

Navy Announces Flag Officer Assignments



ARLINGTON, Va. – The secretary of the Navy and chief of naval operations announced on Dec. 18, 2023, the following assignments:

Rear Adm. (lower half) Amy N. Bauernschmidt is assigned as deputy commander, Seventh Fleet, Yokosuka, Japan.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Walter D. Brafford is assigned as commander, Naval Medical Forces Support Command, with additional duties as Chief of the Dental Corps, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Thomas J. Dickinson is assigned as commander, Naval Surface Warfare Center/Commander, Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Thomas A. Donovan is assigned as deputy director, Global Operations, J39, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Frederic C. Goldhammer is assigned as

deputy director for Political-Military Affairs (Asia), J5, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Robert J. Hawkins is assigned as deputy assistant director, Operations, Strategy, and Education and Training, Defense Health Agency, with additional duties as Chief of the Navy Nurse Corps, Falls Church, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Joshua Himes is assigned as vice director for Intelligence, J-2, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Ian L. Johnson is assigned as commander, Navy Region Southeast, Jacksonville, Florida.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Neil A. Koprowski is assigned as commander, Navy Region Korea; commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea; and commander, Naval Component, U.S. Forces Korea, United Nations Command, Korea, Pusan, Korea.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Paul J. Lanzilotta is assigned as director, Fleet Integrated Readiness and Analysis, N02R, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Joshua Lasky is assigned as deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces, U.S. Central Command; and deputy commander Fifth Fleet, Manama, Bahrain.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Donald W. Marks is assigned as commander, Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center, San Diego, California.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Craig T. Mattingly is assigned as commander, Naval Service Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Andrew T. Miller is assigned as commander, Undersea Warfighting Development Center, Groton, Connecticut.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Kurtis A. Mole is assigned as deputy

commander, Tenth Fleet, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Lincoln M. Reifsteck is assigned as program manager, AUKUS, Integration and Acquisition, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Frank G. Schlereth III is assigned as senior defense official/Defense Attaché – Israel, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Thomas E. Shultz is assigned as deputy director, Policy, Plans, Strategy, Capabilities and Resources (J-5/8), U.S. European Command, Stuttgart, Germany.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Kevin R. Smith is assigned as program executive officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael T. Spencer is assigned as commander, Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center, Fallon, Nevada.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Julie M. Treanor is assigned as deputy chief of staff for Fleet Ordnance and Supply/Fleet Supply Officer, N41, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Todd S. Weeks is assigned as program executive officer, Undersea Warfare Systems, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Todd E. Whalen is assigned as president, Board of Inspection and Survey, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Dianna Wolfson is assigned as fleet maintenance officer, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Forrest O. Young is assigned as director, Operations and Plans, N3, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) John E. Byington is assigned as deputy commander, Navy Space Command, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Jeffrey A. Jurgemeyer is assigned as reserve vice commander, U.S. Naval Forces, U.S. Central Command, Fifth Fleet, Manama, Bahrain.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Richard S. Lofgren is assigned as reserve vice commander, U.S. Fourth Fleet, Mayport, Florida.

Rear Adm. (lower half) David E. Ludwa is assigned as reserve deputy for Fleet Readiness and Logistics, N4R, U.S. Naval Forces Europe/U.S. Naval Forces Africa, Naples, Italy.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael S. Mattis is assigned as commander, Task Force 66 (TF 66); and director, Strategic Effects, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe/U.S. Naval Forces, Africa Naples, Italy.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Richard W. Meyer is assigned as deputy commander, Third Fleet, San Diego, California.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Peter K. Muschinske is assigned as deputy chief of chaplains for Total Force; and deputy director of Religious Ministries, N097C, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) John A. Robinson III is assigned as vice chief of information, Washington, D.C.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Bryon T. Smith is assigned as reserve vice commander, Second Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Michael R. Vanpoots is assigned as deputy/reserve deputy commander, Submarine Force Atlantic, Norfolk, Virginia.

Rear Adm. (lower half) Marc F. Williams is assigned as deputy commander, Navy Closure Task Force – Red Hill, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Bollinger Shipyards Delivers First Bollinger-Built Berthing and Messing Barge to U.S. Navy



Release from Bollinger Shipyards

PASCAGOULA, Miss., – (December 18, 2023) – Last week, Bollinger Shipyards (“Bollinger”) delivered the first Bollinger-built Auxiliary Personnel Lighter–Small (APL(S))

Class berthing and messing barge (APL 71) to the U.S. Navy. APL 71 is the 5th vessel of its class to be delivered to the Navy and the 3rd to be homeported in Norfolk, Virginia.

