

Icebreaker Polar Star Arrives in Antarctica



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star sits hove-to on a cloudy day in Antarctica, Jan. 17. Polar Star is in its 25th year participating in Operation Deep Freeze, one of many operations in the Indo-Pacific region in which the U.S. military promotes security and stability across the region. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Diolanda Caballero*

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica – The 157 crewmembers of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) arrived at McMurdo Station in Antarctica Feb. 7 following an 86-day transit from the United States and the cutter's departure from its Seattle homeport Nov. 13, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

This deployment marks the Polar Star's 25th journey to Antarctica supporting Operation Deep Freeze, an annual joint military service mission to resupply the United States

Antarctic stations in support of the National Science Foundation, lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program.

Each year, the crew pilots the 399-foot, 13,000-ton cutter to break a navigable channel through miles of ice, sometimes as much as 21 feet thick, to allow fuel and supply ships to reach McMurdo Station, the U.S. Antarctic Program's logistics hub and largest station.

Polar Star reached the Ross Sea, Antarctica, Jan. 3, and commenced breaking the 37 miles of ice that extended from the ice pier in Winter Quarters Bay at McMurdo Station out to open water. Polar Star spent four weeks breaking ice and grooming the shipping channel. The crew's efforts were aided by favorable winds and currents and by month's end had created an open and ice-free approach for the supply vessels.

The cleared channel to McMurdo Station will enable two supply vessels, Maersk Peary and Ocean Giant, to safely offload over eight million gallons of fuel and 1,000 cargo containers. Together these two ships carry enough fuel, food, and critical supplies to sustain USAP operations throughout the year until the next sealift opportunity in the austral summer of 2023.

The cutter made international stops in Wellington and Lyttelton, New Zealand on the way to Antarctica. While in New Zealand, the crew engaged with the Royal New Zealand Navy, United States Embassy and volunteered in Christchurch at the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Polar Star will also partner with the Royal New Zealand Navy's largest ship, Her Royal Majesty's New Zealand Ship Aotearoa, in support of resupplying Scott Base, New Zealand's year-round Antarctic research facility.

"It is a tremendous honor to lead the men and women of Polar Star on this important mission," said Capt. William Woityra, commanding officer of Polar Star. "This team brought renewed

energy and passion to this 46-year-old ship, and overcame significant challenges to deliver exceptional results.”

Assigned to Operation Deep Freeze each year, the icebreaker spends January and February breaking ice in Antarctica. Polar Star returns to the United States after completing the mission.

This year also marks the Polar Star’s return to Antarctica following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2020-2021 season, Polar Star conducted a winter Arctic deployment, during which the cutter trekked to the Arctic Circle to project constructive presence in the northern high latitudes under winter conditions and train the next generation of polar sailors. Their efforts resulted in setting a record for the furthest north any American surface vessel has been in the winter months.

**Littoral Combat Ship USS
Savannah Commissioned**



The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship, USS Savannah (LCS 28), on Feb. 5 in

Brunswick, Georgia. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist
2nd Class James S. Hong*

BRUNSWICK – The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship, USS Savannah (LCS 28), Feb. 5 in Brunswick, Georgia, the commander, Naval Surface Forces, said in a release.

“It’s fitting that it would find its home in Savannah – a city whose agility has allowed her to be a defining force in the entire scope of American history,” said principal speaker U.S. Rep. Earl L. “Buddy” Carter (R-Georgia).

Diane Davison Isakson is the ship’s sponsor and wife of the late Johnny Isakson, former senator from Georgia. Their daughter, Julie Isakson Mitchell, served as the matron of honor. Meredith Berger, performing the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy, recognized Isakson.

“It is said that the character and spirit of the ship’s sponsor serves to enrich, guide, and protect the ship and her crew,” said Berger. “You come from a family steeped in service. You’ve got Navy in your blood.”

Guest speakers for the event also included Mayor of Savannah Cosby Johnson, Mayor of Brunswick Van Johnson, and Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, commander of Naval Air Systems Command.

“The USS Savannah is poised to represent its motto across the globe, not for self but for others,” said Chebi. “Today as we commission her as an operating force of the U.S. Navy. The ship and her crew will carry on the legacy of the five other ships that had the honor to bear the name Savannah since 1798. They participated in the Mexican War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II and the Vietnam War. The sixth USS Savannah’s history has yet to be written but will be enriched in stories of honor, courage, and commitment.”

