

# Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba Returns Home to Boston After 61-Day Patrol



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC 907), returned home to Boston, Tuesday, following a 61-day counter-narcotics patrol in the Caribbean Ocean. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

BOSTON –The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba (WMEC 907), returned home to Boston, Tuesday, following a 61-day counter-narcotics patrol in the Caribbean Ocean, the Coast Guard 1st District said in an April 19 release.

The 270-foot Escanaba's 100-person crew supported operation Leeward Horizon and Unified Resolve, presidential initiatives designed to disrupt transnational criminal organizations in Central and South America.

Escanaba's crew deployed with two members from the Barbadian Coast Guard, helping strengthen a vital maritime partnership and improving the interoperability between the two nations.

While transiting to their operational area, Escanaba's crew provided humanitarian and medical assistance to 25 Haitian migrants including five children and a pregnant woman. The migrants were rescued from an unseaworthy vessel and were ultimately repatriated to Haiti.

The crew of Escanaba also rescued two mariners stranded at sea approximately 25 miles from St. Lucia and conducted two boardings of Venezuelan fishing vessels actively fishing in the territorial seas of other countries. These boardings assisted in the disruption and reporting of wide spread illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU) in the area.

"I am very pleased with the total team effort from our crew on this patrol," said Cmdr. Mike Nalli, Escanaba's commanding officer. "We completed multiple training events with partner nations to combat the flow of illegal drugs into our country and disrupt the criminal networks which operate in that part of the Caribbean. Overall, the crew and I are thrilled with what we accomplished and are excited to be home."

In addition, the crew of Escanaba also completed a biennial training assessments in Mayport, Florida prior to patrol departure. This training evaluated their overall readiness in five warfare categories: Weapons Systems, Command and Control, Damage Control and Medical, Engineering, and Navigation and Seamanship. Demonstrating proficient mission capabilities, the crew completed over 65 drills and evaluations, earning an overall score of 96%.

Known as "The Pride of Boston," the Escanaba is a medium-endurance cutter homeported in Boston.

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# Crowley Completes First U.S. Design for Fully Electric Tug with Autonomous Technology



An illustration of Crowley's fully electric tugboat with autonomous technology. *CROWLEY ENGINEERING SERVICES*  
SEATTLE – Crowley Engineering Services has completed the design of the first fully electric U.S. tugboat with autonomous technology, providing operators a sustainable and high-performing system for ship assist and harbor services in any port, the company said in a April 19 release.

The Crowley design, powered by the expertise of recently integrated subsidiary Jensen Maritime, leverages a large battery system and power saving technology to operate in a fully electric mode while producing zero air emissions or greenhouse gases. The 82-foot tug will provide 70 short tons of bollard pull, featuring an Azimuthing drive propulsion system with two 1,800 kW motors and a 6 MWh battery.

The new design is featured in an animated video [available here](#).

The design also supports fully customizable features to meet the vessel design requirements with the future in mind. The platform design can be adjusted for alternate power capacities suitable for a standard hybrid framework if desired. The fully modular batteries allow for upgrades as technology changes. In addition, Crowley has developed an onshore charging station to fully support charging and reliable performance at the home port.

“Crowley’s design provides operators the tugboat solution to continue serving ships quickly and powerfully, while reducing their environmental impact by eliminating a carbon footprint,” said Ray Martus, vice president, Crowley Engineering Services. “This new design sets the standard for innovation by showing that sustainability and power can work together seamlessly in our maritime industries.”

With no exhaust stack, the tug has 360 degrees of visibility from the pilot’s station, allowing the operator to see without obstruction. The tug has also been designed for future autonomous operation to increase the safety and efficiency of the operation including integrated automation and control systems. The intelligent maneuvering and control system offers more efficient vessel operations and allows masters to focus holistically on the overall control and positioning of the vessel in increasingly busy harbors.

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**Vice Adm. Linda L. Fagan**

# Nominated to be Coast Guard Vice Commandant, First Coast Guard Female 4-Star Admiral



Vice Adm. Linda L. Fagan, nominated to be the next vice

commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

WASHINGTON – Vice Adm. Linda L. Fagan has been nominated by the White House to be the next vice commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, the service's headquarters announced in an April 19 release.

