

Vice Admiral: U.S. Navy Seeks 100-USV Fleet Patrolling Middle East Waterways by Next Summer



Saildrone Explorer unmanned surface vessels (USV) operate with the guided-missile cruiser USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), the Royal Navy Sandown-class minehunter HMS Bangor (M109), HMS Chiddingfold (M37) and the U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class cutter USCGC Robert Goldman (WPC 1142) in the Arabian Gulf during exercise Phantom Scope. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Roland Franklin*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy hopes to have a fleet of 100 unmanned service vessels (USVs) patrolling the waterways of the Middle East region by the summer of 2023, said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, during a media roundtable on Oct. 12.

Cooper said that he estimates about 20% of those USVs to be controlled by the United States, and the remaining 80% to be controlled by countries in the region.

This fleet of USVs will “map the pattern of life that’s happening around them” throughout the region,” he said. When this network spots something different in the pattern, they’ll take pictures and alert a U.S. Navy command center where a human being can make a decision about how to use that information.

This is enabled by the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which allows the Navy to monitor the thousands of ships that are underway in the region at any given time – something human beings could not do on their own, Cooper said.

“We can use manned ships much more efficiently, much more effectively,” he said.

Cooper said he has seen a growth in the practicality of USVs and AI to enhance the Navy’s control over the region.

“There’s no single navy alone that can patrol [the waters around the Arabian peninsula],” he said. “We all know the criticality of the waters to the greater flow of commerce throughout the region, and so we think the best way to cover that and expand maritime domain awareness is ... [by] using unmanned sensors through the theater along with AI.”

Cooper also noted that U.S. Naval Forces Central Command has been engaged in other activities in the region, calling the two most important initiatives “accelerating innovation” – which involved the aforementioned USV efforts – but also “strengthening partnerships.”

He pointed to initiatives by the Navy such as the Combined Maritime Forces and the International Maritime Security Construct, which are consortiums that gather nations in the region to cooperate with the Navy in achieving the sea

service's objectives. He also brought up the IMX exercise, an 18-day biennial naval training event led by the command that took place earlier this year and drew participation from dozens of countries.

"We lead two of the largest coalition task forces in the world – each of them will grow in membership and partnership," Cooper said, noting that in 2021 the command did 33 exercises with countries in the region and will double that figure by the end of this year.

U.S., Federated States of Micronesia Sign Expanded Shiprider Agreement



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam Commander Capt.

Nicholas R. Simmons and the Honorable Jose R. Gallen, Secretary of Justice, Federated States of Micronesia, signed an expanded shiprider agreement allowing remote coordination of authorities, the first of its kind aboard the USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) in Guam, on Oct. 13, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir*

SANTA RITA, Guam – To overcome complex challenges to maritime enforcement in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), a nation with over six hundred islands, representatives of the United States and the FSM signed a remote shiprider agreement on Oct. 13, 2022, during a Joint Committee Meeting hosted by Joint Region Marianas.

Through remote coordination, this agreement, the first of its kind, will enable the U.S. to act on behalf of the country to combat illicit maritime activity when an FSM law enforcement officer is not present. More specifically, the agreement provides a coordinating mechanism and process for U.S. law enforcement personnel to work with the FSM National Police through command centers to receive approval from the FSM to act.

Shiprider agreements allow maritime law enforcement officers to observe, board and search vessels suspected of violating laws or regulations within a designated exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or on the high seas. These law enforcement activities bolster maritime law enforcement operations and maritime domain awareness and provide a mechanism to conduct integrated operations within the Pacific.

“We’re thrilled to cooperate with our Federated States of Micronesia partners on this initiative that will reap benefits for FSM’s economic, environmental and national security in the maritime domain,” said Alissa Bibb, chargé d’affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Kolonia.

The dynamic nature of detecting, deterring and suppressing illegal activity in the Pacific, like fisheries offenses and illicit maritime drug trafficking, requires creative and

collaborative solutions. This agreement builds on the enduring partnership and long-standing shiprider agreement between the two nations by providing a new framework to conduct maritime operations and relies on the professionalism and expertise of U.S. and FSM maritime law enforcement officers.

The U.S. Coast Guard regularly exercises 13 bilateral fisheries law enforcement agreements with countries throughout the Pacific islands. These agreements enable U.S. Coast Guard personnel and U. S. Navy vessels with embarked U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement personnel to work with host nations to protect critical regional resources. Shiprider efforts greatly enhance host-nation sovereignty by enabling Pacific Island Nation partners to enforce their laws and regulations using U.S. assets.

