# New T-54A arrives at NAS Corpus Christi to replace aging T-44C
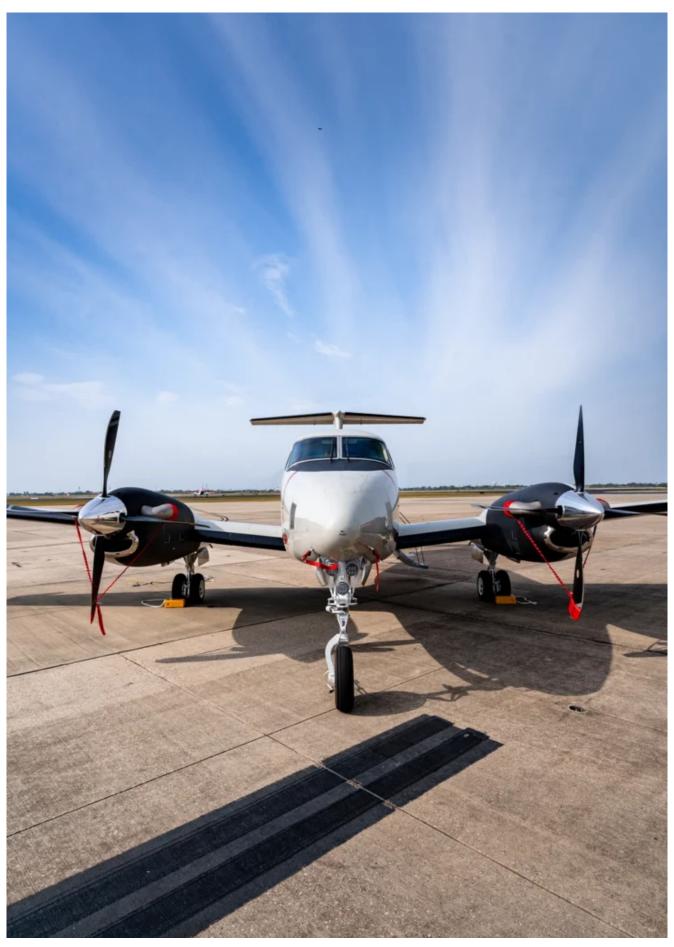
Photo By [Ensign Alan Wang](#) | A T-54A multi-engine aircraft sits on the flight line of Naval Air Station (NAS) Corpus Christi,

April 18. The arrival of the T-54A heralds a new generation of Naval Aviators who will use the trainer to earn their wings of gold as they prepare to fly such aircraft as the P-8A Poseidon, E-2D Hawkeye and C-130 Hercules. The T-54A replaces the T-44C Pegasus, an aircraft that has been in naval service since 1977.

From , Apr. 18, 2024

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Two T-54A multi-engine aircraft landed aboard Naval Air Station (NAS) Corpus Christi, April 18. The arrival of the T-54A heralds a new generation of Naval Aviators who will use the trainer to earn their wings of gold as they prepare to fly such aircraft as the P-8A Poseidon, E-2D Hawkeye and C-130 Hercules. The T-54A replaces the T-44C Pegasus, an aircraft that has been in naval service since 1977.

The Navy awarded a contract to Textron in early 2023 to acquire up to 64 King Air 260 aircraft that will be designated as T-54A in the Navy's training fleet. T-44C Pegasus is the Navy's designation for the aging fleet of Beechcraft King Air 90 aircraft. The T-44C has successfully served generations of Naval Aviators after continuously supporting Training Air Wing (TAW) 4 efforts to routinely exceed Naval Aviator production requirements each year. Most recently, TAW-4 effectively employed the T-44C in achieving 110% of fiscal year 2023 requirements for Naval Aviator production. But as aviation and maritime warfare continue to evolve, the T-54A has arrived to better help Student Naval Aviators prepare for the future.