During the ceremony, Savannah's commanding officer, Cmdr. Kevin M. Ray, reported the ship ready, and Isakson gave the traditional order to "man our ship and bring her to life."

"To the city of Savannah, I assure you, the fine men and women of our crew, who I am humbled to lead, represent everything that is great about your city. Pride, patriotism, resiliency, diversity, and hospitality," said Ray. "We will carry your name forward, wherever our Nation asks us to go, and we will represent you well."

Following commissioning, Savannah will sail to California to be home ported in San Diego, joining sister ships USS Coronado (LCS 4), USS Jackson (LCS 6), USS Montgomery (LCS 8), USS Gabrielle Giffords (LCS 10), USS Omaha (LCS 12), USS Manchester (LCS 14), USS Tulsa (LCS 16), USS Charleston (LCS 18), USS Cincinnati (LCS 20), USS Kansas City (LCS 22), USS Oakland (LCS 24) and USS Mobile (LCS 26).

Cutter Active Returns Home to Port Angeles Following Counterdrug Patrol



An aircrew and a HH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Port Angeles prepares to land on the Coast Guard Cutter Active's flight deck during a counter-drug patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Sept. 17, 2018. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Wood*

PORT ANGELES, Wash. – The Coast Guard Cutter Active (WMEC 619) and crew returned to their homeport in Port Angeles Feb. 2 after a 10,572-mile, 55-day deployment to the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 13th District said Feb. 4.

The crew—deployed off the coast of Central America in support of counterdrug operations.

Shortly after getting underway, Active participated in helicopter proficiency operations off the coast of Southern California. Pilots from multiple Coast Guard air stations and crews from a number of West Coast-based cutters converged on Active to perform necessary training and proficiency evolutions.

During a 48-hour period, Active's crew participated in 72 takeoffs and landings from the flight deck in addition to

performing a helicopter in-flight refueling and a vertical replenishment. In total, Active directly assisted in the qualification and certification of eight pilots across two helicopter platforms in addition to certifying eighteen shipboard aviation support crewmembers.

While moored in San Diego, Active embarked a joint aircrew and helicopter from HITRON [Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron] and Coast Guard Air Station San Francisco. HITRON is a Jacksonville, Florida-based specialized law enforcement unit. HITRON crews are trained to use airborne use of force for non-compliant vessels suspected of violating U.S. and international laws to comply with lawful orders.

“The Active crew performed superbly in every assigned mission during this patrol,” said Cmdr. Brian Tesson, Active’s commanding officer. “Presented with myriad challenges, from engineering casualties to Omicron safety protocols, this crew made a bold statement by stepping out with a positive, can-do attitude in the face of adversity, defining what it means to work aboard the ‘Li’l Tough Guy.’ Bringing their best selves to the job daily, the crew patrolled the Eastern Pacific Ocean to deter and suppress transnational crime and narcotics smuggling while training and qualifying crewmembers as they honed new personal and professional skills. I watched this team overcome each consecutive obstacle with ingenuity, fortitude and professionalism. I could not be more proud to be a part of it.”

Active’s crew departed in mid-December and were unable to spend time with family and loved ones during the holiday season. However, as is typical for the Active and Coast Guard cutter crews in general, they came together as a family to create a number of great memories during the patrol. The Active’s crew found ways to keep spirits high while patrolling the high seas through conducting drills and training or gathered during one of our onboard holiday meals cooked by the Chiefs’ Mess, or over a sparkling apple cider New Year’s Eve

toast.

Nicknamed the Li'l Tough Guy, the 55-year-old medium-endurance cutter routinely operates from the Straits of Juan de Fuca to Central America conducting search and rescue, domestic fisheries enforcement, counter-narcotics law enforcement, and other statutory Coast Guard missions.

CNO and MCPON Visit Norfolk for Naval Safety Command Establishment, Fleet Engagement



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday salutes Sailors

assigned to USS Mason (DDG 87) during a visit to the ship on Feb. 4. CNO Gilday and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith were in Norfolk for an establishment ceremony for the Naval Safety Command, previously known as the Naval Safety Center, and to visit various local commands. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeremy R. Boan*
NORFOLK, Va. – U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell Smith visited Norfolk Naval Station to attend the establishment ceremony of the Naval Safety Command and visit local Norfolk-based commands on Feb. 4.

Gilday was the guest speaker for the establishment ceremony, during which the Naval Safety Center was elevated to the Naval Safety Command.

This elevation, highlighted during his remarks at the Surface Navy Association symposium in January, was a key component of Gilday's call to action for the U.S. Navy to "get real, get better."