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains strong partnerships with the maritime forces in the region through extensive training and subject matter expert exchanges. FSM, also known as the Big Ocean State, has one of the world's largest EEZs, with waters rich in sea life. FSM consists of four states – Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae – each with a mix of unique peoples, languages and cultures. FSM is a signatory to a Compact of Free Association with the United States. They are also a Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association member and a party to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty.

“This historic agreement significantly strengthens presence and enforcement options to counter illicit maritime activity in the region. It is only made possible by the deep and abiding relationships and respect between the Coast Guard and our FSM partners,” said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia. “FSM has the 14th largest EEZ in the world and only two patrol boats. Our crews spend ample time within the region but getting a shiprider aboard our vessels can be a real logistical challenge. This agreement dramatically increases the capacity of available resources to act on FSM’s behalf to protect their living marine resources

and sovereignty. We appreciate their continued trust and confidence as we work together.”

The USCGC Oliver Henry (WPC 1140) hosted Chargé d'affaires Bibb and her team aboard in Pohnpei in September. They met with several key officials, and members of the cutter's engineering team conducted a subject matter exchange with the crew of FSS Palikir, the last active Pacific-class patrol boat, on shipboard repairs and assisting with preventative maintenance.

In May, USCGC Myrtle Hazard (WPC 1139) made a contactless crew rest and re-fueling stop in FSM during their expeditionary patrol across Oceania. In December 2021, USCGC Sequoia (WLB 215), working alongside the Navy's Underwater Construction Team Two (UCT-2), conducted operations to widen the channel at Kapingamarangi Atoll. U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam also provides search and rescue support to FSM, with several successful cases in the last year, resulting in ten lives saved.

The shiprider program supports regional coordination and aligns with the National Security Strategy, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command efforts, and the U.S. Coast Guard's Operation Blue Pacific. The bilateral agreements enacted in the Pacific are the bedrock of regional maritime law enforcement partnership. They convey the United States' ongoing investment in protecting shared resources and interest in maritime safety and security, including fair and reciprocal trade, while standing against a current of aggressive and coercive influence in the region.

The U.S. is devoted to ensuring greater unity and a free and open Indo-Pacific for all nations who observe the rule of law. The U.S. Coast Guard continues to demonstrate our enduring presence in the Pacific and help facilitate increased regional stability, security and resilience for U.S. partners.

Construction of New Maritime Center at Coast Guard Academy Nearly Complete



U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, one of two senators for Connecticut, speaks at the commissioning ceremony of the Maritime Center of Excellence, Oct. 12. The 20,000 square-foot Maritime Center of Excellence (MCOE) will be the Academy's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified building and will highlight the unique waterfront programs there. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Abban*

NEW LONDON, Conn. – A \$25 million construction project is nearing completion at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy that will transform the waterfront area of the 90-year-old campus, the Academy said in an Oct. 12 release.

A ceremony and reception acknowledging the milestone was held at the center Oct. 12 with construction company representatives, cadets and alumni eager to tour the nearly completed project.

The 20,000 square-foot Maritime Center of Excellence (MCOE) will be the Academy's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified building and will highlight the unique waterfront programs there.

With a curvilinear vaulted roof, wooden decks and true north orientation, the building is designed to highlight the waterfront landscape. The new facility will feature interactive and high-tech classrooms designed to encourage collaboration.

The modern design of the center also includes ambitious sustainability design goals in line with coordinated climate resiliency efforts across the service to address the dangers posed by climate change.

The interior spaces of the future center have been designed with access to daylight and natural ventilation to minimize reliance on artificial lighting and air conditioning. Double-height spaces for vessel maintenance, office space and an atrium will provide natural ventilation.

Other sustainability goals include the exploration of ground-source heating and cooling, solar panels and rainwater harvesting. The building exterior will also feature durable, resilient materials that are easily maintained.

The completion of the center represents a significant step forward as the Academy works to recapitalize 1930's infrastructure and build modern training and education spaces to develop the future Coast Guard workforce.

"This LEED-certified, multi-purpose facility will be a space where young women and men can gather to learn and grow," said

Rear Adm. Bill Kelly, academy superintendent. “I am certain it will enhance an appreciation for the water and all its power and beauty, and ultimately play an important role in helping us instill a liking for the sea and its lore.”

Coast Guard Cutter Northland Diverted to Patrol Near Port-au-Prince, Haiti



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Northland (WMEC 904) patrols with the Haitian Coast Guard in vicinity of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Oct. 12, 2022. The U.S. Coast Guard is one part of a whole-of-government approach to assist the Haitian government with security and stability throughout Haiti through the deterrence and prevention of dangerous, irregular maritime migration.

