

# USS Donald Cook Returns to Mayport after Surge Deployment



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) arrives at Naval Station Norfolk, April 13. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacob Milham*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) returned to Naval Station Mayport following a three-month deployment, April 24, the U.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet said in an April 25 release.

Donald Cook departed Naval Station Mayport in January on a short-notice deployment to operate with NATO Allies and partners in the Eastern Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea.

The crew spent more than 70 days at sea and conducted three port visits in support of maritime security partnerships in Copenhagen, Denmark; Rostock, Germany; and the Isle of Portland, England.

“Visiting other countries as a representative of the United States is surreal,” said Fire Controlman (Aegis) 2nd Class Brady Itkin. “People told us how nice Americans are everywhere we went, and we were shown amazing hospitality by the civilians of other NATO countries. There’s no better feeling than making a positive impact on other people’s perspective of America.”

The ship received warfare excellence awards in communications, engineering and ship safety while underway.

“The crew put in a lot of hard work over the past year,” said Ensign Benjamin Steen, electronic warfare officer aboard Donald Cook. “This recognition is definitely a testament to all of our efforts.”

While deployed, Donald Cook participated in NATO Exercise Dynamic Guard 2022 in the North Sea. Dynamic Guard, hosted by Norway, is a biannual, multinational electronic warfare exercise series designed to provide tactical training for the NATO Response Force and NATO national units. For the first time in three years, two U.S. vessels participated to further enhance the ongoing cooperation, strength and interoperability between NATO Allies.

“The crew demonstrated their tenacity by executing multinational exercises and national tasking on short notice during this surge deployment,” said Cmdr. Matt Curnen, commanding officer of Donald Cook. “Our operations over the past few months have demonstrated our proficiency and capability as well as reaffirming our commitment to the NATO Alliance. I could not be more proud of the resiliency and

professionalism the crew displayed during this deployment.”

Donald Cook is scheduled to start a major maintenance availability, its first since returning from their former homeport of Rota, Spain, in June.

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## Philly Shipyard Awarded Contract for Fifth NSMV



An artist's conception of the purpose-built National Security Multi-Mission Vessel, to which the Maritime Administration (MARAD) wants to transition to replace obsolete training ships. *MARAD*

PHILADELPHIA – Philly Shipyard Inc. will build one additional National Security Multi-Mission Vessel, or NSMV, the fifth and final in the training ship series.

The vessel, built under an order from TOTE Services as authorized by the Maritime Administration, will replace the

aging training vessel at California State University Maritime Academy in Vallejo, California.

Construction of the new vessel, NSMV 5, is expected to commence in 2023. The contractual delivery date for NSMV 5 is 2026.

The order was placed under the April 2020 contract with TOTE Services, which allows for the construction of up to five NSMVs. The initial award included the first two vessels in the NSMV program, NSMVs 1 and 2. The next two vessels in the NSMV program, NSMVs 3 and 4, were ordered in January 2021.

The award for NSMV 5 is valued at approximately \$300 million, bringing the total order intake under the contract for the five-ship program to be approximately \$1.5 billion.

As announced in November 2021, Philly Shipyard's order backlog also includes a contract from Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Co. to construct one Jones Act-compliant Subsea Rock Installation Vessel, with a contract value of approximately \$200 million. The SRIV will be constructed in between NSMVs 4 and 5.

"It is truly a great day for Philly Shipyard as we are now responsible for building the complete series of the NSMV program – a physical symbol of MARAD's investment in the future of maritime education and training," said Steinar Nerbovik, president and CEO of Philly Shipyard. "The NSMV program continues to mark a turning point in our company's transformation to serve both commercial and government markets."

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# Future APL 69 Conducts Builder's and Acceptance Trials



The Navy's newest berthing barge, APL 69, recently conducted builder's and acceptance trials in Pascagoula, Mississippi. This is a file photo of APL 67. *U.S. NAVY*

WASHINGTON – The Navy's newest berthing barge, Auxiliary Personnel Lighter (APL) 69, recently conducted builder's and acceptance trials in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Team Ships Public Affairs said in a release.