Capt. Michael Albus, commander TAW-4, will oversee the introduction of the T-54A into the Navy's two premier multi-engine training squadrons, Training Squadron (VT) 31 and VT-35.

"We produce the best multi-engine pilots in the world," said Albus. "The T-54A will be the training aircraft to carry that

legacy into the future. With its ProLine Fusion avionics suite, combined with increased range, speed, and altitude, the T-54A will ensure that our aviators are well-prepared to operate complex fleet aircraft, and are ready for tomorrow's challenges in a multi-domain environment."

The arrival of the first multi-engine training system (METS) replacement in over 45 years is not just historic for TAW-4, but for the entire naval air training enterprise. This aircraft is the first of the Chief of Naval Air Training's (CNATRA) entire fleet of over 650 aircraft to include a glossy grey paint scheme. This paint scheme, which was announced alongside a "Midway" blue paint coat for CNATRA's T-6B Texan II aircraft, is an effort to reconnect students and instructors with the fleet. The glossy grey color of the T-54A reflects similar paint coats of the P-8A Poseidon and E-2D Hawkeye.

"The T-44C Pegasus trained generations of Naval Aviators seeking to fly multi-engine platforms. So the arrival of the T-54A is a truly historic moment that signifies the Navy's commitment to training our future pilots," said Albus. "Many will quickly notice that the new aircraft is not painted orange and white like the previous 70 years of naval air training.
The new grey paint scheme is designed to bolster pride not only in our students but in our instructors."

Two crews ferried the aircraft back to NAS Corpus Christi after the Navy took possession of the aircraft days earlier in Wichita, Kansas. Cmdr. Kerry Bistline, TAW-4's officer in charge of METS fixed wing training, was the flight leader for both crews.

"This is a culminating moment for me as a TAW-4 flight instructor. Being able to see this program grow from the acquisition phase to delivery is a highlight for my 27-year

career. It's been a long process to ensure that the METS team got this right. I look forward to seeing this trainer fly in the local Corpus Christi area for many years to come."

Other crew members included Lt. Mike Stengel, Naval Aviator and instructor pilot who volunteered to help ferry the aircraft back home on its maiden voyage as an official naval aircraft.

"The T-54A will be a great addition to the TAW-4 family. This aircraft will lead the way for the next generation of multi-engine aviators. It has been a very rewarding and humbling experience to be a part of the METS team and it will be one of the highlights of my career."

As more T-54A aircraft arrive, the T-44C Pegasus will slowly begin to phase out. Combined with the gradual repaint of T-6B Texan II aircraft, less and less orange-and-white aircraft will appear in the South Texas sky. Increasing numbers of new students in the advanced stage of training for multi-engine platforms will immediately begin to train in the T-54A as other students and instructors lead the T-44C to sundown.

CNATRA trains, mentors, and delivers the highest quality Naval Aviators who prevail in competition, crisis, and conflict. Headquartered at NAS Corpus Christi, CNATRA comprises five training air wings in Florida, Mississippi, and Texas, which are home to 17 training squadrons. In addition, CNATRA oversees the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels and the training curriculum for all fleet replacement squadrons.

# AV'S Switchblade 300 Selected for U.S. Marine Corps' Organic Precision Fires-Light Program



The Switchblade 300 Block 20 system is battle-proven and production-ready to support Marine Infantry. *AeroVironment*

ARLINGTON, Virginia — AeroVironment was selected by the U.S. Marine Corps for the first phase of the Organic Precision Fires-Light (OPF-L) program of record. AV's Switchblade 300 Block 20 loitering munition system (LMS) will provide the Marine Corps with organic, anti-armor/anti-personnel, precision fires capability at the tactical level. AV was awarded an initial order of $8.9M on a contract with a maximum potential value of $249M.

AV's Switchblade 300 Block 20 supports the OPF-L program's request for an individually operated, man-portable loitering munition with a lightweight, precision-guided capability against beyond- line-of-sight adversaries. Switchblade 300

will ensure that Marines are properly equipped and sustained with a lethal, reliable, organic capability for rapid target engagement while minimizing collateral damage and exposure to threat weapon systems.