"The establishment of the Naval Safety Command expands our focus on safety and leverages 'get real get better' principles, while we evaluate safety management and performance of the Navy and Marine Corps," said Gilday.

The get real, get better program seeks to reduce the gap between the Navy's least and most capable performer, cement dynamic learning and innovation into Navy culture, and build better leaders and teams who are ready to solve problems more effectively.

"The significance of today's establishment can be summarized simply: It's a vital change that will increase warfighting readiness," said Gilday. "Almost no aspect of naval operations can be separated from risk, but risk can be reduced."

The Navy elevated the Naval Safety Center to the Naval Safety Command following the USS Bonhomme Richard fire and the Major

Fires Review.

“We will empower our Sailors, Marines and civilians by collecting their insights to bolster our safety culture,” said Commander, Naval Safety Command Rear Adm. Frederick Luchtman. “Ultimately, the command will serve as a force multiplier of a culture that incorporates risk management and accountability by all individuals, regardless of rank and position.”

Gilday, Luchtman and Hailey unveiled the command’s new seal during the ceremony. Key elements of the seal include a blue and red shield representing protection across the naval enterprise, blue for the Navy’s dominance on, under and over the maritime domain, and red for the courage and tenacity of the Marine Corps, said the command’s press office. The globe behind the shield symbolizes naval warriors, wherever they serve worldwide, under the protection of safety principles.

The new command motto featured on the seal, “Enabling Warfighting Readiness,” is a testament to the command’s mission to preserve warfighting capability, combat lethality and enable readiness by working with its stakeholders to identify and mitigate or eliminate hazards to reduce unnecessary risk to people and resources.

“The Naval Safety Command will provide transparency into emerging risk trends and the current safety status of all commands through enhanced risk identification, communication, and accountability, as well as data collection, management, and product dissemination, which will protect our most important resource, our Sailors, Marines, and civilians whose lives we value above all else.” Luchtman said.

For more information or resources from the Naval Safety Command, visit the command website at <https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil>.

Other Visits

While in Hampton Roads, Gilday and Smith also visited the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mason (DDG 87) and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg (CG 64) where they met with Sailors and leadership.

“Having the opportunity to travel with CNO while having unfiltered, candid conversations with Sailors provides essential feedback that improves our fleet and increases combat readiness. Our people are truly paramount to readiness; without them, Gettysburg and Mason could not perform the multitude of missions they were designed for. It is our Sailors who will ensure we prevail in combat,” said Smith.

Navy, Marine Corps Dismissals for Declining COVID-19 Vaccination on the Rise



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro talks with Chief Engineman Stephen Bashore, aboard the Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) in Ponce, Puerto Rico, Jan. 25. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class T. Logan Keown*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The number of U.S. Marines and Sailors dismissed from the services for refusing vaccination against COVID-19 has grown to well over 600, officials say.

On Feb. 2, the Navy announced it has dismissed 118 Sailors, 96 active duty and 22 recruits who had served less than 180 days. All have received honorable discharges, according to the Navy. No reservists have been dismissed to date.

The next day, the Marine Corps reported 469 uniformed personnel have been separated from the service for incomplete vaccination. According to Marine Corps guidance, any active duty Marine who did not receive a final vaccination dose, by Nov. 14, 2021, or reservist by Dec. 14, 2021 “is considered unvaccinated.”

According to Defense Department statistics, 194,689 active duty and reserve Marines were fully vaccinated by Feb. 2 and

384,586 Sailors and reservists met full vaccination requirements. Both the Navy and Marine Corps, as well as the Pentagon, consider COVID-19 a readiness issue requiring full vaccination for all military personnel.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro became the latest Pentagon official to test positive for COVID-19 on Jan. 31. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. Mark Milley, all tested positive in early January.

Del Toro, who was fully vaccinated and had received a booster shot, said he would quarantine for a minimum of five days in accordance with the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He planned to attend key meetings and discussions virtually and when necessary, be represented by Meredith Berger performing the duties of undersecretary of the Navy.

The Navy has granted 269 Sailors medical exemptions to mandatory vaccination, all but 10 of them temporary. The nine medical exemptions granted reservists were all temporary. By Feb. 2, the Navy also granted 60 administrative exemptions for active duty Sailors and 23 for reservists. However, not a single request for exemption from vaccination on religious grounds, has been granted to any of the 3,288 active duty Sailors and 773 reservists who requested one.

The Marine Corps reported a combined 665 administrative or medical exemptions had been approved by Feb. 2. Of 3,538 requests for religious accommodation to skip the vaccine mandate, 3,414 have been processed and only three requests were approved. The Marines are the only armed service, so far, to issue a religious exemption for the vaccine mandate. In a letter to Rep. Darrell Issa (R-California), first reported by Military.com, a Marine Corps official explained that even those three Marines granted religious accommodation were, in effect, no longer serving or soon leaving the Marine Corps.

The high rejection numbers for exemption requests, particularly for religious accommodation, have sparked numerous complaints to members of Congress that they are being handled in a pro forma review with nearly identical rejection letters.

That prompted Issa, a highly vocal critic of the Pentagon's vaccination mandate, to write Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger Jan. 17 for an explanation of the exemption process. In a statement released by his office, Issa said the vaccine mandate "is ending careers of distinction, ruining lives of service, and weakening America's force readiness. This isn't how the military wants to treat its own – it's how the president and his team show their unprecedented hostility to our men and women in uniform. I will not stand for this betrayal."

Issa and 14 other House Republicans have written House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-Connecticut) urging funding for the vaccination mandate be prohibited in any pending defense spending bill.

In a Jan. 21 letter to Issa, J.J. Daly, deputy legislative assistant in the Marines' Office of Legislative Affairs, explained that of the three Marines who received a religious exemption, two were "on terminal leave" and the other "has transitioned into the Department of Defense Skill Bridge Program, a 180-day training program in private industry." Marine Corps leadership determined that "the likelihood of their vaccination status impacting military readiness and health and safety was remote because the requestors are no longer serving with Marine Corps commands."

He noted chaplains counsel every Marine who submits a religious accommodation request and provide advice to the adjudication authority for each request. However, "the ultimate question is whether or not approving the request will have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion,

good order and discipline, or health and safety. This is a decision that requires consideration of factors that fall outside the expertise of a trained chaplain,” Daly wrote.

Navy to Commission Future Littoral Combat Ship Savannah



USS Independence (LCS-2), shown here at Naval Air Station Key West, Florida in 2010. The newest Independence-class littoral combat ship, the future USS Savannah, will be commissioned Feb. 5. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will commission the future USS Savannah (LCS 28) as the newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship during a 10:00 a.m. EST ceremony Saturday, Feb. 5,

in Brunswick, Georgia, the Defense Department said Feb. 4.

Remarks will be provided by Rep. Earl L. "Buddy" Carter, R-Georgia; Meredith Berger, performing the duties of the undersecretary of the Navy; Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, Commander, Naval Air Systems Command; Van Johnson, mayor of Savannah; Cosby Johnson, mayor of Brunswick; and Larry Ryder, vice president of Business Development and External Affairs, Austal USA.

The ship's sponsor is Dianne Davison Isakson, wife of the late Johnny Isakson, former senator from Georgia. In a time-honored Navy tradition, Isakson, along with the matron of honor, her daughter Julie Isakson Mitchell, will give the first order to "man our ship and bring her to life."

"The city of Savannah, Georgia, has played an important role in our nation's naval history," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. "I have no doubt the Sailors of USS Savannah will carry on the fighting spirit of this city and will play an important role in the defense of our nation and maritime freedom."

The LCS class consists of two variants, the Freedom and the Independence, designed and built by two industry teams. Lockheed Martin leads the Freedom variant team, or odd-numbered hulls, constructed in Marinette, Wisconsin. Austal USA leads the Independence variant team in Mobile, Alabama for LCS 2 and the subsequent even-numbered hulls.

Savannah is the 14th Independence variant LCS and the sixth ship to bear its name. USS Savannah will homeport at Naval Base San Diego, California.

The ceremony will be live streamed at: [USS Savannah Commissioning](#). The link becomes active approximately 10 minutes prior to the event (9:50 a.m. EST).

Navy Orders Nine Additional CH-53K Helicopters for the U.S. Marine Corps



A CH-53K King Stallion (right) and a CH-53E Super Stallion are staged during a redesignation ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina, Jan. 24, 2022. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Elias E. Pimentel III*

STRATFORD, Conn. – Prioritizing affordability and utilizing advanced manufacturing techniques, Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, will build nine additional CH-53K aircraft at a lower unit price than previous lot buys, resulting in significant savings for the U.S. government and taxpayers, the company said Feb. 3. The company's experienced supply chain coupled with its active digital approach drives speed and

affordability throughout design, development, production, and sustainment.