Builder's trials consist of a series of in-port tests and demonstrations that allow the shipbuilder, VT Halter Marine, and the Navy to assess the craft's systems to ensure installation in accordance with the original equipment

manufacturer's guidelines and that the craft design and configuration meet the contract requirements.

Acceptance trials consist of integrated testing to demonstrate the capability of the platform and installed systems across all mission areas to effectively meet its requirements. These tests and demonstrations are witnessed by the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey and are used to validate the quality of construction and compliance with specifications prior to delivery to the Navy.

"These vessels improve quality of life for our Sailors during ship maintenance availabilities and inter-deployment training cycles," said Capt. Eric Felder, program manager for U.S. Navy and Foreign Military Sales Boats and Craft, Program Executive Office Ships. "We look forward to delivering more of these vessels to the fleet to provide the necessary berthing, messing, administrative, and leisure facilities to crews while their ships are undergoing maintenance."

APLs are 82-meter-long barges that can berth up to 609 people – 72 officers and 537 enlisted personnel. Mess seating is available for 224 enlisted personnel, 28 chief petty officers and 28 officers in 20-minute intervals, allowing food service for 1,176 personnel with three meals a day.

APLs are used to house duty crews while ships are in maintenance availabilities and can be towed to new bases or shipyards to support changing fleet requirements. Additionally, they offer the potential use for humanitarian missions and other temporary assignments. APLs are equipped with offices, classrooms, washrooms, laundry facilities, a medical treatment facility, a barber shop and a fitness center.

VT Halter Marine is currently in production of two additional APLs.

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# Marine Corps to Use Leased Ships to Test Light Amphibious Warfare Ship Concept



U.S. Military Sealift command's Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport ship, City of Bismarck, floats while docked at the Commercial Seaport of Palau in Koror, Republic of Palau, Nov. 5, 2021. Spearhead-class ships may be used to test the concept for a light amphibious warfare ship. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Atticus Martinez*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps plans to lease two commercial ships over the next two years to experiment with the light amphibious warfare ship concept, also now being classed as the landing ship-medium.

Brig. Gen. Mark Clingan, assistant deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration and deputy commanding general of Marine Corps Combat Development Command, speaking April 21 in a webinar of the National Defense Industrial Association, said the Corps was planning to lease a commercial “stern[-ramp] landing vessel” by late summer or early fall [2022]” to use to test the LAW/LSM concept.

Clingan said a second vessel would be leased in fiscal 2023 for the same purpose.

The general said the Corps also was looking at using Spearhead-class expeditionary fast ships – which do not have beach landing ramps – and utility landing craft – which do – as part of the concept experimentation.

The LAW will be designed to carry 75 Marines of a Marine Littoral Regiment and land them on a shore in support of distributed maritime operations and expeditionary base operations. Clingan said the ships would be able to operate within the weapons engagement zone and be less attractive targets for enemy missiles than would a larger amphibious warfare ship.

Clingan said that with each Marine Littoral Regiment comprised of nine platoons or units of action – one on each light amphibious warfare ship – 27 LAWs would be needed to support the three MLRs. Counting extra MLRs in the maintenance pipeline, the Corps lists 35 LAWs as its probable requirement.

The Navy plans to procure the light amphibious warfare ship beginning in fiscal 2025.

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# Marine Corps May Keep More Tube Artillery, Osprey Squadrons in Force Design 2030



An MV-22 Osprey aircraft, assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 166 (Reinforced), departs the flight deck of amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) in 2016. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jose Jaen*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps continues to tweak its Force Design 2030, adjusting the number of tube artillery batteries, the number of MV-22B squadrons, the operation of a Marine Littoral Regiment and the size of an infantry battalion.

Under Force Design 2030, the Marine Corps is divesting itself of some force structure and weapon systems and building others to reshape the Corps to be more capable of operating inside a threat zone in the current era of great power competition.