"AV offers a battle-proven and production-ready system to support OPF-L to meet the Marine Corps' requirements," said AV's Senior Vice President of LMS, Brett Hush. "Our mature and trusted manufacturing capability combined with world-class training and support will ensure Marine Infantry is adequately prepared for the fight."

AV's Switchblade 300 has been deployed in support of urgent operational needs to combat theaters since 2012. Switchblade 300 Block 20 is the next generation of the system that capitalizes on over a decade of user assessments, combat deployments, and lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine, including operating in contested environment operations.

The Switchblade Block 20 system significantly expands on the currently fielded Switchblade 300 capabilities, including armor penetrating capability through an Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) warhead, increased target attack angle, and significantly greater battery life, flight endurance, and radio link range.

"With over 6,000 Switchblade loitering missiles tested, produced, and fielded, AV is in a unique position to offer revolutionary organic precision fire capabilities to the USMC, leveraging the proven reliability, producibility and supportability of current Switchblade programs," continued Hush.

# Finland Joins Combined Maritime Forces in Middle East as 43rd Member



By Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs | April 19, 2024

MANAMA, Bahrain — Combined Maritime Forces welcomed Finland as the 43rd member of the world's largest maritime security partnership, April 17.

"It is a pleasure to officially welcome Finland to the Combined Maritime Forces," said Vice Adm. George Wikoff, CMF commander. "The Finns bring to the largest international naval coalition a long history of maritime professionalism. They will enhance our already impressive partnership here in the Middle East."

CMF is comprised of a headquarters staff and five combined task forces focusing on defeating terrorism, preventing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation, and promoting a safe maritime environment. The naval partnership upholds the international rules-based order by supporting security and

stability across 3.2 million square miles of water encompassing some of the world's most important shipping lanes.

With 43 nations, CMF is the largest naval partnership in the world. Task forces include CTF 150, focused on maritime security in the Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea and eastern Gulf of Aden; CTF 151, which leads regional anti-piracy efforts; CTF 152, dedicated to maritime security in the Arabian Gulf; CTF 153, responsible for maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and western Gulf of Aden; and CTF 154, established in May to enhance maritime security training throughout the region.

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# Australian Sailors Graduate Sub Officer Course: Next, Assignment to U.S. Nuclear Attack Submarines

By U.S. Naval Submarine School Public Affairs and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Office

GROTON, Connecticut — In a first for the U.S. Navy and Royal Australian Navy, three RAN officers graduated from the U.S. Navy's Submarine Officer Basic Course (SOBC) on April 18, 2024, at the Naval Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut.

The RAN officers' graduation represents a significant step toward realizing Pillar 1 of the trilateral AUKUS partnership, a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Pillar 1 aims to create a sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine fleet for the Royal Australian Navy.

"Collectively, we would like to thank our instructors here in Groton and also in Goose Creek, South Carolina, for getting us to this point," said Lieutenant William Hall. Hall, Lieutenant Commander James Heydon and Lieutenant Commander Adam Klyne are

the first RAN officers to complete Naval Nuclear Power School and Nuclear Power Training Unit, located in South Carolina, and now SOBC. "Now, we're looking to join our boats and continuing our careers as part of Australia's conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine force."

The Submarine Officer Basic Course is the last step in the U.S. Navy's 15-month nuclear submarine training pipeline before assignment to the fleet. The three RAN officer graduates will be assigned to Virginia-class attack submarines based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Upon assignment, the graduates serve as division officers, leading a team of highly trained enlisted submariners. In this capacity, they will be tested and qualified on the ship's systems and in various warfighting and leadership roles.

"Over the last two months, these three officers have trained alongside our Sailors, learning the fundamentals of operating and tactically employing SSNs," said Naval Submarine School Commanding Officer Captain Matthew Fanning. "At SOBC, they applied both their previous experience and the new skills they developed through our nuclear training schools, to learn how we operate the ocean's apex predator, the nuclear-powered attack submarine."

"These officers are the future leaders of Australia's sovereign conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine fleet," said the U.S. Navy's AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Manager Rear Admiral Lincoln Reifsteck. "Their time in Groton bridged the operational gap between the Collins-class SSKs and the Virginia-class SSN. These tours on U.S. Virginia-class submarines are the key professional development step toward earning the privilege to become submarine executive officers and the first commanding officers of Australian SSNs."

Nearly 100 RAN officers and enlisted personnel will enter the

submarine and Naval Nuclear Propulsion training piplelines in 2024.

"These three officers are trailblazers for the Royal Australian Navy," said Rear Admiral Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability within the Australia Submarine Agency. They are not only the first Australians to be fully trained within the U.S. system but will also gain real-world experience aboard Virginia-class SSNs, which will be foundational to Australia's ability to sovereignly operate, maintain, and steward these world-class platforms."

AUKUS is a strategic partnership that will promote a safe, free, and open Indo-Pacific, enhance national security, and uplift the three industrial bases. AUKUS Pillar 1 is delivering a conventionally armed SSN capability to the Royal Australian Navy by the early 2030s. The AUKUS I&A Program Office is responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to deliver conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines to the RAN at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards and continuing to maintain the highest nonproliferation standard.

# VMUT-2 begins assembly of the first 2nd MAW MQ-9A Reaper

U.S. Marines with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Training Squadron (VMUT) 2 conduct familiarization training with an MQ-9A Reaper unmanned aircraft at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, April 11, 2024. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Orlanys Diaz Figueroa)

Story by [2nd Lt. John Graham,](#) [2nd Marine Aircraft Wing](#)

April 12, 2024

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. – Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Training Squadron (VMUT) 2, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), began the assembly of 2nd MAW's first MQ-9A Reaper, April 10, as part of the U.S. Marine Corps' continued transition from the legacy RQ-21A Blackjack in accordance with Force Design initiatives.

"The delivery and build of VMUT-2's first MQ-9A aircraft is yet another successful milestone in the transition of VMUT-2 to become the MQ-9A Fleet Replacement Squadron, responsible for the world-class training of the Marine Corps' MQ-9A pilots and sensor operators," said Lt. Col. Michael Donlin,

commanding officer of VMUT-2.

Many of the parts for the aircraft were delivered to VMUT-2, known as the "Night owls," aboard Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, North Carolina, from General Atomics in March, making 2nd MAW the third and final MAW to receive the aircraft. Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron (VMU) 1, 3rd MAW, procured the first MQ-9A Reaper for the Marine Corps in August 2021, and VMU-3, 1st MAW, was the first VMU to achieve initial operational capability with the MQ-9A platform in August 2023.

The MQ-9A Extended Range Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Unmanned Expeditionary (MUX) Medium-Altitude, High-Endurance (MALE) aircraft is a medium-altitude, long-endurance Block 5 remotely piloted aircraft, enabling future Marine Corps, naval, and joint force operating concepts by providing multisensor surveillance and reconnaissance; data gateway and relay capabilities through an aerial layer; and enabling or conducting the detection and engagement of targets during expeditionary, joint, and combined operations. The aircraft will provide intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting as well as performing additional missions such as: maritime domain awareness, airborne network extension, airborne early warning, and electronic support.

With a range of more than 1,600 miles and the ability to operate for more than 20 hours, the unmanned aircraft is designed to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in support of 2nd MAW and wider Marine Expeditionary Force missions. This extended range is possible through the Marine Corps' addition of external fuel tanks to the aircraft that are capable of holding 1,300 pounds of fuel.

