

Strike Groups with Fifth-Generation Fighters Demonstrate Interoperability, Interchangeability



Ships from four nations take part in large scale formation sailing. On Aug. 24, the ships of the United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group, led by the Royal Navy flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth, met with the USS America, USS New Orleans, JS Ise and JS Asahi. Working with ships from the US Navy and the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force, a close formation was formed and on completion the Japanese ships broke away to conduct a ceremonial sail past. *ROYAL NAVY / Dan Rosenbaum*

A multinational task force is operating together as part of Large Scale Global Exercise 2021 (LSGE 21) in the Pacific.

The U.K. Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG 21) and U.S. Expeditionary Strike Group 7 (ESG 7) are conducting multinational advanced aviation operations as part of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's LSGE 21.

According to Lt. Cmdr. Sherrie Flippin, spokesperson for ESG 7, "LSGE is a Joint Staff-sponsored exercise intended to rehearse the integration of defense activities in the Indo-Pacific Region. LSGE 21 is the first iteration of this event, involving the coordination of operations, activities, and investments in support of large-scale operational maneuvers.

"Currently, both HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group and USS America Expeditionary Strike Group are conducting multinational advanced aviation operations to further enhance proficiency and capability to respond to shared challenges in the region."

LSGE 21 commenced Aug. 2 and is taking place throughout the

Indo-Pacific region. It will run until the end of this week.

Royal Navy Commodore Steve Moorhouse commands Carrier Strike Group 21 and is embarked aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08). Rear Adm. Chris Engdahl is in command of ESG 7 and is aboard his flagship, USS America (LHA 6). They spoke to a small group of reporters by phone while they were underway on Tuesday.

HMS Queen Elizabeth leads the U.K.'s Carrier Strike Group and is operating a mixed air group of F-35Bs, with a squadron of U.K. jets and a squadron from the U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211 (VMFA 211), and is escorted by surface combatant escorts from the U.S. Navy, Dutch Navy and Royal Navy – HMS Defender (D36), USS The Sullivans (DDG 68), HMS Kent (F 78) and HNLMS Evertsen (F805).

“HMS Queen Elizabeth is the largest warship has ever built for the Royal Navy, and she was designed from the keel up to operate the F-35B aircraft,” said Moorhouse. “We have our own 617 Squadron of Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel, as well as a U.S. Marine Corps Squadron. When we talk about a fifth-generation aircraft, we now have ourselves a fifth-generation aircraft carrier. This is the largest force of fifth-generation aircraft to put to sea anywhere in the world.”

For LSGE 21, both strike groups have been contending with a multi-domain tactical scenario, from undersea to surface and air, as well as cyber and space, and to include the Marines going ashore and operation on land.

The USS America Expeditionary Strike Group (AMA ESG) is carrying Sailors and Marines from 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit with aviation support from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 262 (Reinforced), and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 12 (VMFA 12), along with staff members from Expeditionary Strike Group 7, Amphibious Squadron 11, and Destroyer Squadron

7, Tactical Air Control Squadron 12, Fleet Surgical Team 7 and an embarked helicopter detachment from Helicopter Sea-Combat Control Squadron 25. Also part of the ESG is USS New Orleans with personnel from Naval Beach Unit 7, Fleet Surgical Team 7, and additional personnel from the 31st MEU.

“For years we have operated with partners, and we’ve been able to talk and communicate. But what we’re really trying to do here is take it to the next level of integrating. Our Dutch and American warship are absolutely integral to our strike group operations,” Moorehouse said. “But as we operate with the America strike group, our aircraft – both fixed and rotary – have been flying and operating from each other’s deck seamlessly.”

“We extended the range of our fifth-generation fighters by moving them from one aircraft carrier to another. We recovered, rearmed, refueled and relaunched those planes to continue the mission,” Engdahl added.

Helping to sustain the task force at sea are the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries RFA Fort Victoria and RFA Tidespring. Furthermore, USS America is optimized for aviation operations and does not have a well deck for LCACs (landing craft air cushion) or LCUs (landing craft-utility) with amphibious vehicles inside.

“One of her attributes is the capacity for significantly more fuel than other amphibious ships – literally millions of gallons of fuel – which means she can supply fuel to the other ships in company,” Engdahl said.