U.S. COAST GUARD / Seaman Rachelle Amezcua-Gonzales

MIAMI – The Coast Guard diverted one of its major cutters to patrol near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, at the request of the government of Haiti and in close coordination with the U.S. State Department, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Oct. 12 release.

USCGC Northland (WMEC 904) was diverted to Haiti as a clear sign of U.S. resolve in support of the Government of Haiti and its people, and to rendezvous with the Haitian Coast Guard for training in the area.

Northland was previously patrolling within the Windward Pass under the direction of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami, in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry, a standing maritime law enforcement operation.

"The U.S. Government has a vested interest in regional security throughout the Caribbean Sea and is aware of the ongoing situation of civil unrest and gang violence within Haiti," said Rear Adm. Brendan C. McPherson, commander of the Seventh Coast Guard District. "The Coast Guard is one part of a whole-of-government approach to assist the Haitian government with security and stability throughout Haiti, especially as it relates to the deterrence and prevention of dangerous, irregular maritime migration."

The Coast Guard has a longstanding relationship with the Haitian Coast Guard. In January 2010, USCGC Forward (WMEC 911), a 270-foot Famous-class medium-endurance cutter, was the first U.S. asset to respond and render humanitarian aid and assistance following a 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Haiti. In August 2021, the Coast Guard was among the first U.S. agencies to respond with humanitarian aid following a 7.2-magnitude earthquake in Haiti.

In August 2022, USCGC Robert Yered (WPC 1104), a 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter, delivered firefighting

equipment sourced as a donation from Miami-Dade Fire Rescue to better equip the Haitian firefighting department at Port-au-Prince-Toussaint Louverture International Airport. In September 2022, the Coast Guard's international training team visited Haiti to facilitate the second of two iterations of small boat operations training with the Haitian Coast Guard to ensure uniform and repeatable training standards for the maintenance and safe operation of the Haitian Coast Guard's surface fleet.

The Coast Guard continues to patrol the Caribbean Sea to deter undocumented migration by sea. In fiscal year 2022, the Coast Guard interdicted 7,173 Haitian migrants attempting to enter the United States illegally by sea.

Northland is a 270-foot Famous-class medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia. Northland's missions include law enforcement, search and rescue, drug interdiction, fisheries enforcement, migrant interdiction, homeland security and defense operations, international training, and humanitarian operations. Northland patrols the offshore waters from Maine to Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

Kaman Selected to Build Cargo UAS Prototype for Marine Corps



The Marine Corps' first two Kaman K-MAX Helicopters arrived at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., Saturday, May 7, 2016. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Pfc. George Melendez*

BLOOMFIELD, Conn. – Kaman Air Vehicles, a division of Kaman Corporation, has been selected to build a logistics UAS prototype for the United States Marine Corps, the company said in an Oct. 10 release. Kaman will build a funded military version of its KARGO UAV, a purpose-built autonomous medium-lift logistics vehicle. KARGO UAV carries up to 800 pounds of payload and is designed to operate in austere environments.

The Marine Corps project is being managed by NAVAIR PMA-263 under the Medium Unmanned Logistics Systems – Air (MULS-A) program. Once the prototype is constructed, KARGO UAV will complete a Field User Capability Assessment conducted in an operationally relevant test environment.

Kaman began development of its KARGO UAV last year and flew a scaled demonstrator in Fall 2021 to prove out the concept. A full-scale demonstrator is under construction, with first flight scheduled for later this year. Near Earth Autonomy, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was selected as the autonomy provider on KARGO UAV, and parallel testing is ongoing for the

autonomy systems that will be employed on the Marine Corps prototype.

“We have been tracking the need for expeditionary logistics for some time,” said Carroll Lane, president of Kaman’s Precision Products segment. “And we are thrilled to see our focused R&D efforts to provide an affordable, reliable and maintainable logistics vehicle come into alignment with such an important program as MULS-A.” Lane stressed that KARGO UAV development for the U.S. Marines would remain a priority for the foreseeable future.

Built with the Marines’ future operating concept in mind, KARGO UAV offers rugged design optimized for expeditionary employment. Compact form-factor of the system fits in a standard CONEX shipping container and is designed to be unloaded and operated by as few as two people.