Brig. Gen. Mark Clingan, assistant deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration and deputy commanding general of Marine Corps Combat Development Command, speaking April 21 in a webinar of the National Defense Industrial Association, said the Corps is looking at retaining more tube artillery batteries, choosing to retain seven batteries instead of five.

The tube artillery batteries operate M777 155mm howitzers.

Clingan also said the Corps will continue to field 16 Marine Medium Tilt-rotor Squadrons rather than reduce to 14 squadrons. However, the number of MV-22B Osprey aircraft in each squadron would decrease from 12 to 10 aircraft. One squadron, VMM-166, was deactivated last year.

He said the Corps' force design plans "probably weighted too much on the Marine Littoral Regiment and did not really acknowledge that to appropriately be able to do the recon/counter-recon fight is going to require the full complement and scope of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, and so MLRs are singular units but are still going to be very much a part of reaching back and employing the resources of the entire MAGTF.

Regarding the design of the MLR, Clingan said, "we probably focused too much on lethality without taking enough look or considering specifically the requirement to 'sense and make sense,' the mobility and maneuverability and also the need for deception. Now we're making refinements to that as well.

"Our initial thoughts were that MLR units would be sourced through UDP [the Unit Deployment Plan] rotation and now we're opening the aperture and think, maybe, some PCS [permanent change of station] personnel may be more suited to the terms of the units," he said.

The Corps has one MLR on strength, the 3rd MLR. Two more MLRs are planned in the future: the 12th and probably the 4th.

Regarding the size of an infantry battalion, “we initially thought we would be cutting that from about 896 [Marines and Sailors] down to 735,” he said. Noting the need to make the battalions more “robust and capable,” the number of personnel in a battalion “probably need to hover around numbers about 800-835 to have the capabilities it needs.”

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## Coast Guard Commissions 47th Sentinel-Class Fast Response Cutter



The commissioning crew of the USCGC Clarence Sutipin Jr. (WPC 1147), Patrol Forces Southwest Asia’s sixth 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter, stand at attention as the ship is placed into service at a ceremony held at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space

Museum in New York City, April 21. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan Schultz*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard commissioned the USCGC Clarence Sutphin Jr. (WPC 1147), Patrol Forces Southwest Asia's sixth 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter, into service at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum in New York City on April 21, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a release.

Vice Adm. Steven Poulin, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area commander, presided over the ceremony.

The cutter's namesake is Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Clarence Sutphin Jr., a New York native who served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1941 to 1945. During this time, Sutphin served as landing craft coxswain on board the attack transport USS Leonard Wood (APA 12), a landing craft supporting our troops in North Africa and Sicily.

In November 1941, just weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 18-year-old Sutphin enlisted in the United States Coast Guard. After enlisting, Sutphin attended boot camp at the Coast Guard Yard near Baltimore. He then received orders to the North Carolina coast to train in amphibious operations and landing craft, also known as Higgins Boats, landing troops in North Africa and Sicily.

When that operation was complete, the boat transited to the Pacific theater. During the Battle of Saipan in 1944, Sutphin helped oversee boat operations, including landing, loading, and salvaging landing craft as the USS Leonard Wood endured the heavy fire. During the conflict, he repeatedly risked his life to save others. He swam a towline to a landing craft stranded on a reef, saved another boat stuck on the beach under enemy fire, and came to the aid of eight Marines who a mortar round had struck. He provided first aid to the survivors and evacuated them to the nearest aid station.

Sutphin stayed aboard the Leonard Wood through May 1945 and

participated in its eight primary amphibious operations. Sutphin was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his “exceptional bravery under fire” during the Battle of Saipan.

The Clarence Sutphin Jr. was officially delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard on Jan. 6 in Key West, Florida. It is the 47th Sentinel-class fast response cutter. While the ship is commissioning in New York City, it will be homeport in Manama, Bahrain, part of U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia.