Engdahl said LSGE 21 provided great practice to enhance the tactical abilities of the crews of the ships and the aviation units embark.

“It reflects the strength of our alliance, our partnerships, the ongoing military relationship. And the relationship that

we have is really bolstered by the interchangeability of the platforms that we employ.”

BAE Systems Unveils World's Smallest M-Code Military GPS Receiver

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa – Aug. 25, 2021 – BAE Systems Inc. unveiled its ultra-small MicroGRAM-M global positioning system (GPS) receiver compatible with next-generation M-Code military GPS signals that are resistant to jamming and spoofing, the company said in an Aug. 25 release. About the size of a postage stamp, MicroGRAM-M is the world's smallest, lightest, and most power-efficient M-Code embedded GPS receiver – delivering assured positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) for size-constrained and other micro-applications.

“We’re delivering reliable PNT where our customers need it – from soldiers’ handheld devices to small unmanned aerial vehicles,” said Greg Wild, director of Navigation and Sensor Systems at BAE Systems. “MicroGRAM-M provides our armed forces and allies with a low-SWAP M-Code GPS solution that’s resistant to adversaries’ disruption efforts in highly contested environments.”

MicroGRAM-M features rapid secure GPS signal acquisition, enhanced security and resiliency, anti-jamming and anti-spoofing capabilities, and the industry's lowest power consumption for an M-Code device. The 1.0” x 1.25” x 0.275” MicroGRAM-M has the same physical dimensions as its predecessor, enabling quick upgradability to M-Code and reduced system integration costs. At its core is a proven,

tamper-proof M-Code Common GPS Module that encapsulates classified data and signal processing.

“MicroGRAM-M is the latest BAE Systems M-Code military GPS product, joining MPE-M and NavStrike-M, which deliver enhanced awareness in highly contested environments and precision munitions guidance,” said John Watkins, vice president and general manager of Precision Strike & Sensing Solutions at BAE Systems. “Qualification of MicroGRAM-M is underway, with full-rate production expected in 2022.”

HII Technical Solutions Division Announces New Business Groups

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) announced on Aug. 25 new business groups within its Technical Solutions division, on the heels of the successful acquisition of Alion Science and Technology.

The new business groups include:

- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) – This group designs, develops, integrates and manages sensors, systems, and other assets to support ISR operations, exploitation and analysis.
- Live, Virtual and Constructive (LVC) Solutions – This group designs, develops and operates enterprise tactical training systems to ensure full coordination and readiness.
- Cyber and Electronic Warfare (EW) – This group provides full spectrum cyber, big data architectures, analytics

and cloud migration; EW and foreign material exploitation.

- Fleet Sustainment – This group is responsible for full-spectrum sustainment, including hull, mechanical and electrical and C5ISR maintenance, modernization, and integrated product support.

The Unmanned Systems and Nuclear and Environmental Services business groups are unchanged.

Coast Guard, Partner Agencies Continue to Support Haiti



A U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook Helicopter crew chief assists a partner rescue agency crew with the delivery of food and medical supplies in Haiti, Aug. 23, 2021. The Coast Guard and partner agencies conducted humanitarian efforts in impacted areas of Haiti following a magnitude 7.2 earthquake, Aug. 14, 2021. *COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan Estrada*
MIAMI – The Coast Guard, USAID, U.S. Southern Command and Joint Task Force-Haiti continue to have unity of effort and respond to critically injured Haitian citizens, Aug. 24, by transporting them to a higher level of care in Port au Prince, Haiti, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Aug. 25 release.

“The Coast Guard immediately responded to the government of Haiti’s request for assistance following the tragic 7.2 magnitude earthquake just over a week ago,” said Coast Guard 7th District Commander, Rear Adm. Brendan C. McPherson. “Since then, the U.S. Coast Guard saved or assisted more than 350 lives and transported more than 350 medical personnel and

first responders to the areas most damaged. As the USAID-led, DOD-supported mission transitions to an extended humanitarian assistance and disaster response operation, we will begin to transition our people and aircraft to best support Joint Task Force-Haiti while meeting our other mission demands in the region. We will continue to provide agile and versatile search and rescue capability if needed. Alongside U.S. Embassy Haiti, we remain a proud partner in our whole of government approach to help the people of Haiti.”

In the past 24 hours, Coast Guard men and women deployed to Haiti have flown 14 evolutions, saved three people, assisted three others, transported four urban disaster and relief personnel and transported 1,800 pounds of disaster and relief supplies.

Since Aug. 15, Coast Guard men and women have flown 227 evolutions, saved 219 people, assisted 145 people, transported 362 urban disaster and relief personnel and transported 13,400 pounds of disaster and relief supplies.

NAVCENT Stands Up Task Force Supporting Afghanistan Evacuation



U.S. Navy personnel construct a tent in a hanger in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations for use during efforts to support the safe transit of U.S. citizens and evacuees from Afghanistan. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Andy A. Anderson*

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY BAHRAIN – A U.S. Naval Forces Central

Command (NAVCENT) task force established Aug. 19 is temporarily assisting the safe evacuation of personnel from Afghanistan, the command said in an Aug. 24 release.

More than 700 U.S. military personnel stood up Task Force 58 from units operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet region. U.S. Sailors, Marines, Soldiers and Airmen are working alongside their U.S. Embassy and Bahraini counterparts to temporarily facilitate the safe departure of U.S. citizens and evacuees from Afghanistan through Bahrain.

"We are extremely grateful for the Kingdom of Bahrain's critical efforts and assistance in the safe transit of U.S. citizens and evacuees from Afghanistan," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of NAVCENT, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "We deeply value our enduring bilateral relationship."

International military staff from the Combined Maritime Forces are also contributing to efforts that include providing travelers meals, short-term lodging and medical services before departing for the United States.

"Every organization is contributing," said Cooper. "The entire team is stepping up and doing phenomenal work during a challenging time. I could not be prouder."

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses nearly 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The region is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab-al-Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

Pentagon: FDA Vaccine Approval Opens Way for Mandatory Military Vaccinations



U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Orbie VanCurine, a native of Mansfield, Texas, with Combat Logistics Battalion 22 (CLB-22), prepares a COVID-19 vaccine during the opening of the state-run, federally supported Center City Community Vaccination Center at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia on March 3, 2021. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / 1st Lt. Kevin Stapleton / Combat Logistics Battalion 22*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine paves the way for the Defense Department to require all military personnel to be vaccinated against the coronavirus strain, officials say.

Because the three available anti-COVID vaccines were only approved for human application by the FDA under an emergency use authorization (EUA), no one – including members of the military – could be compelled to get vaccinated. More than 73% of active duty personnel had received at least one shot of the vaccines by mid-August. However, thousands more service men and women declined to roll up their sleeves for inoculation.

"Now that the Pfizer vaccine has been approved, the department is prepared to issue updated guidance requiring all service members to be vaccinated," Pentagon Press Secretary John F. Kirby told reporters Aug. 23. He said a timeline for completing vaccination of the total force would be provided in coming days.

"We're going to move forward, making that vaccine mandatory,"

Kirby said. "We're preparing guidance to the force right now. In other words, how we want to see it get done. We're working through that right now."

Kirby noted Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced Aug. 9 that with the increasing spread of more lethal COVID variants, he intended to mandate vaccination as soon as the FDA licensed one of the three available anti-COVID vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson. If none received FDA licensure by mid-September, Austin said he would seek a waiver from President Joe Biden to make vaccination mandatory for the military, which Biden indicated he would grant.

In announcing FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 16 years of age and older, acting FDA Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock said, "the public can be very confident that this vaccine meets the high standards of safety and effectiveness, and manufacturing quality the FDA requires of an approved product."

For service members with religious objections to receiving the vaccine, exemptions are governed by the individual military services' regulations, Kirby said Aug. 10, adding there are provisions for medical exemptions to mandatory vaccination, including pre-existing medical conditions.

Meanwhile, the number of COVID-19-related deaths among uniformed personnel has climbed to 34 as of Aug. 18, including the first death in the Marine Corps.

Sgt. Edmar J. Ismael died on Aug. 14 in Seattle due to complications related to COVID-19. Ismael, 27, a native of Alaska, was an electrician assigned to Support Platoon, Engineer Support Company, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force, according to a Marine Corps statement.

Across the uniformed services there has been a total of 222,138 cases of COVID-19, resulting in 1,998 service members

requiring hospitalization while 211,034 have recovered.