“We are honored to be entrusted to build the APL berthing and messing barge for the U.S. Navy,” said Ben Bordelon, President and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. “I’m proud of the hard work and dedication of our team at Bollinger and our continued commitment to delivering high-quality, reliable vessels that meet the Navy’s rigorous standards and improve the quality of life for our sailors. We look forward to continuing to grow our partnership with the Navy and delivering this critical asset to support our national defense.”

The previous four APLs were built and delivered by VT Halter Marine, which Bollinger acquired in late 2022. Halter received the initial contract in 2018. APLs are used by the Navy to house crewmembers when ships are in port for availabilities and Inter-Deployment Training Cycles. The barges are mobile and can be towed to new bases or shipyards to support changing fleet requirements and also offer potential use for humanitarian missions and other temporary assignments.

APLs are 269 feet long, 69 feet wide and have a draft of 7 feet. Each vessel is equipped with offices, classrooms, washrooms, laundry facilities, medical treatment areas, a barber shop and fitness center. With mess seating for 224 enlisted personnel and 28 officers, each meal is served via five 20-minute shifts to allow food service for 1,130 personnel (three meals per day). The vessels are fitted with mixed gender berthing spaces for 74 officers and 537 enlisted personnel, for a total of 611 people.

Naval Surface Force Establishes Surface Readiness Group in San Diego



[Release from Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet](#)

[By Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet](#)

14 December 2023

SAN DIEGO – Naval Surface Forces established Naval Surface Readiness Group (SURFGRU) Southwest at Naval Base San Diego Dec. 14.

The ceremony marked the formal establishment of SURFGRU Southwest, which joins Surface Readiness Groups previously

established in Japan, Hawaii, Norfolk and Mayport. SURFGRUs will ultimately operate from each fleet concentration area with a mission focus on force generation and preparing more, ready ships for on-time maintenance execution.

“The establishment of Surface Readiness Groups is ultimately about the readiness of our force and achieving our North Star objective of 75 mission capable ships,” said Rear Admiral Yvette Davids, Acting Commander, Naval Surface Forces. “These commands will help prepare the Surface Force for the high-end fight.”

The North Star goal is an objective set by the Naval Surface Force to have 75 mission-capable ships available on any given day.

The establishment of SURFGRU Southwest, and each of the SURFGRUs in fleet concentration areas, provides a single accountable commander with a team of readiness and training experts that focus on force generation in support of operational commanders.

“This investment is for our ships to become more ready and more lethal,” said Capt. Gil Clark, inaugural commander of Naval Surface Group Southwest. “That lethality comes from the readiness we will generate—readiness allowing our ships to answer any call our nation and our leaders require.”

SURFGRUs will play an integral role in achieving North Star 75 goal by spearheading maintenance for ships on the waterfront during their workups. This force generation focus by SURFGRUs will enable destroyer and amphibious squadrons to focus more on operations and tactics. This delineation of responsibility will ultimately provide more effective workup phases for ships, resulting in better prepared Sailors and units for future deployments.

The mission of CNSP is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.

For more news from Naval Surface Forces, visit www.Surfpac.Navy.Mil/ and www.Dvidshub.Net/Unit/COMNAVSURFPAC.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Seizes Illegal Narcotics in Gulf of Oman



[Release from U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs](#)

By U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs | December 15, 2023

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard ship seized illegal drugs worth over \$6 million from a fishing vessel in the Gulf of Oman, Dec. 12.

Crewmembers from the Sentinel-class fast response cutter USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144) observed individuals on a fishing vessel throw seven bales of material over the side. The material was discovered to be 174 kilograms of heroin.

Glen Harris arrived in the Middle East region last year and operates from Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

The fast response cutter is part of a contingent of U.S. Coast Guard ships forward-deployed to the region under Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA). PATFORSWA deploys Coast Guard personnel and ships alongside U.S. and regional naval forces throughout the Middle East.

Keel Authenticated for Future USS George M. Neal

Release from Naval Sea Systems Command

Dec. 15, 2023

By Team Ships Public Affairs

The keel for the future USS George M. Neal (DDG 131), a Flight III Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, was ceremonially laid at

HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division, December 15.

The ship is named for the late Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class George M. Neal, who was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic actions during the Korean War. As a volunteer crewman on a helicopter mission, Neal flew deep into the North Korean mountains to attempt the rescue of a Marine aviator. After his rescue helicopter was disabled and crashed, he assisted his helicopter's pilot and rescued Marine aviator in evading enemy forces for nine days before being captured and held as a prisoner of war.

The contemporary keel laying ceremony represents the joining together of a ship's major modular components at the land level and is a significant milestone in the production of a ship. The keel is authenticated with the ship sponsors' initials etched into a ceremonial keel plate that is later incorporated into the ship. Kelley Grey, the daughter of Aviation Machinist's Mate Third Class Neal, participated in the ceremony.