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## **Embraer Delivers Last Modernized AF-1B Fighter Jet to the Brazilian Navy**

GAVIAO PEIXOTO, BRAZIL – Embraer delivered on April 20 the last modernized AF-1 fighter (AF-1B) to the Brazilian navy. The ceremony was held at Embraer’s industrial unit in Gavião Peixoto in São Paulo state. Under the AF-1 program (the Navy designation for the McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawk), seven subsonic fighter jets were modernized, five single-seater AF-1Bs and two two-seaters AF-1Cs.

The AF-1 is an intercept and attack aircraft operated from airfields or aircraft carriers as a vector for the fleet’s air defense. The Brazilian navy’s modernized aircraft received new navigation, weapons, power generation, computers, tactical communication, and sensor systems, including a state-of-the-art multi-mode radar and a new operating system. In addition to the modernization, the revitalization of the cell was carried out, increasing the aircraft’s useful life.

Modernization provides pilots a situational awareness and familiarity with modern combat aircraft systems operations – essential and relevant criteria for the current combat scenario.

As part of the modernization program carried out by Embraer, a high-fidelity flight simulator was developed permitting the Brazilian navy to carry out pilot training, thus increasing safety in its operations. Briefing and debriefing stations used in the training and proficiency of pilots were also provided to improve their use, to reduce costs and to bring greater effectiveness to mission planning and execution.

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## **Navy Awards Raytheon Up to \$1.68B for Zumwalt DDG Engineering Services**



Guided-missile destroyer USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), right, and amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli (LHA 7) sail behind amphibious transport dock USS Anchorage (LPD 23) in the Pacific Ocean, April 10. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Malcolm Kelley*

TUCSON, Ariz. – The U.S. Navy awarded Raytheon Missiles & Defense an activation, sustainment and modernization contract for \$483 million with options, if exercised, totaling \$1.68 billion across five years, the company said April 20.

Under this contract, Raytheon Missiles & Defense will provide the U.S. Navy services and professionals to complete the activation and fleet introduction of the three Zumwalt-class destroyers, while continuing to develop technology and warfare capabilities.

“This contract underscores our role as a systems integrator, which goes beyond offering customers weapons and radars,” said Wes Kremer, president of Raytheon Missiles & Defense. “Our team provides Zumwalt destroyers extensive support, from

engineering and cyber protection to software development and upgrades.”

Additional services will include design, integration, test and evaluation, system upgrade and replacement, logistics product development, configuration management and training systems.

The Zumwalt-class destroyers recently achieved initial operational capability in December 2021, with the inaugural fleet employment of USS Zumwalt scheduled for later this year.

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## **Navy Proposes to Cut Five EA-18G Growler Electronic Attack Squadrons**



Sailors assigned to the “Lancers” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 131 recover an EA-18G Growler during night operations in 2020. Under Navy plans, the squadron is one of several that would be deactivated. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Benjamin Ringers*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy is proposing to deactivate five electronic attack squadrons, or VAQs, that operate the Boeing EA-18G Growler electronic attack jet, roughly a third of the Defense Department’s tactical jet electronic attack force.

As laid out in the recently released Department of the Navy’s fiscal 2023 budget highlights book, the Navy proposes to deactivate its entire expeditionary VAQ force, which deploys to overseas bases to provide electronic attack capabilities to the joint force. The five expeditionary VAQ squadrons are separate from the Navy’s VAQ squadrons that deploy on aircraft carriers.

The Navy is the only provider of expeditionary electronic attack jets to the joint force. The Air Force retired its last EF-111A Raven jets in 1998 and the Marine Corps retired its

last EA-6B Prowler tactical jets in 2019. The expeditionary VAQ squadrons have deployed to Southwest Asia, Japan and Italy over the years in support of U.S. and coalition forces. Last month, one squadron, VAQ-134, was deployed to the European Command as part of the build-up of forces in support NATO's eastern flank after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The budget book says the five squadrons include a total of 25 EA-18Gs which would be placed in storage at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group at Davis-Montham Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona, half in fiscal 2024 and half in fiscal 2025. The cuts also would free up approximately 1,020 officer and enlisted personnel. The Navy estimates the savings over the Future Years Defense Plan would be 807.8 million.