She currently serves as the commander of the Coast Guard Pacific Area, overseeing all Coast Guard missions from the Rocky Mountains to the waters off the East Coast of Africa. Fagan concurrently serves as commander, Defense Force West and provides Coast Guard mission support to the Department of Defense and Combatant Commanders. Fagan is a 1985 graduate of the Coast Guard Academy and is the Coast Guard's first-ever Gold Ancient Trident, the officer with the longest service record in the Marine Safety field.

"Vice Adm. Fagan is an outstanding leader with 36 years of Coast Guard operations, policy-making, joint service, and interagency experience," said Adm. Karl L. Schultz, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. "Throughout her distinguished career, she has been a top performer and a trailblazer. As the Coast Guard's first female four-star admiral, and President Biden's nominee to serve as the Coast Guard's 32nd vice commandant, Adm. Fagan will be instrumental in moving the Service forward at a critical juncture in our history."

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas released a statement on Fagan's nomination.

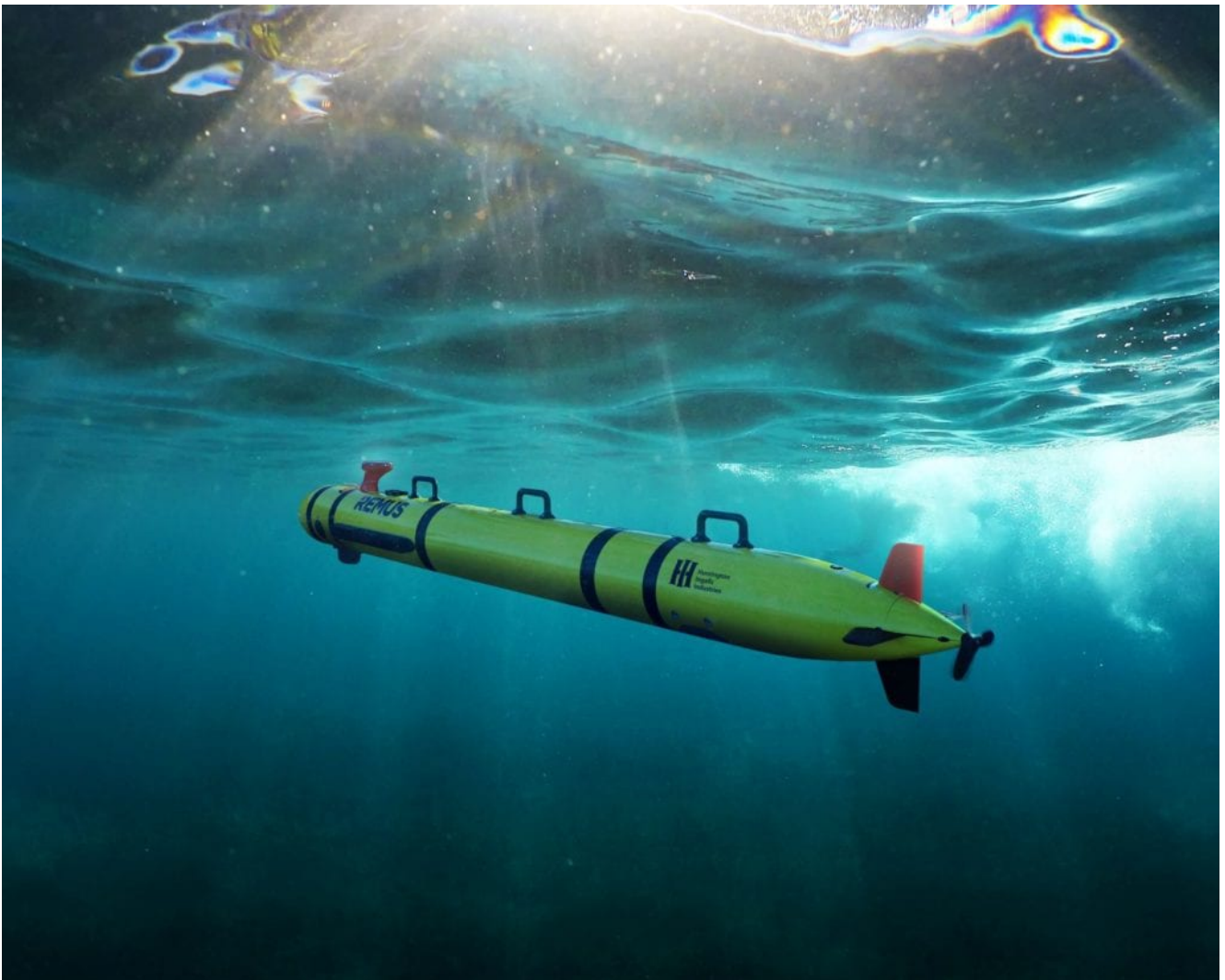
"I am pleased that President Biden has nominated Vice Admiral Linda Fagan to be the vice commandant of the United States Coast Guard," it says. "She is a superb leader who, as the 32nd vice commandant, will guide the Coast Guard at a time when its mission of securing our maritime borders, ports, and waterways has never been more important. If confirmed, Vice Admiral Fagan would serve as the first woman to be promoted to a 4-star rank in the Coast Guard. We are grateful to Vice Admiral Fagan for continuing her service to country, for the