"The late George M. Neal inspired his fellow servicemen, and we are honored to have his daughter with us as we marked this important milestone in the life of the ship, " said Capt. Seth Miller, DDG 51-class program manager, Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships. "The future USS George M. Neal will provide our Sailors with the latest air and missile defense capability."

The DDG 51 Flight III upgrade centers on the AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar and incorporates upgrades to the electrical power and cooling capacity plus additional associated changes to provide greatly enhanced warfighting capability to the fleet. Flight III is the latest Flight upgrade in the more than 30-year history of the class, building on the proud legacy of Flight I, II and IIA ships before it.

Ingalls Shipbuilding division is also in production on future

destroyers USS Ted Stevens (DDG 128), USS Jeremiah Denton (DDG 129), USS Sam Nunn (DDG 133), and USS Thad Cochran (DDG 135).

As one of the Defense Department's largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships, sealift ships, support ships, boats and craft.

The Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System in Naval Support Facility Redzikowo, Poland, Transfers Ownership from Missile Defense Agency to the U.S. Navy

Release from U.S. Naval Forces Europe/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs

Dec. 15, 2023

By U.S. Naval Forces Europe/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs

NAPLES, Italy – The Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System (AAMDS) located in Redzikowo, Poland, will be accepted by the U.S. Navy on Dec. 15, 2023, where AAMDS will enter a planned maintenance period to upgrade the network and computer systems. Once finalized, AAMDS Poland will be a fully integrated and tested element of the U.S. Ballistic Missile

Defense System, and made ready to operate under NATO command and control. The official transfer to NATO is scheduled to occur spring to summer of 2024.

The acceptance of the Aegis Ashore site in Poland, like its sister site in Romania, is an important step in our efforts to get AAMDS ready to protect against the growing threat posed by ballistic missiles launched from Iran. The addition of this site in Poland will help provide enhanced coverage and expand protection for all NATO European populations, territories and forces against potential threats to the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Aegis Ashore is defensive in nature and designed to shoot down threats posed to U.S. forward deployed forces, or the security of our European allies. The defensive focus of Aegis Ashore is confirmed in the U.S. commitments to NATO and standing NATO policy.

Aegis Ashore in NSF Redzikowo is a critical part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). EPAA protects European Allies and partners against ballistic missile threats emanating from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. EPAA integrates the missile defense systems of forward deployed U.S. Navy destroyers in Rota, Spain with the Aegis capabilities at NSF Deveselu, Romania and, once fully operational, AAMDS Poland at NSF Redzikowo to provide comprehensive ballistic missile defense across Europe.

NSF Redzikowo is a tangible demonstration of the U.S. commitment to collective security in Europe. Poland is a vital ally, partner, and friend of the United States. Our alliance is based on shared values, including democratic governance, free markets, and individual liberty. Security is a fundamental pillar of the U.S.-Poland bilateral relationship.

For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with our Allies and Partners, leveraging a foundation of shared

values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and USAFRICOM areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

SECDEF Announces Nominations for Marine Corps Reserve Generals

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced Dec. 15, 2023, that the president has made the following nominations:

Marine Corps Reserve Brig. Gen. Douglas K. Clark for appointment to the grade of major general. Clark is currently serving as commanding general, 4th Marine Division, U.S. Marine Forces Reserve, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Marine Corps Reserve Brig. Gen. Sean N. Day for appointment to the grade of major general. Day is currently serving as mobilization assistant to the deputy commander, U.S. Space Command, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Marine Corps Reserve Col. Thomas M. Armas for appointment to the grade of brigadier general. Armas is currently serving as deputy director, Reserve Affairs, Reserve Affairs Division, Manpower & Reserve Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps,

Quantico, Virginia.

Marine Corps Reserve Col Daniel B. Taylor for appointment to the grade of brigadier general. Taylor is currently serving as liaison officer to the commander, Third Fleet, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, California.

Marine Corps Reserve Col. Patrick F. Tiernan for appointment to the grade of brigadier general. Tiernan is currently serving as assistant wing commander, 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, U.S. Marine Forces Reserve, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Marine Corps Col. William T. Wilburn Jr. for appointment to the grade of brigadier general. Wilburn is currently serving as director of Plans and Strategy, Joint Task Force – ARES, Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command, Fort Meade, Maryland.

**NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE
ENHANCES ALLIED DEFENSE WITH
ROMANIAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS
FORCES**



[Release from U.S. Fleet Forces Command](#)

[BY LT. J.G. MARTIN CAREY](#)

13 December 2023

CONTANTA, Romania – East-Coast based Naval Special Warfare Operators (SEALs) and the 164th Romanian Naval Special Operations Forces (ROUSOF) conducted training on maritime interdiction operations, special reconnaissance, and special operations tactics to enhance allied defense throughout the European region. The joint effort was conducted November 4-17, and enhanced maritime expertise and strengthened the capacity to respond to maritime crises in the Black Sea region.