USS Billings and USNS Burlington Support Haiti Relief



An MH-60R Seahawk helicopter, assigned “Easyriders” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 37 delivers cargo to the Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport USNS Burlington (T-EPF-10) Dec. 10, 2020. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Maria G. Llanos*
CARIBBEAN SEA – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Billings (LCS 15) and USNS Burlington (T-EPF-10), a spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport ship, operated by Military Sealift Command are supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations off the coast Haiti, Aug. 22, the U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet said in an Aug. 23 release.

Both ships are supporting U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) following a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on Aug. 14, 2021.

“As the maritime component for this mission, we are on scene ready to provide whatever support we can to USAID,” said Capt. Peter Ehlers, Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC). “Our ships, aircraft, and personnel are ready to provide relief to the people of Haiti.”

Burlington is utilizing its ScanEagle unmanned aerial system

to obtain aerial images of the destruction on the ground which helps relief planners determine where supplies are needed, what airfields can be used, and what roadways are accessible.

Both Burlington and Billings, along with her embarked MH-60S Seahawk assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28, will be prepared for any additional tasking such as afloat refueling from U.S. Southern Command Joint Task Force-Haiti, commanded by Navy Rear Adm. Keith Davids, which was stood up to coordinate military support.

They join other U.S. Southern Command components and U.S. Coast Guard ships already on station, in addition to allies and partners from the Netherlands, France, and United Kingdom.

USS Billings and USNS Burlington have been to deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations to support Joint Interagency Task Force South's mission, which includes counter-illicit drug trafficking missions in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

Joint Force Command Norfolk,

U.S. 2nd Fleet Change of Command



Vice Adm. Daniel Dwyer reads his orders during his change of command ceremony aboard the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) Aug. 20. Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis was relieved by Vice Adm. Daniel Dwyer as Commander, Joint Force Command Norfolk, Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, and Director, Combined Joint operations from the Sea – Centre of Excellence. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Kris R. Lindstrom*

NORFOLK, Va. – Joint Force Command Norfolk and U.S. 2nd Fleet held a change of command ceremony aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), Aug. 20, the fleet said in an Aug. 22 release.

Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis was relieved by Vice Adm. Daniel Dwyer as commander, Joint Force Command Norfolk, commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, and director, Combined Joint Operations from the Sea – Centre of Excellence (CJOS-COE).

“Today’s ceremony marks a changing tide. So often in life a beginning or ending of an era goes unmarked, and it is not until much later that we can look back and say ‘that is where it all began,’ or, ‘that is when things changed,’” Lewis said. “I cannot overstate the amount of work that goes into building two commands of this nature. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people have supported both 2nd fleet and Joint Force Command Norfolk since establishment, and a ‘thank you’ is truly not enough.”

On Sept. 30, 2011, after 65 years of faithful service to the U.S. Navy, 2nd Fleet was disestablished until then-Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. John Richardson, formally reestablished the command during an official ceremony on Aug 24, 2018. Lewis, a native of Los Altos, California, served as the first

commander of the re-established 2nd Fleet, and was later named the commander of the newly established NATO command, JFC Norfolk.

Prior to assuming the responsibilities of 2nd Fleet and JFC Norfolk, Dwyer's previous assignment was the director of plans and policy at U.S. Cyber Command at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland.

"Under the exceptional leadership of Adm. Lewis, JFC Norfolk and 2nd Fleet have become the commands that our nation and alliance both wanted and needed," said Dwyer. "During this era of strategic competition, it is evident that the Atlantic and Arctic play a critical role in reinforcing common maritime norms, providing for economic freedom for North America and Europe, and for the ultimate goal of continued peace."

Adm. Christopher Grady, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, exercises operational authority over 2nd Fleet and CJOS COE, and was a guest speaker and presiding officer during the ceremony.

"Provided only one year to operationalize a fleet battle staff capable of conducting sustained major combat operations in the Atlantic and High North, and with only 11 officers and four enlisted personnel at the start, Vice Adm. Lewis' deft leadership and tireless efforts resulted in Second Fleet achieving initial operating capability in just nine months," Grady said. "And true to his vision, he designed a fully integrated team that is lean, agile, and lethal in all domains and across the spectrum of conflict."

Gen. Tod Wolters, the commander of U.S. European Command and NATO's Supreme Allied Command Europe exercises operational authority over JFC Norfolk, and also spoke and presided during the ceremony.

"Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis comprehensively led his force and found a way to make this organization better through his sheer

willingness and will power,” said Wolters. “He found a way to take his component of JFC Norfolk and mesh it with all the components of NATO organizations and other commands to make them quicker, smarter and faster.”

JFC Norfolk provides a critical capability to NATO, providing for fuller situational awareness to the SACEUR based in Belgium. The command mission is to secure the strategic lines of communication between North America and Europe.

Second Fleet exercises operational authorities over assigned ships, aircraft, and landing forces on the East Coast and throughout the Atlantic.

CJOS COE is a maritime focused NATO-accredited military think tanks established in May 2006 and with 13 member nations represented on the staff. CJOS is the only center of excellence in the U.S., and one of 25 NATO centers worldwide, whose collective wealth of international experience, expertise and best practices helps to improve alliance readiness for the future.

Del Toro Taps Berger to Perform Duties of the Undersecretary of the Navy



Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. Kathleen H. Hicks swears in Meredith Berger as the assistant secretary of the Navy at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., Aug. 5, 2021. *DOD / U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jack Sanders*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro

selected Meredith Berger to perform the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy effective Aug. 25, the Navy announced in an Aug. 23 release.

Berger who is currently serving as the assistant secretary of the Navy for energy, installations and environment, will relieve James F. Geurts, who will retire Aug. 28 after 34 years of government service.

"The Department of the Navy has been strengthened by the wisdom and leadership generated by Mr. Geurts," said Del Toro. "I value his commitment to our personnel in uniform, his service to our great nation and his teamwork and communication amongst the personnel in this building. I know that Ms. Berger will carry on this strong tradition of collaboration as she performs the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy."

Geurts served for 22 years in a variety of acquisition positions, focused on engineering and program management while on active duty in the Air Force. Afterwards, he served as the U.S. Special Operations Command acquisition executive before joining the department in December 2017 as the assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition. He was selected to perform the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy in February 2021.

"It's been an honor serving the Sailors, Marines and their families," said Geurts. "I have great confidence that the Department of the Navy team is well positioned to take on the many challenges they will face in the uncertain future."

Berger holds a bachelor of arts in American Studies and Spanish from Vanderbilt University, a juris doctor from Nova Southeastern University and a master's degree in public administration from the Harvard Kennedy School. She has served in various positions in state and federal government to include the Florida Department of Financial

Services, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Defense. Berger served as the deputy chief of staff to the secretary of the navy from 2014 to 2017.

“I am driven by the mission of supporting the department’s nearly one million Sailors, Marines, and civilians who do the brave work of defending our nation,” Berger said. “Ensuring they have the resources necessary to tackle current and future challenges, improve warfighting, and build resiliency and readiness is my top priority.”

US, Singapore Reaffirm LCS, P-8 Rotational Deployments



Vice President Kamala Harris is greeted by Cmdr. Brandon Cornes, commanding officer, aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Tulsa (LCS 16), Aug. 23, 2021 in Singapore. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Richard Cho*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The United States and Singapore have reaffirmed a strong military partnership that includes continuing rotational deployments of U.S. naval units to Singapore, the White House said.

Singapore, an island nation at the tip of the Malay peninsula in the South China Sea, hosts a U.S. naval logistics presence at a base in Changi, one that has hosted the first rotational deployments of the U.S. Navy’s littoral combat ships. The location’s importance to regional security has increased with the development in recent years of Chinese bases built in atolls in the South China Sea.

In an Aug. 23 statement, the White House announced cooperation with Singapore on a number of issues, including military partnership.

“Singapore provides critical access for U.S. military units deployed to the region, hosting nearly 1,000 service members, civilians, and dependents which support port visits and sorties transiting the country’s military airfields – while Singapore has the second largest military presence in the United States of any foreign partner, with 1,000 Singapore military personnel and dependents stationed across the country,” the statement noted.

“The United States and Singapore remain deeply committed to working together to uphold regional peace, security, and stability,” the statement said. “The United States and Singapore reached agreements that reaffirm the strength of our bilateral Strategic Partnership, the critical importance of our security relationship, and the U.S. enduring commitment to maintaining a robust presence in Southeast Asia, including through rotational deployments of U.S. P-8 aircraft and littoral combat ships to Singapore.”