trail she has blazed, and for inspiring us all.”

Pending confirmation, Fagan is expected to relieve current Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Charles W. Ray on June 18.

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## **HII Announces Commercial Release of REMUS 300 Unmanned Underwater Vehicle**



Huntington Ingalls Industries' Technical Solutions division

has announced the commercial release of its REMUS 300 unmanned underwater vehicle, shown here in an artist's rendering.

#### *HUNTINGTON INGALLS INDUSTRIES*

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries announced on April 19 the commercial release of its REMUS 300 unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV). This new, open architecture, small-class UUV can dive to depths of 305 meters (1,000 feet) and has endurance options up to 30 hours.

“The REMUS 300 is the most advanced small-class UUV on the market,” said Duane Fotheringham, president of the Unmanned Systems business group in HII’s Technical Solutions division. “It combines everything we’ve learned from more than 20 years of development on our REMUS 100 systems with enhancements like advanced modularity and a more robust structure and sensors. We’re excited to offer this solution to customers who are looking to dive deeper and go longer with a flexible, man-portable system.”

Built on the REMUS Technology Platform, the REMUS 300 has compact and efficient core electronics, advanced autonomy and a common operating system that allows for interoperability with the entire REMUS family of systems. Its open architecture design and modularity enable integration of the latest hardware and software, with an optional hardware development kit and software development kit to enable third-party integration.

The REMUS 300 design incorporates feedback from hundreds of REMUS 100 users and provides the ability to exchange payloads, allowing application flexibility. Common applications include mine countermeasures, hydrographic survey, rapid environmental assessment, search and recovery, and marine research. Modular energy sections allow for field replacement of 1.5, 3.0 or 4.5 kilowatt-hour lithium-ion batteries enabling up to 10, 20 or 30 hours of endurance.

More than 500 REMUS UUVs have been sold to 25 countries

worldwide. Standard configurations of the REMUS 300 can now be acquired internationally and commercially, with orders being accepted now for delivery in 2022.

Learn more about the new REMUS 300 UUV at: <https://tsd.huntingtoningalls.com/capabilities/unmanned-systems/unmanned-underwater-vehicles/remus300m/>.

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## HII Achieves Milestone in RCOH of USS George Washington



The aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73) celebrated the reopening of the aft crew mess with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 16, 2021. Pictured (Left to right): Capt. Kenneth Strong, the ship's commanding officer; CVN 73 program director Thomasina Wright; and Scott Menkes, deputy project

supervisor for Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Newport News. *U.S. NAVY / MCSN Dakota Nack*

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding division reached a major milestone on the refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) of USS George Washington (CVN 73), the company said in an April 16 release.

Following a ribbon-cutting ceremony, Sailors ate the first meal prepared in the galley in the nearly three years since the ship arrived at Newport News. The opening of the crew galley is one of the last significant steps before the first 1,100 Sailors are expected to move aboard in June.

“George Washington has gone through a transformation since it arrived at Newport News for the mid-life refueling overhaul and maintenance availability,” said Todd West, Newport News' vice president, in-service aircraft carrier programs. “The crew beginning their move aboard and the reopening of berthing spaces and galleys, all supporting our nearing completion of the RCOH, is a sign that the ship is being brought back to life. We look forward to continuing our work with our Navy partners to redeliver the ship to the fleet.”

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier is in the final stages of testing, which is designed to exercise all aspects of the propulsion plant systems and will certify the systems and components for future operations over the next 25 years of service. The RCOH is more than 85% complete, and the ship is on track to be re-delivered to the Navy in 2022.

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# Aircraft Carrier Industrial

# Base Coalition Confident of Another Dual-CV Buy



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), due to be retired, a move opposed by the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The chairman of the industrial coalition of suppliers for the Navy's aircraft carriers said the coalition supports continuing to build large aircraft carriers instead of light ones and predicts there will be another dual-carrier procurement in the future.