“Our partnership with the Romanian Naval Special Operations Forces is in direct alignment with the U.S. National Defense Strategy’s emphasis on strengthening alliances and partnerships. Together, we prepare for the challenges posed by

the unique operational environment here as we work in tandem to preserve security during this critical time,” said Maj. Gen. Steven G. Edwards, Commander of Special Operations Command Europe.

During the evolution, SEALs and ROUSOF conducted a multitude of interoperability and training iterations including close quarters combat techniques, urban patrol movements, breacher training and integrated visit, board, search and seizure tactics. The ability for U.S. and NATO special operations forces to integrate seamlessly across multiple operating areas further refines their capabilities to deploy in support of real-world operations in the area.

“Working alongside our allied Romanian special operators provides us the ability to further enhance our capabilities in order to meet operational demands,” said the senior Naval Special Warfare Operator on site. “These opportunities are not only invaluable for the SEALs, but also the numerous support personnel who enable us to complete our mission in a joint environment.”

In the spirit of solidarity and shared commitment to regional security, the collaboration between SEALs and ROUSOF serves as a testament to the vital importance of international partnerships within the European Command Area of Responsibility. Strengthening alliances through joint training initiatives bolsters the capabilities of both nations’ special operations forces and underscores the collective dedication to preserve peace and security in the Black Sea region.

The 164th Romanian Naval Special Operations Forces are a highly specialized unit of the Romanian Navy who conduct direct action missions, special reconnaissance, and maritime operations to safeguard the interests of Romania and promote regional security.

Naval Special Warfare Group TWO produces, supports, and deploys the world's premier maritime special operations forces to conduct full-spectrum operations and integrated deterrence in support of U.S. national objectives. For more information, visit <https://www.nsw.navy.mil/>

Coast Guard Cutter Diligence returns to Pensacola after interdicting \$20.3 million in illicit drugs, six smugglers



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

Dec. 14, 2023

PENSACOLA, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Diligence (WMEC 616) returned to homeport in Pensacola on Thursday after a 52-day counterdrug patrol in the Caribbean Sea.

During the patrol, Diligence's crew worked in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South) within the Coast Guard Seventh District's area of responsibility to interdict and deter the smuggling of illicit narcotics. Diligence's crew disrupted approximately 700 kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of over \$20.3 million dollars and apprehended six suspected smugglers.

Diligence also conducted a joint training exercise with the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). During the exercise, the Diligence crew and pilots from SOAR completed daytime and nighttime helicopter landing evolutions. This exercise strengthened the interoperability of the Coast Guard and the U.S. Army.

"Stopping the flow of drugs to the United States is a challenging mission that requires a significant amount of teamwork," said Cmdr. Nolan Cain, Diligence's commanding officer. "The Diligence crew had the opportunity to work alongside our Department of Defense and international partners in this unified effort. The dedication and hard work of the Diligence crew and our partners is incredibly inspiring."

Detecting and interdicting illegal drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. JIATF-South in Key West, Florida, conducts detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension process. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard

under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

Diligence is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter with 78 crewmembers. The cutter's primary missions are counterdrug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcing federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.goCoastGuard.com) to learn about active duty, reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane arrives at new homeport in Pearl Harbor



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area](#)

Dec. 13, 2023

HONOLULU – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) and crew arrived at its new homeport at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Wednesday, after transiting more than 8,000 nautical miles over 36-days from Portsmouth, Virginia.

The Harriet Lane is U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area's newest Indo-Pacific support cutter and spent more than 15 months in a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) in Baltimore, Maryland, to prepare for the transition in missions and operations. Following reconstitution of the crew in July and returning to Portsmouth in August, the crew went through an extensive dockside period, ensuring the cutter was ready for the transit from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

“Re-homeporting U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane is indicative of the Coast Guard's commitment to the Indo-Pacific

– the most dynamic region in the world,” said Rear Admiral Brendan McPherson, deputy commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area. “Harriet Lane will work by, with, and through allies and partners within the Indo-Pacific region to promote capacity building and model good maritime governance.”

“The crew and I look forward to building partnerships in Oceania to enhance our capabilities, strengthen maritime governance and security while promoting individual sovereignty,” said Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero, commanding officer of the Harriet Lane. “We plan to build upon many decades of enduring support, operating in concert with the needs of our partners.”

Harriet Lane and crew departed Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, November 2023, and during the transit, the crew conducted trainings for upcoming operations along with professional development for crewmembers. Harriet Lane transited through the Panama Canal, and had port calls in Golfito, Costa Rica and San Diego.

Harriet Lane, commissioned in 1984, is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter now homeported in Honolulu to support Coast Guard missions in the Pacific region. The service’s medium endurance cutter fleet supports a variety of Coast Guard missions including search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment.