of the personnel supporting this contract must meet the Navy’s strict Cybersecurity Workforce requirements. “This was a major reason Rite-Solutions won the contract. Many of our employees have degrees in cybersecurity or computer science as well as security and operating system certifications.”

“We are honored that NUWC chose to renew the contract with us,” says Rite-Solutions co-founder Joe Marino. “While we are rapidly expanding into new technologies that give the Navy an Information Advantage, IT services and security remain a

critical component of what we offer.”

The company is the prime contractor on the project and will work with subcontractors including SAIC, McLaughlin Research Corporation, Mikel, and others.

Rite-Solutions will support NUWC headquarters in Newport, R.I. as well as NUWC locations in Connecticut, Virginia, Florida, and the Bahamas.

SECNAV Announces General, Flag Officer Nominations

March 18, 2024

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced today that the president has made the following nomination:

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James F. Glynn for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific; and commanding general, Fleet Marine Forces Pacific. Glynn is currently serving as the deputy commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Quantico, Virginia.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Joseph B. Hornbuckle for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Hornbuckle is currently serving as commander, Fleet Readiness Centers, Naval Air Systems Command, Patuxent River, Maryland.

HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding Celebrates Apprentice Graduates



PASCAGOULA, Miss., March 16, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII's (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division hosted their apprentice graduation today, celebrating 99 graduates during a ceremony at the shipyard. Each of these apprentice graduates have invested time in the classroom and shipyard to prepare them for a shipbuilding career with the company.

Kari Wilkinson, president of Ingalls Shipbuilding, addressed the graduates providing words of encouragement for these new first-class shipbuilders.

"Each of our graduates has a role to play and an important job to get done on behalf of millions of Americans," Wilkinson said. "Together they form an elite and special team to do the work of the nation."

Enrollment for the apprentice program is competitive, and

students work full-time while learning a craft through classes and on-the-job training. The prestigious workforce development program has produced more than 4,000 graduates since its inception in 1952 and currently has 700 students enrolled in the program, the highest enrollment since prior to the pandemic.

Russel Sand Jr. received the 2023 Overall Apprentice of the Year Award, which recognizes the apprentice who has set a standard of excellence among their peers and has performed at the top of their class continuously.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-ingalls-shipbuilding-celebrates-apprentice-school-graduates-2024/>.

Sand has been with the company for four years and is currently a transportation rigger. When asked where his motivation came from to complete the four-year program, Sand said, "My fellow rigging apprentices were some of the best motivators, we all encouraged each other as we went through classes and rotated through crafts."

While in the apprentice program Sand learned about the various aspects of shipbuilding and gained a greater purpose for the work he does saying, "In a four-year span I have seen ships go from the keel to delivery, and it gives you a sense of accomplishment. Our purpose is to build some of the finest warships in the world, and I am proud of my decision to become an Ingalls shipbuilder."

The apprentice program offers a comprehensive three- to four-year curriculum with 15 registered Department of Labor apprentice programs for students to pursue. Apprentices earn competitive wages and receive a comprehensive benefit package upon entering the program. This allows apprentices to receive an education, build work ethic, gain experience and develop into world-class journeymen of their crafts.

For more information about Ingalls Shipbuilding's apprentice school visit <https://hii.com/careers/ingalls-apprentice-school/>.

March 15-16 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM

March 16, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – On March 16, between 7:50 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthis launched two unmanned Aerial vehicles (UAV) from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the Red Sea. United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces successfully engaged and destroyed one UAV and the other is presumed to have crashed into the Red Sea. There were no reports of damage or injuries from ships in the vicinity.

Between 9:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. (Sanaa time), CENTCOM destroyed five unmanned surface vessels and one UAV in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen in self-defense. It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

March 15, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between approximately 8:30 and 10:50 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 15, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired three anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition, or commercial ships.

Navy Narrows Fiscal 2025 Aircraft Procurement to Five Types



PHILIPPINE SEA (Jan. 29, 2024) An F-35C Lightning II from the “Warhawks” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 97 prepares to recover on the flight deck of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Isaiah B. Goessl)
By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Department of the Navy is proposing to procure 75 aircraft with \$16.2 billion in the fiscal 2025 budget, but those 75 are divided among only five types.

The 2025 budget proposed funding 13 F-35B Lightning II strike fighters for the Marine Corps; 13 F-35C carrier-based variants for the Navy and Marine Corps; 19 CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters for the Marine Corps, 27 T-54 multi-engine training aircraft for the Navy, and three MQ-25A Stingray unmanned aerial refueling aircraft for the Navy.

The budget is noteworthy in that the 2025 procurement funding of such types as the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters, EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye radar warning aircraft, MH-60R/S helicopters, MV-22B and CMV-22B Osprey transport aircraft, AH-1Z Viper and UH-1Y Venom helicopters, P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, MQ-4C Triton and MQ-9A Reaper unmanned surveillance aircraft, and TH-73A Thrasher training helicopters – barring adjustment by the Congress – has been completed, although in some cases deliveries are ongoing. In some cases, the production lines will remain open for some time, building aircraft for foreign customers and which could resume production for the Navy and Marine Corps if needed.

The only new types on the five-year horizon are a replacement for the T-45 Goshawk training jet and a replacement for the E-6B Mercury strategic communications aircraft, planned to be a version of the C-130J Super Hercules.

Procurement of the KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport for the Marine Corps is being gapped for four years, with one planned for fiscal 2029. The fact that C-130Js are in production for other services and nations means that this gap does not have major implications for the Lockheed Martin production line.

The 2025 Future Years Defense Plan lists planned Department of the Navy procurement for 2026 through 2029 as 58, 67, 77, and 90 aircraft, respectively.

Noteworthy is – as of this writing – that the fiscal 2024

defense budget still is mired in the Congress.

Austin Nominated for Deputy Commandant for CD&I

ARLINGTON, Va.—Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced March 14 that the president has made the following nomination:

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Eric E. Austin for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, with assignment as deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; and commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command. Austin is currently serving as the commanding general, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Camp Foster, Okinawa, Japan.

ArmorWorks Enterprises Announces Acquisition of Fox Valley Metal-Tech

CHANDLER, AZ, March 14, 2024 – [ArmorWorks Enterprises](#), LLC (“ArmorWorks”), a portfolio company of Littlejohn Capital, LLC, announced today the acquisition of Fox Valley Metal-Tech, Incorporated (“Fox Valley”), a provider of complex, precision metal fabrications for use on naval ships, submarines, combat

vessels, and other critical defense applications.

Founded in 1989 and based in Green Bay, WI, Fox Valley specializes in complex metal fabrications primarily for the U.S. Department of Defense (“DoD”), as well as commercial industries. The company manufactures custom electrical enclosures and consoles, components and fabrications for military trailers, radar systems as well as watertight doors and hatches. Fox Valley actively supports leading defense industry companies, and its precision components and fabrications are incorporated on the latest naval platforms such as the Ford-class aircraft carrier and Columbia-class submarine, amongst others. The company has a state-of-the-art 185,000 square foot facility that enables it to meet the highest of quality standards. For more information, visit www.fvmt.com.

Kevin Dahlin, Chief Executive Officer of ArmorWorks, commented, “Fox Valley’s components meet the Navy’s stringent requirements, and combine unique fabrication, machining, precision welding, and painting/finishing capabilities to provide customers with a vertically-integrated manufacturing solution in compliance with the highest U.S. military standards. Fox Valley’s fabrications are trusted on high priority naval programs amid a historical fleet expansion, and we look forward to supplementing our existing business with the addition of Fox Valley’s superior products.”

Angus Littlejohn III, President of Littlejohn Capital, said, “Fox Valley’s focus on mission-critical Naval systems instantly propels ArmorWorks into a broader segment of the DoD. The acquisition also adds impressive manufacturing capabilities in the Midwest expanding the geographic reach of ArmorWorks. Fox Valley is a trusted partner to the defense industry, and we are proud to add this company as an integral part of ArmorWorks as they continue to protect the military personnel who defend our country.”

Steve Corbeille, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Fox Valley, added, "Fox Valley has built its business and reputation over the past 25 years by developing products whose standards are designed to withstand the harshest conditions. Fox Valley will continue to thrive and better serve its customers as part of a larger organization within ArmorWorks."

KAL Capital served as exclusive financial advisor to Fox Valley.