"We're strong supporters of the large platform," said Rick Giannini, chairman of the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition (ACIBC), who also is president and chief executive

officer of Milwaukee Valve Co. in New Berlin, Wisconsin, in an interview with *Seapower*.

Giannini said the size of the Navy's carrier aircraft demand a large flight deck to sustain a high sortie rate and that a large aircraft carrier is the most survivable airfield.

The Navy will be conducting an analysis of the concept of light aircraft carriers.

"I believe the L-class ships [amphibious assault ships] operating with the F-35B would fit that bill," said Rear Adm. Gregory Harris, the Navy's director for Air Warfare, speaking last month at a Navy League Special Topic Breakfast webinar, sponsored by General Dynamics. "Others would disagree."

Harris said he is "confident that over the long run we'll find that there's not a compelling return on investment to make a smaller carrier just [because of] speed, station-keeping, the air wing that you would put on top of that carrier, and the ability to have the fuel for the air wing and for the carrier to have for the surface combatants."

The ACIBC members meet on Capitol Hill every year to lobby Congress. This year's virtual session included more than 260 companies holding more than 123 scheduled meetings with members of Congress to impress upon them the importance of aircraft carriers to the national defense.

"We're doing everything we can to get that message out," Gianni said.

The ACIBC represents the more than 2,000 supplier companies in 46 states, supporting 92,000-plus jobs. These companies inject over \$8.8 billion into our nation's economy.

He was critical of proposed initiatives to retire the USS Harry S. Truman instead of refueling it for another quarter century of service, noting the Navy risks falling below the

legally mandated number of 11 aircraft carriers.

That leads right back to the industrial base, because for us it's all about stability and predictability of where those funds are coming from," Giannini said, noting that the Navy's two-ship buy of CVN 80 and 81 brought a lot of stability to the suppliers.

"We're always concerned when a new administration comes in every time these things are starting over for the next ship in the class," he said. "We're fortunate right now; we have two [CVNs] in the pipeline – orders in [fiscal 2019] for eight years of work. We're still confident that the reasons carriers have been required for the last 50 years aren't going to be any different than the requirements for the next 50 to 100 years.

"We remain confident there will be another block buy for [CVNs] 82 and 83, because it is the best way to spend the nation's money, which is to ensure that the supply base has this steady and predictable stream of work, so we can lower the cost," he said.

Giannini pointed to the example of a class of valves supplied by his company that, because of the last dual-carrier buy, were produced at 20-25% lower cost. Not only is the cost being reduced because the orders for both ships come at once, but additional cost savings come by being able to order materials at today's prices rather than at future prices.

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## **USS Oakland Commissioning**

# Ceremony Set for April 17



The USS Independence, a sister ship to the future USS Oakland, which will be commissioned on Saturday, April 17. U.S. NAVY ARLINGTON – The Navy's newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship, the future USS Oakland (LCS 24), will be commissioned at 10:00 a.m. PST on Saturday, April 17, 2021 in Oakland, California, the Defense Department said in an April 16 release.

Due to public health and safety concerns related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the commissioning will be a private event. The ceremony will be live-streamed for those unable to attend. The following link will become active approximately five minutes prior to the event (9:55 a.m. PST): <https://allhands.navy.mil/Live-Stream>.

Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas W. Harker, will deliver the commissioning ceremony's principal address. Ms. Kate Brandt, Google sustainability officer, is the ship's sponsor.

The ceremony will be highlighted by a time-honored Navy tradition when Ms. Brandt gives the order to “man our ship and bring her to life!”

Cmdr. Francisco X. Garza, a native of Phoenix, Arizona, is the ship’s commanding officer and leads a crew of 70 officers and enlisted personnel. The 3,200-ton Oakland was built by General Dynamics/Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. The ship is 421 feet in length, has a beam of 103 feet, and a navigational draft of 15 feet. The ship is powered by two gas turbine engines, two main propulsion diesel engines, and four waterjets to reach speeds up to 40-plus knots.

“The USS Oakland crew is excited and ready to bring our ship to life and join the fleet,” said Garza. “We are privileged to be a part of this ship and embody the spirit of the people of Oakland. As plank owners and future crew members build a positive legacy for this ship, the city of Oakland will experience those successes with us.”