The CH-53K will further support the U.S. Marine Corps in its mission to conduct expeditionary heavy-lift assault transport of armored vehicles, equipment, and personnel to support distributed operations deep inland from a sea-based center of operations, critical in the Indo-Pacific region.

These nine helicopters are part of 200 aircraft program of record for the U.S. Marine Corps with deliveries beginning in 2025.

“By embracing resilient, predictive logistics and sustainment, we are enabling CH-5K crews to make smarter, faster decisions, to increase reliability, and improve readiness and material availability at reduced burden to the fleet,” said Bill Falk, Sikorsky Director, CH-53K programs. “After 50 years of supporting the CH-53E, Sikorsky has a deep understanding of the heavy-lift mission and an enduring partnership with the U.S. Marines Corps enabling our team and our proven supply chain to offer tailored solutions resulting in more efficient missions.”

The aircraft will be built at Sikorsky headquarters in Stratford, Connecticut, leveraging the company’s digital build and advanced technology production processes.

The factory is active with seven CH-53K aircraft in build and there are 47 more aircraft in various stages of production.

Sikorsky has made significant investments in workforce training, tooling, and machinery to increase the number of aircraft built and delivered year over year.

In total, Sikorsky has delivered five operational CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters to the U.S. Marine Corps in Jacksonville, North Carolina, with four more planned for delivery this year.

The CH-53K program operated by the U.S. Marine Corps entered Initial Operational Test and Evaluation in 2021 and is set to conclude in 2022.

Sikorsky has a strong foundation to support the CH-53K because the company already provides the U.S. Marines with predictive maintenance on the legacy CH-53E by utilizing the Fleet Common Operating Environment enabling the shift from reactive to predictive maintenance.

The CH-53K aircraft is equipped with Integrated Vehicle Health Management System, which will transition the U.S. Marines from fixed-interval to on-condition maintenance resulting in lower maintenance crew hours, reduced life cycle costs, and increased aircraft readiness.

Lockheed Martin is working with the U.S. Navy on a performance-based logistics contract that expands from the CH-53E to add the CH-53K with a contract award expected this year.

CNO Visits Philadelphia Navy Commands; Emphasizes Importance of Columbia-class Submarines



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday speaks with Sailors assigned to the future USS Lenah H.S. Higbee (DDG 123) at Naval Surface Warfare Center, Philadelphia Division, Feb. 3. *U.S. NAVY / Lt. Rachel Maul*

PHILADELPHIA – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday and Rear Adm. Douglas Perry, director, undersea warfare division, visited Philadelphia-based Navy commands, Feb. 3, the CNO’s public affairs office said in a release.

Together, they visited the Naval Foundry and Propeller Center and Naval Surface Warfare Command Center, Philadelphia Division, where Gilday toured the facilities, spoke with Sailors and Navy civilians, and received updates about Columbia-class submarine construction.

“The impressive cadre of engineers here who are delivering world-class results are a national treasure,” said Gilday. “The work you are doing here is vital to national security, as well of that of our Allies and partners.”

Columbia-class submarines are the Navy’s number one

acquisition priority, Gilday added.

“These submarines need to be delivered on time, on budget and ready for the fight – and that’s what we intend to do,” Gilday said. “Working together, we will get them off of the production line and into the fleet where they belong.”

The Columbia-class submarine is the nation’s future sea-based strategic deterrent and will provide the most survivable leg of the Nation’s strategic triad. It replaces the currently serving Ohio-class submarines and must be constructed and delivered beginning in fiscal year 2028 to meet U.S. Strategic Command requirements. These ballistic missile submarines serve as an undetectable launch platform for submarine-launched ballistic missiles and are designed specifically for stealth and the precise delivery of nuclear warheads.

Gilday toured the Naval Sea Systems Command Compatibility Test Facility where he saw the shipboard-representative Columbia Integrated Propulsion System prototypes in operation and the Arleigh Burke-class Land-Based Engineering Site. He also received updates about the developing electrical and propulsion test facility risk-reduction capabilities for newer classes of ships, including the next-generation destroyer (DDG(X)), Constellation-class frigates, and unmanned surface vehicles.

“Fielding greater numbers of more affordable, smaller surface combatants, like the new Constellation-class frigates, allows us to operate in a more distributed manner – both in day-to-day competition and in high-end combat,” said Gilday. “Because of the work of our systems commands and our partnerships with industry, we will continue to successfully compete and win.”