USS Billings (Gold Crew) Returns Home After 4th Fleet Deployment



The Freedom-variant littoral combat ships USS Wichita (LCS 13), left, USS Billings (LCS 15), and an MH-60s Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28, Detachment 6, participate in a photo exercise in the Caribbean Sea, Sept. 10, 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mineman 2nd Class Justin Hovarter*

MAYPORT, Fla. – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Billings (LCS 15) Gold Crew returned to Mayport, Fla., Oct. 7th, following its second successful deployment to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations, the fleet’s public affairs office said in an Oct. 8 release.

Billings, along with the “Valkyrie” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28, Detachment 8, deployed in April 2022 to support Joint Interagency Task Force South’s counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean. The USS Billings (LCS 15) conducted the first east coast littoral combat ship overseas (OCONUS) exchange of command and has operated forward-deployed since December 2021.

During the deployment, Billings, with her embarked U.S. Coast

Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET), assisted in disrupting an estimated 3,065 kilograms of cocaine along with 1,841 pounds of marijuana worth an estimated street value of \$217.7 million and removed twelve suspected drug traffickers from the narcotics trade.

“I am once again incredibly proud of the Sailors on Billings for everything they accomplished this deployment,” said Cmdr. Brett Seeley, Billings’ commanding officer. “They professionally sailed the mighty Billings from the Atlantic into the Pacific Ocean and crossed the equator for the first time in the ship’s history. The crew built upon the successes of her maiden deployment a year ago and succeeded at working with our partner nations strengthening our interoperability and taking narcotics off the streets. We look forward to watching our sister crew continue the sustained operations downrange as the mighty Billings leads the way for the littoral combat ship community.”

Billings conducted bilateral maritime exercises with Jamaica and participated in the French led multi-national maritime humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR) exercise CARAIBES 2022 to strengthen partnerships and build interoperability among forces.

During a port visit to Ocho Rios, Jamaica, the ship hosted the U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica, the honorable Noah Nickolas “Nick” Perry along with senior members of the Jamaican Defence Force to showcase the capabilities of the USS Billings (LCS 15) and discuss the continued partnership and commitment shared between our two countries.

“Billings’ Gold Crew Sailors again showed superior performance in countering malign activities and conducting theater security cooperation,” said Rear Adm. Jim Aiken, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “They continued to build onto the firm foundation of demonstrating forward-

deployed operations and maintenance, and met U.S. Southern Command objectives for the region.”

The Billings’ Blue Crew has relieved the Gold Crew and the Billings will remain deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations.

U.S. Coast Guard, U.K. Ships Seize \$93 Million in Drugs in Middle East



Personnel from U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter USCGC

Glen Harris (WPC 1144) inventory illicit drugs seized from a fishing vessel in international waters in the Gulf of Oman, Oct. 10. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard fast response cutter seized an estimated \$48 million worth of drugs from a fishing vessel while patrolling the Gulf of Oman, Oct. 10, while a week earlier a Royal Navy frigate seized \$45 million worth of drugs in the Gulf of Oman, said U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in Oct. 9 and 11 releases.

While operating in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144) seized 5,000 kilograms of hashish and 800 kilograms of methamphetamine as the fishing vessel transited international waters.

Glen Harris previously interdicted another fishing vessel Aug. 30 while patrolling the Gulf of Oman. The interdiction led to CTF 150 seizing 2,980 kilograms of hashish and 320 kilograms of amphetamine tablets worth \$20 million. This followed two earlier Glen Harris seizures of heroin, methamphetamine and amphetamine pills worth \$28 million in the same body of water in May.

The fast response cutter arrived in the Middle East in January and operates from the U.S. Navy base in Bahrain where CMF is headquartered with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet.

The Royal Navy frigate HMS Montrose (F 236) was operating in international waters in the Gulf of Oman as part of CTF 150 when it seized 870 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine. Montrose is a Duke-class frigate that has been operating in the Middle East since March 2019.

“HMS Montrose again proves the value of having a forward-deployed presence in the region,” said Cmdr. Claire Thompson, the ship’s commanding officer. “This shows the professionalism of the boarding team and whole ship’s company.”

Led by the Royal Saudi Navy, CTF 150 is one of four task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. CTF 150 conducts maritime security operations in the Gulf of Oman and North Arabian Sea to help ensure the free flow of commerce.

Combined Maritime Forces is the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. The organization includes 34 nations and is headquartered in Bahrain with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet.

Coast Guard Releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Seattle Base Expansion

SEATTLE – The Coast Guard is inviting the public to comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the Coast Guard’s proposed expansion and modernization of Base Seattle, the Coast 13th District said in a release. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the PEIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action alternatives.