These capabilities will allow the MQ-9A Reaper to support future Marine Corps operating concepts, such as distributed maritime operations, littoral operations in a contested environment, and expeditionary advanced base operations as

part of Force Design initiatives. The capabilities that the MQ-9A Reaper will provide represent an enhancement to 2nd MAW's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and data and communications network capabilities. The arrival and assembly of this aircraft represents a milestone in 2nd MAW unmanned aircraft systems' support for future operating concepts and represents an additional milestone in VMUT-2's continued transition from the RQ-21A Blackjack platform that served as 2nd MAW's primary unmanned aircraft system until July 2023.

"Our ability to rapidly and safely build these aircraft sets the stage for flight operations in the near future and is a testament to the hard work of the 'Night owl' maintenance department and the program office over the last ten months," said Donlin. "'Night owls' don't quit."

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# CORAS Rolls Out Early Release of Driver Trees Tool

April 17, 2024

Responding to U.S. Navy's Agenda for Performance-based Management, Decision-Making, and Readiness

MCLEAN, Va., April 17, 2024 (Newswire.com) — [CORAS](#) Federal, a FedRAMP High Software as a Service (SaaS) platform, announced an early release of a Driver Trees feature that adds to its suite of enterprise decision management tools. Driver Trees are a performance-based management process that identifies root causes and the most impactful way of pushing efficient progress and resolution, incorporating the U.S. Navy's (USN) Get Real Get Better and Performance to Plan (P2P).
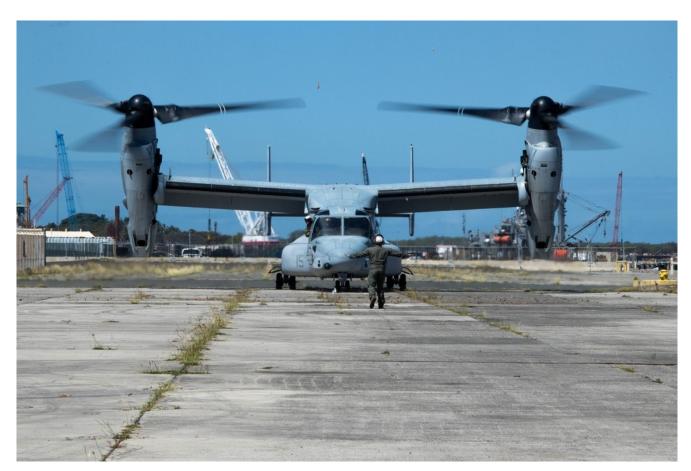
CORAS Driver Trees are already at work within the USN supporting Program Managers in their "hunt for leverage", using metrics and cause-and-effect relationships to predict future performance and determine the highest-capacity drivers of those metrics. CORAS Driver Trees empower users to identify baseline conditions, align workflows to key performance indicators (KPIs), predict future outcomes, and promote clear ownership and accountability within teams.

"U.S. Navy departments already trust CORAS to deliver complete insights, informed decisions, proactive collaboration, and a single source of truth across complex multi-system secure environments," said CORAS President and CTO [Dan Naselius](#). "The CORAS Driver Trees tool is a direct result of listening to our U.S. Navy customers' needs and delivering them another weapon in our arsenal for DoD defense systems that articulates clear objectives, outcomes, drivers, and data-informed analyses. This tool will keep evolving as we continue to collaborate and refine CORAS Driver Trees' functionality through customer feedback."

USN Vice Admiral Morley recently presented a leadership masterclass on Program Management and Driver Trees with an agenda of understanding how to leverage tools like driver

trees to align team accountability and deliver positive delta outcomes in USN acquisition environments. [CORAS supports the warfighter](#) by bringing disparate data sources together in secure, real-time environments for leadership to make fully informed decisions with live reporting, predictive AI/NLP, what-if scenarios, automations, and workflows.

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# VMM-268 Marines Prepare for Marine Rotational Force Darwin



Marine Corps Base Hawaii

April 16, 2024

A U.S. Marine with Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 268, Marine Aircraft Group 24, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, guides an MV-22B Osprey in preparation for Marine Rotational Force Darwin (MRF-D) at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, April 16, 2024. MRF-D is a deployment held in Australia that enhances capabilities and readiness of both the United States Marine Corps and the Australian Defense Force and continues to help strengthen the alliance between the two nations. VMM-268 will serve as the Aviation Combat Element for the upcoming iteration of MRF-D. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Tania Guerrero)

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# April 16 Red Sea Update

U.S. Central Command

April 16, 2024

TAMPA, Fla.- Between 10:50 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) on April 16, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully engaged two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) in Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas in Yemen.

There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition, or commercial ships.

It was determined the UAVs presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

# Rite-Solutions Awarded Navy Task Order to Support Electronic Warfare and Support Trainers

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. — Rite-Solutions has been awarded a five-year, $10.7 million competitive Task Order from the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC), Division Newport to provide hardware and software development services for Electronic Warfare (EW) and Electronic Support (ES) elements of the Submarine Multi-Mission Team Trainer (SMMTT).

The win — Rite-Solutions' third prime contract win in as many months — will enable the company to continue to support the Undersea Warfare Combat Systems Department, Product Development Division (Code 253) with critical analysis, designing, prototyping, programming, integrating, testing and evaluation, training and installation of EW and ES products.

Execution of this contract will fall under Rite-Solutions' Engineering Services Business Unit, led by Senior Vice President Laura Deady. "SMMTT is a critical tool in ensuring our sailors have the necessary skills in areas such as strike warfare; anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare; mine warfare; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; navigation; command, control, communications, computers and intelligence; and special warfare," said Deady. "Rite-Solutions brings the experience, capability, and high-caliber personnel necessary to ensure that our sailors are safe, trained, and prepared."

Rite-Solutions will support EW System environment simulations

such as WLR-8 and BLQ-10, in addition to related Early Warning Receiver (EWR) subsystems. Additionally, Rite-Solutions will support the development of inorganic sensor data analysis, and emitter simulations of potential vessels or vehicles within a trainer gaming environment.

"Software development is a critical element to our company's core capabilities, and NUWC Newport is one of our most valued customers," said Joe Marino, Rite-Solutions' co-founder and CEO. "This contract win is a testament to our technical capabilities, our reputation in the industry, and our amazing team of engineers, scientists, and technical professionals who have an unwavering focus on our customers and their requirements."

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# Indian Navy Carries Out First Drug Interdiction as CMF Member

By Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs | April 16, 2024

MANAMA, Bahrain — The Indian Navy Ship INS Talwar, operating in support of the Canadian-led Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, conducted its first interdiction of illicit narcotics as a member of Combined Maritime Forces, seizing 940 kg of drugs in the Arabian Sea, April 13.

Talwar, a Talwar-class frigate, seized 453 kg of methamphetamines, 416 kg of hash and 71 kg of heroin from a dhow as part of Focused Operation Crimson Barracuda.

The Indian Navy joined CMF last November.

"I commend the crew of INS Talwar for their efforts throughout this Focused Operation and their hard work has paid off with this seizure of 940 kg of drugs," said Royal Canadian Navy Capt. Colin Matthews, Commander, Combined Task Force 150. "This seizure, the fourth of this Focused Operation, demonstrates the effectiveness and professionalism of CMF, and of the Indian Navy, in deterring and disrupting criminal and

terrorist activities at sea."

Crimson Barracuda, which concluded on April 15, focused on countering terrorist and criminal organizations' use of the high seas to conduct smuggling operations in the Western Indian Ocean region.

CTF 150 is one of five task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, the world's largest international naval partnership. CTF 150's mission is to deter and disrupt the ability of non-state actors to move weapons, drugs and other illicit substances in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman.

Combined Maritime Forces is a 42-nation naval partnership upholding the international rules-based order by promoting security and stability across 3.2 million square miles of water encompassing some of the world's most important shipping lanes.