Oakland is the third ship to bear the name. She is the 12th Independence-variant LCS and the 297th ship to join our battle force. The littoral combat ship is a fast, agile, focused-mission platform designed to operate in near-shore environments, while capable of open-ocean tasking and winning against 21st-century coastal threats such as submarines, mines, and swarming small craft. The LCS is capable of supporting forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence.

USS Oakland will be homeported at Naval Base San Diego, California.

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**Five Marine Officers  
Nominated, Renominated to Lt.  
General**



Lt. Gen. David G. Bellon, reappointed to the grade of lieutenant general and assigned as commander, Marine Forces Reserve, one of several nominations announced April 16. *U.S. MARINE CORPS*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced April 16 that the president has made the following

nominations:

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. David G. Bellon for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commander, Marine Forces Reserve; and commander, Marine Forces South. Bellon is currently serving as commander, U.S. Marine Forces Reserve, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. George W. Smith Jr. for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force. Smith is currently serving as the deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

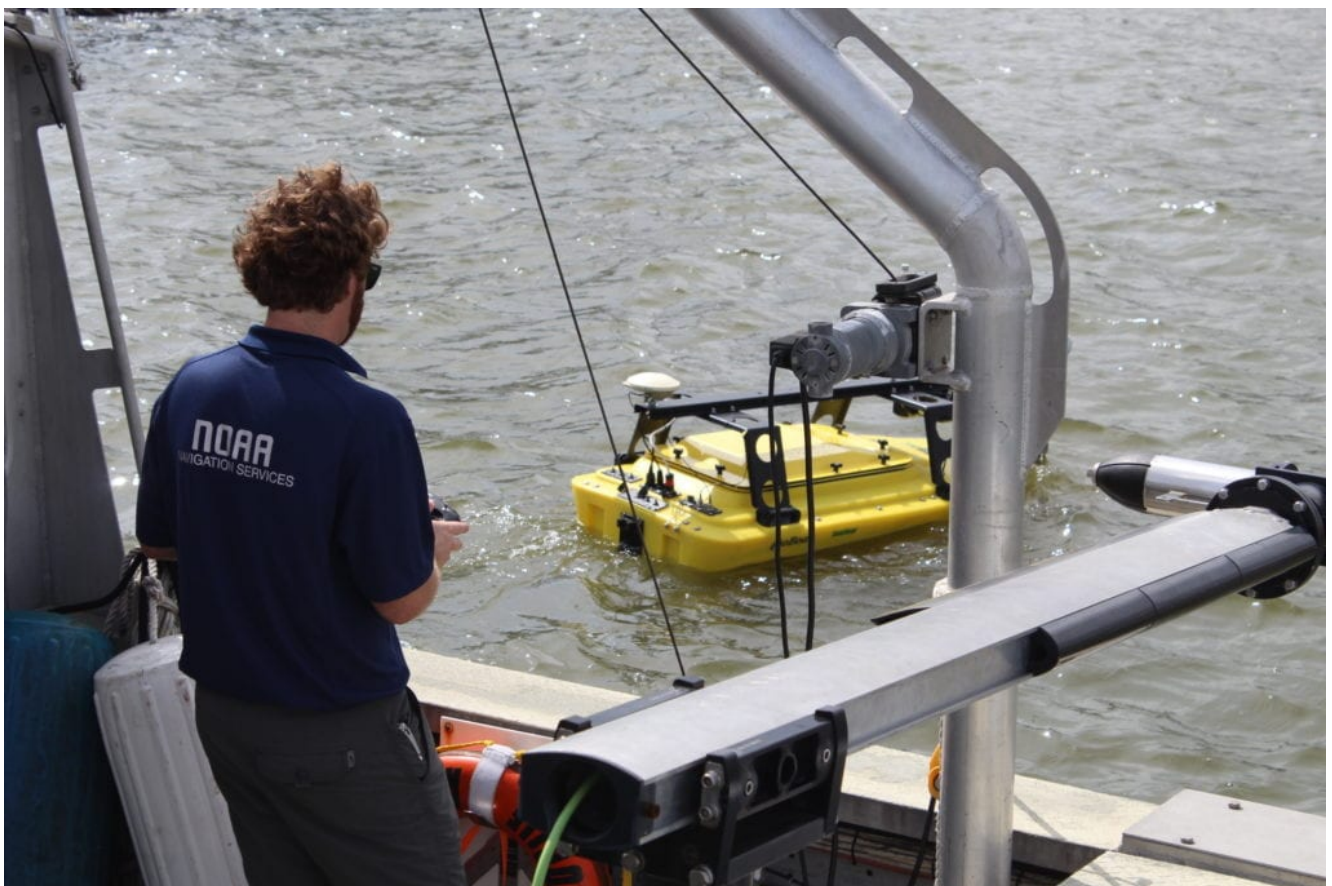
Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Edward D. Banta for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as deputy commandant for installations and logistics, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. Banta is currently serving as commander, Marine Corps Installations Command; and assistant deputy commandant for installations and logistics (facilities), Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Kevin M. Iiams for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commanding general, Training and Education Command. Iiams is currently serving as the assistant deputy commandant for combat development and integration; and deputy commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. William M. Journey for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general, and assignment as commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force. Journey is currently serving as commanding general, Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command; and commanding general, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California.