The purpose of the expansion is to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure at Base Seattle to support current and future execution of the Coast Guard’s statutory missions. Base Seattle is the largest Coast Guard facility in the Pacific Northwest and is an essential facility to support Coast Guard missions in both the local area as well as the Polar Regions

now and for the foreseeable future.

The draft PEIS can be read in its entirety at the following online location: <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/NEPA>

With the Oct. 11 publication of the Coast Guard's Notice of Availability, the public may provide comments through Dec. 2, 2022. Comments may be submitted online at www.regulations.gov with docket number USCG-2021-0183 or via U.S. Mail addressed to: U.S. Coast Guard, Shore Infrastructure Logistics Center, Environmental Management Division, ATTN: Mr. Dean Amundson, 1301 Clay Street, Suite 700N, Oakland, CA 94612-5203. Comments must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 2, 2022.

A public meeting is scheduled to be held in mid-November in Seattle to provide an additional opportunity for public commentary. Additional details will be released at a later date.

SERCO Inc. Selects Thrustmaster Propulsion System for No Manning Required Ship (NOMARS) Platform

HOUSTON – Thrustmaster of Texas Inc. is providing a customized thruster propulsion system to SERCO, Inc. in support of their recently awarded No Manning Required Ship (NOMARS) contract from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA),

Thrustmaster said in an Oct. 11 release.

This innovative approach draws upon the almost four decades of designing and manufacturing thrusters for demanding military and commercial applications. The Thrustmaster propulsion system is an essential component of the advanced platform design developed by SERCO to meet the unique and stringent performance requirements established by DARPA to demonstrate true unmanned operations for extended time periods.

“Thrustmaster is honored to be selected by SERCO for this challenging project”, stated Joe Bekker, president of Thrustmaster of Texas. “We are looking forward to providing the next generation thruster propulsion system technology to demonstrate the multiplicity of capabilities that thrusters bring to both military and commercial vessels. The thruster system developed for the NOMARS platform uses a combination of proven and highly reliable thruster component technologies with an innovative hydrodynamic design that allows for the thruster to support not only critical propulsion requirements but also to meet additional maneuvering and endurance requirements. We are proud to be a critical part of this project and pleased to support not only the thruster design and production but also the initial NOMARS system level testing at our 300,000 square foot facility in Houston, Texas.”

Thrustmaster of Texas is a small business that has been supporting demanding marine platform requirements since its inception in 1984. Thrustmaster is currently providing the Auxiliary Propulsion Units (APU) for the Independence (LCS 2)-class platforms and is developing and manufacturing the APU for the Constellation (FFG 62) Class Frigate program.

Navy EA-18G Squadron Home from Emergency EUCOM Deployment



A U.S. Navy EA-18G Growlers assigned to the “Garudas” Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 134, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, waits to receive air-to-air refueling from a Royal Air Force Voyager tanker assigned to 101 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton, United Kingdom, during a Red Flag-Nellis 22-1 mission Feb. 3, 2022, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Airman 1st Class Zachary Rufus* ARLINGTON, Va. – A squadron of U.S. Navy EA-18G Growler electronic warfare aircraft has returned to its home base after more than six months deployed to the European Command as part of the build-up of forces in support NATO’s eastern flank.

Electronic Attack Squadron 134 (VAQ-134) has returned home to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, from U.S

European Command, according to a source. The squadron had deployed to Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany in late March 2022.

“The purpose of this deployment is to bolster readiness, enhance NATO’s collective defense posture and further increase air integration capabilities with our allied and partner nations,” said then- Defense Department spokesman John Kirby said in a release that month. “They are not being deployed to be used against Russian forces in Ukraine. They are being deployed completely in keeping with our efforts to bolster NATO’s deterrence and defense capabilities along that eastern flank. The deployment is not in response to a perceived threat or incident.”

The Navy has five-land-based expeditionary VAQ squadrons in addition to nine carrier-based VAQ squadrons, all equipped with EA-18Gs. For many years they deployed to bases in Southwest Asia to support combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, and currently deploy to Misawa, Japan. The Navy’s Growlers provide electronic attack support for all of the armed services. The aircraft can jam enemy radars and communications and fire anti-radiation missiles at radar sites.

It has not been announced if VAQ-134 was replaced in Europe by another VAQ squadron. A carrier-based squadron, VAQ-140, currently is deployed to the region on board the USS George H.W. Bush.

In its 2023 budget proposal, the Navy proposed de-activating the five expeditionary VAQ squadrons. While the budget has yet to be passed, the proposal has met heavy opposition in Congress.