The Navy's five expeditionary VAQ squadrons are all based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington: VAQs 131, 132, 134, 135, and 138. The Navy's only reserve VAQ squadron, VAQ-209, also has been used in an expeditionary role.

The carrier-deployable VAQ squadrons are VAQs 130, 133, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, and 142, with another, VAQ-144, set for establishment in October. All are based at Whidbey Island, except for VAQ-141, which is based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, as part of the forward-deployed Carrier Air Wing Five for USS Ronald Reagan.

The expeditionary VAQ squadrons are considered high-demand/high-value assets by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The assessments of the various regional combatant commanders may be instrumental in reversing or mitigating the Navy's proposal.

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# Navy's LCS Decommissioning Proposals Would Bring Major Changes for Retained Ships



The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Jackson (LCS 6) pierside in Guam during routine operations in 2021. Under new Navy plans, it would be operated by a single crew in 2023 and decommissioned in 2024. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Langholf*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's 2023 budget proposal – including the Future Years Defense Plan – would result in profound changes to the missions, organization, force structure, training and crews of the Navy's littoral combat ships in addition to the force reduction by decommissioning of many of the ships.

The LCS remaining in service would see a second order of effects that would further show a force dramatically changed

from the original vision for the ships. The surface warfare mission and the mine countermeasures mission will be divided by coast instead of mixed on both.

The Freedom-class LCS would be most the most affected by the proposed budget. Including earlier decisions, the Navy would, because of fiscal constraints, decommission LCS 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 19 across the FYDP. (LCS 1 was decommissioned in 2021.) Six Freedom-class ships (LCS 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, and 31) would be retained, having been or will be completed with the combining gear improvement installed.

The Independence-class LCS will not be unscathed. The Navy proposes to reduce LCS 6 and 8 to single crews (from dual Blue-Gold crews) in 2023, and then decommission the two ships in 2024. (LCS 2 was decommissioned in 2021, and LCS 4 is scheduled to be decommissioned in 2022.) A total of 15 Independence-class ships would be retained in the fleet.

All LCS assigned the surface warfare mission would be assigned single crews only. Such crews would see their manpower increased by approximately 25 Sailors each to help sustain readiness levels that a second off-hull provided.

Since the antisubmarine warfare mission package is being divested, all LCSs marked for the ASW mission will be shifted to the surface warfare or mine countermeasures mission. Because of the substantial reduction in the number of LCS planned, the ASW mission in small surface combatants will reside solely in the future Constellation-class guided-missile frigate (FFG 62), which the Navy says is a “foundational mission set for the FFG 62 program, which is a more suitable platform and Variable Depth Sonar [VDS] capability will be added to the fleet through the FFG 62 class.”

The Navy is proposing the East Coast littoral combat ships – which are of the Freedom class – be assigned only the surface warfare mission and the West Coast LCS – planned to be only

Independence-class ships – be assigned only the mine countermeasure mission. As a result, there would be changes in the LCS command and support organization structure.

Accordingly, the LCS antisubmarine warfare divisions on both coasts would be disestablished in 2023 with the divestiture of the ASW mission. MCM Division 22 on the East Coast and SUW Division 11 on the West Coast also would be disestablished in 2023.

With the overall reduction in LCS ships and their crews, and a force of just 21 LCS planned (15 MCM ships and 6 SUW ships), the training infrastructure required for training would be reduced. The proposal calls for the disestablishment of LCS Training Facility Atlantic, consolidating all LCS training at LCS Training Facility Pacific.

All of these proposals will receive the scrutiny of the congressional armed services and appropriations committees.

If the total LCS changes were to be approved, the Navy estimates the savings to be \$391.4 million for fiscal 2023, totaling \$2.46 billion over the FYDP.