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# Forecasting for the Fleet: Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command Monitors Weather, Ocean and Atmospheric Conditions to Keep the Navy in the Fight



Personnel from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) operate an autonomous surface vehicle (USV) in the Port of Gulfport, Miss., during the Commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command's (CNMOC) Advanced Naval Technology Exercise (ANTX) on Nov. 6, 2019. ANTX is a catalyst for innovation, experimentation and high velocity

learning featuring more than 50 participants including industry partners. The exercise tests and evaluates technologies and future concepts that address human and machine interactions within the maritime domain. *NAVAL OCEANOGRAPHY / Kayla Adcock*

Everyone wants accurate weather predictions, but for the military, and the Navy in particular, they can be crucial – typhoons can sink ships and bad weather can force operational delays.

Providing timely and accurate weather predictions and information about the maritime environment falls to the roughly 2,500 military members and civilians who work for the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command.

“Naval oceanography applies meteorological, oceanographic and astrometric decision-science expertise across every aspect of warfare,” said Rear Adm. John A. Okon, who heads the Stennis Space Flight Center, Mississippi-based command. “No other organization across our government, [including] the Department of Defense, applies this knowledge under, on or above the sea in a manner with assured information that can be protected and relied upon in the high-end fight.”

The Navy’s antisubmarine, mine, electromagnetic and special warfare communities all depend upon information the Naval Oceanography Operations Command – which reports to Okon – gathers and processes. Six Pathfinder-class (T-AGS) survey ships and a fleet of unmanned underwater vehicles operate while forward deployed, constantly compiling data.

Buoyancy gliders, drifters, upper-air balloons, satellites and telescopes monitor the operational space from the ocean floor to the stars, providing commanders with real-time understanding of the conditions in which they conduct their missions. The data is processed into numerical models that forecast conditions of the atmosphere, ocean, waves, ice and surf as accurately as possible – and predict how they would affect the performance of weapons systems and fleet

operations.

“We use high-performance computing to match with the expert knowledge of our Sailors and civilians – subject matter experts – to develop various certain scenarios that might affect fleet operations,” Okon said.

For example, a typhoon moving through the Western Pacific would certainly curtail surface-fleet operations, Okon said, but offer optimal conditions to conduct antisubmarine warfare. “This is a critical tier that develops environmental knowledge and a predictive advantage to the fleet.”

### **Round the Clock Forecasting**

The Fleet Numerical Meteorology and Oceanography Center (FNMOC) engages in round-the-clock, high-performance computing at all levels of security, from unclassified to top secret. “FNMOC has the nation’s only information-assured modeling capability,” Okon said.

Fleet weather centers at Norfolk and San Diego naval stations can take information from both the Oceanography Operations Command and FNMOC and provide operational area forecasts to the fleet as it is in route, Okon said. Even though such actions ensure a margin of safety, Okon pointed out that “Mother Nature always gets a vote.”

The cooperative effort among the production centers and the fleet weather center provides further information that would keep the forces of nature from wreaking havoc on a mission, Okon said. Additionally, the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., provides the authoritative time reference essential for precise navigation and positioning necessary for accurate computer operation, as well as targeting of weapons and systems.

Okon described the concept of battlespace on demand as a multi-tiered pyramid. The bottom layer consists of

observational platforms, with eyes on the oceans, the atmosphere and space. The next tier employs models generated from those observations, providing a functional understanding and prediction of any given environment. The top layer, he said, uses the collected information to determine how the environment would affect performance of forces and systems.

Ultimately, Okon said, the highly trained Sailors and civilians who work under him are experts in disseminating the data and providing the fleet with the predictive advantage they need. The work at hand requires what he calls a highly trained and motivated staff of apprentice, journeyman and master forecasters. "They're the ones who link the data to decisions," Okon said.