Throughout the visit Gilday expressed his gratitude for the innovation and dedication Sailors and civilians have shown to keep these manufacturing and testing efforts on track, especially amidst the pandemic.

“To the entire workforce here, you directly support and generate warfighting readiness and have my profound thanks,” said Gilday. “Your hard work and commitment to the Fleet is appreciated, and what you are doing is critical for us to be able to protect our Nation.”

The visit marked Gilday’s first trip to Philadelphia since he assumed his duties as CNO.

NSWCPD’s mission is to provide research, development, test and evaluation, acquisition support, engineering, systems integration, in-service engineering and fleet support with cyber-security, comprehensive logistics and life-cycle savings through commonality for surface and undersea vehicle machinery, ship systems, equipment and material and to execute other responsibilities.

Rear Adm. Okano: Modern Sensors Making Navy Ships ‘Data-Providing Monsters’



Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Pinckney (DDG 91) transits the South China Sea in July 2021. Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program Block 3 is being installed on Pinckney, giving it an electronic attack capability. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jeffery L. Southerland*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Sensors on naval platforms are becoming multi-purpose – some even weapons – and are making the U.S. Navy's surface ships the most data-rich platforms in the Department of Defense as their sensors become part of an analog-to-digital transformation, a senior Navy program executive said.

Noting the amount of data that comes from modern surface-ship sensors, Rear Adm. Seiko Okano, program executive officer – Integrated Warfare Systems, speaking Feb. 3 during the Combat Systems Symposium conducted by the American Society of Naval Engineers, said the amount “is absolutely incredible. ... Our surface ships are the most data-rich platforms ever. ... We are data-providing monsters.”

She noted that each array face of the SPY-6 radar for the Flight III Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyer (DDG) is producing terabytes per minute of data.

“We’re right now not digesting that to its full capacity,” she said. “We’re doing with that what we did 40 years ago, ... which is why we’ve got to invest in digitizing our fleet and the power of AI/ML [artificial intelligence/machine learning]. There’s so much capability we’ve got to unleash from those sensors alone.

“We’ve shifted to this digital era,” Okano said. “Where before, your hardware and software were really tightly coupled ... now it is all software-programmable. And that’s the world we’re living with SEWIP [Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program], Aegis, SPY-6 and our sensors right now, which allows us to change and adapt a lot faster than we ever had before.”

Okano pointed to examples of radars such as the SPS-48 and SPS-49 search radars as single-purpose sensors. The trend now, she said, is “we’re going multi-mission. These sensors are no longer just used for air search or surface search.

“Are we really unleashing the power of what we are putting on board ships?” she asked. “Our infrastructure isn’t one that really we can manipulate that sensor to do whatever we want. We’re already behind the power curve.”

The admiral noted new sensors “are absolutely fantastic and they are only getting more powerful.”

She noted SEWIP Block 3 [SLQ-32(V)7] is being installed on the Arleigh Burke-class DDG USS Pinckney. This SEWIP block has an electronic attack capability.

“Sensors [are] becoming weapon systems,” Okano said. “You’re both sensing and you’ve got a capability to react as well. [That] is the world we’re getting into.”

First MQ-4C Triton with Multi-Intelligence Upgrade Delivered to the Navy



A Northrop Grumman Corp. MQ-4C Triton takes to the skies over the California desert as the Triton low-rate initial production schedule progresses. Known as B8, this is the first production Triton to be upgraded to the multi-intelligence configuration to meet the Navy's critical maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting needs. B8 was delivered to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, on Feb. 1.

ARLINGTON, Va. – The first production MQ-4C Triton unmanned aerial vehicle to be upgraded to the multi-intelligence configuration was delivered to the U.S. Navy at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, on Feb. 1, Northrop Grumman

said in a release.

The MQ-4C's new configuration Integrated Functional Capability Four is designed to bring an enhanced multi-mission sensor capability as part of the Navy's Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting transition plan.

The Triton, designated B8 by the manufacturer, Northrop Grumman, went through a 30-month modification period to the new configuration.

The two MQ-4Cs currently deployed to Guam for the U.S. 7th Fleet's Task Force 72 by Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19) as part of the early operational capability deployment are in the baseline IFC-3 configuration.

The Triton in the IFC-4 configuration is designed to complement the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and eventually will enable the Navy to retire its EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft. The initial operational capability for the Triton will be declared in 2023 when IFC-4-configured Tritons are deployed in one complete orbit. The Navy plans to deploy Triton to five orbits worldwide.