AGC Asya Andrews (right) reviews model data with her OA Division team onboard USS America (LHA- 6) to assess impacts of a developing tropical depression in the South China Sea in this 2017 photo. As a result of forecasting and model performance, the team anticipated the formation of Tropical Depression 01W and provided critical recommendations to the

Amphibious Readiness Group that ensured safety of navigation during their transit home from their 5th and 7th Fleet Deployment. *NAVAL OCEANOGRAPHY / Katey Turfitt*

Much of his enlisted force consists of 975 aerographer's mates. Some 340 officers are oceanographers, the senior-most of whom hold masters' degrees in meteorology.

"We also have civilians who have dedicated their lives to this cause – naval oceanography – to predicting the physical battle space," Okon said.

As technical lead for the command's acoustics department, civilian Joseph Senne evaluates the effects on the environment as sound travels through water and into sediment. Any naval craft – manned, unmanned, surface or subsurface – will be affected, he said.

"We estimate geologic properties so that fleet systems give more accurate predictions of how acoustics interact with the seafloor as they're moving through different world areas," said Senne, a physicist who holds a doctorate in ocean engineering and master's degree in marine science. While the general approach to the job is not new, Senne said, the work constantly changes as computers become more capable.

Senne and his colleagues work with other organizations in the Navy research community, including the Office of Naval Research (ONR), the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) and the warfare development centers.

"We're more the production piece, making sure that the answers we're providing around the world are interacting with tactical decision aids and giving correct answers," Senne said.

The different parts of the ocean change constantly, he said. Salinity, temperature and the water column itself all have an effect on the way sound travels.

"The cutting edge is being able to keep track of the spatial

and temporal variability of the water column, as well as taking advantage of new technologies and methodologies to describe the geo-acoustic environment,” Senne said. “Sound that hits rocky outcroppings is going to behave very differently than when it’s hitting mud.”

Getting this information disseminated and delivered to the captain of a vessel can influence critical decisions. Correct information would better enable a sensor to accurately indicate that an object is one specific distance away or moving in one particular direction. Senne and his colleagues are called upon to spend considerable time at sea plying their trade, with productive results.

“We have mounted sensors on our ships that are multi-beam bathymetry and sub-bottom profiling measurement systems,” Senne said. “They’re putting out sound at very specific frequency bands.”

Based on how the sound reflects off of the sediment, the angle at which it is emitted and returned and travel time, shipboard crews can determine the depth of the water in which they are operating.

“We can do that at very high resolutions and are able to map out the seabed itself,” Senne said. “On top of that, on our acoustic surveys, we will trail seismic-type equipment behind us that is putting sound deeper into the sediment so that it’s not just reflecting from the water-sediment interface but from the layer interfaces of the sediment as well.”

### **Relaying the Message**

The command’s Sailors have to be proficient in jobs that require mastery of a complicated skill set and explain its relevant points to people in leadership who must use them to take critical action at a moment’s notice. Chief Aerographer’s Mate Ciera Greene, an instructor at the Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Center at Point Loma, California, embraces

the challenge.

“It’s super rewarding to have your products be valued at such a high level, and [to be] talking directly to the people making decisions,” Greene said. To be effective, Greene at times has to engage in jargon-filled discourse with her professional colleagues.

“When we’re going through our schooling, we are learning the parameters and rules and science of it all in depth,” Greene said.

But relaying relevant information to those who need it requires a different skill set that also must be learned, Greene said.

“When we talk to other people, we want to explain how we got our answers in definiteness [and] build our credibility,” Greene said. “When a weather briefing is due, you have to understand what everyone is thinking about, the things that matter and the things that could help. And you tailor your briefing to that.”

Bogging down presentations with technical jargon could mean a missed opportunity to inject a valuable piece of information into the decision-making process. The meteorological and oceanographic community, Greene said, uses data from its models primarily provide a level of safety.

“To be a part of the mission in a way that can only make it more efficient and effective is huge,” Greene said. “I’m very proud to be a part of it.”

As quick as Okon is to recognize the contributions civilians and Sailors like Senne and Greene, he understands that continued success hinges upon cooperative arrangements that extend both with and beyond the Navy community. Partnerships with government agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and cooperative research and

development agreements with industry, are essential to speed emerging technology through the production pipeline and deliver it to forward operators.

“It is a very big deal. These are key challenges for us, in under and on the sea,” Okon said.

Arrangements such as the command’s two-decade partnership with the University of Southern Mississippi and the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency, as well as ONR and NRL, are producing results, Okon said.

“The Gulf Coast Tech Bridge Network spans from Tallahassee to Panama City [Florida], to Stennis Space Center[in Mississippi], to New Orleans,” Okon said. “It’s a collaboration of three Navy commands – mine, the Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City Division, and the Naval Research Laboratory at Stennis, and it serves as the nation’s regional super connector – tying together government, industry and academia to solve the Navy’s and nation’s challenges in coastal regions.”

International partners also play essential roles, Okon said, by providing vital oceanographic data and access to ports and harbors around the world. The collective effort, he said, is vital in countering the power competition and thwarting the illegal drug trade.



Naval Oceanographic Office personnel prepare to launch 10 littoral battlespace sensing gliders from USNS Maury in the Eastern Atlantic Ocean in support of NAVOCEANO's goal to deploy more than 50 gliders globally. These gliders are unmanned underwater vehicles used to collect data that is incorporated into ocean models, ultimately providing underwater forecasts for U.S. Navy operations. *NAVAL OCEANOGRAPHY / Rebecca Shaw*

### **Unmanned Expertise**

Additionally, the oceanography community is emerging as a Defense Department leader in the operation of unmanned vehicles, Okon said.

"We are a key component of the Navy's innovation culture of catalysts, and we must outpace our competition to ensure that U.S. forces retain that technical warfighting advantage," Okon said.

With more than 20 years' experience in operating some 100

different unmanned systems, Okon said, only the commercial oil and gas industry has been at it longer. The command has operated these systems in every ocean in the world and has what he described as a significant inventory of vehicles that have logged more than 60,000 miles and 19,000 hours of bottom time in nearly 2,000 sorties.

“We are the only organization in the world to successfully deploy, operate and retrieve the most ocean gliders at one time – more than 100,” Okon said. “We did that from one location, right here at Stennis.”

The combination of human talent and cutting-edge assets, Okon believes, place the oceanography community in a prime role for the continuing effort to maintain freedom of the seas and win wars.

“Wherever the Navy or joint maritime force is,” Okon said, “you will find naval oceanography.”

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## **Flag Officers Newly Nominated as Vice Admirals and Commanders for Three Fleets**



Rear. Adm. Kelly A. Aeschbach, one of six nominations for vice admiral announced on April 15. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III announced a number of Navy flag officer nominations by the president on April 15, including six for vice admiral, three of which would assume command of the U.S. 3rd, 5th and 7th Fleets.

Austin said the president has made the following nominations:

Navy Rear Adm. Kelly A. Aeschbach for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as commander, Naval Information Forces, Suffolk, Virginia. Aeschbach is currently serving as director, National Maritime Intelligence Integration Office; and commander, Office of Naval Intelligence, Washington, D.C.

Navy Vice Adm. Scott D. Conn for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting requirements and capabilities, N-9, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C. Conn is currently serving as commander, Third Fleet, San Diego, California.

Navy Rear Adm. Charles B. Cooper II for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command; commander, Fifth Fleet; and commander, Combined Maritime Forces, Manama, Bahrain. Cooper most recently served as commander, Naval Surface Force, Atlantic, Norfolk, Virginia.

Navy Rear Adm. John V. Fuller for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as inspector general, Department of the Navy, Washington, D.C. Fuller is currently serving as deputy director for force protection, J-8, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.

Navy Rear Adm. Stephen T. Koehler for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as commander, Third Fleet, San Diego, California. Koehler is currently serving as deputy

commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Navy Rear Adm. Karl O. Thomas for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, and assignment as commander, Seventh Fleet, Yokosuka, Japan. Thomas is currently serving as assistant deputy chief of naval operations, plans and strategy, N3/N5B, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Robert T. Clark has been nominated for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Clark is currently serving as deputy commander, Seventh Fleet, Yokosuka, Japan.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Nancy S. Lacore has been nominated for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Lacore is currently serving as chief of staff, U.S. Naval Forces Europe/U.S. Naval Forces Africa/Sixth Fleet, Naples, Italy.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Eileen H. Laubacher has been nominated for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. Laubacher is currently serving as senior defense official/defense attaché – India, New Delhi, India.

Navy Rear Adm. (lower half) Theodore P. LeClair has been nominated for appointment to the grade of rear admiral. LeClair is currently serving as mobilization assistant to the director for operations, J3, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii.