

# I MEF launches Operation Clean Sweep IV to improve barracks habitability



From I Marine Expeditionary Force Communication Strategy and Operations

March 30, 2026

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – I Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Installations West-Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton launched Operation Clean Sweep IV today, continuing a focused effort to improve barracks conditions and strengthen operational readiness.

OCS IV is part of the I MEF / MCI-West Barracks 360 Reset initiative and supports the Commandant of the Marine Corps' broader Barracks 2030 effort to improve unaccompanied housing across the force. The operation focuses on resident

empowerment, leadership engagement and measurable, proactive maintenance.

Barracks 360 Reset began in 2024 with recurring standdowns to surge maintenance and self-help support. The first iteration at Camp Pendleton ran Oct. 16-30, 2024, addressing deferred work through both self-help and contracted support. OCS II followed March 24-April 11, 2025, expanding training while broadening resources to additional bases. OCS III ran Sept. 15-26, 2025, and continued expanding these efforts to Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms and Marine Corps air stations Miramar and Yuma.

I MEF and MCI-West continue Barracks 360 Reset efforts to improve living conditions and operational readiness through enhanced command oversight, maintenance backlog reduction and resident engagement.

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## **U.S. and Colombian Navies Reinforce Partnership at Maritime Staff Talks**



Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, participates in an opening ceremony March 24, 2026 in Cartagena, Colombia. Sardiello, led the U.S. delegation for the annual Maritime Staff Talks, reaffirming the enduring partnership between the two nations and outlining a path for future collaboration in the maritime domain.

By Ensign Paul Archer, March 30, 2026

CARTAGENA, Colombia – Senior naval leaders from the United States and Colombia convened in Cartagena from April 24-27, 2026 for the annual Maritime Staff Talks (MST), reaffirming the enduring partnership between the two nations and outlining a path for future collaboration in the maritime domain.

The U.S. delegation, led by Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, was hosted by the Chief of Naval Operations of the

Colombian Navy, Vice Adm. Carlos Serrano. The tri-service U.S. contingent also included Maj. Gen. Douglas Clark, Deputy Commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South, along with representatives from the Joint Interagency Task Force South and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The talks focused on enhancing interoperability, deepening commitment to mutual security, and advancing a bilateral strategy to address shared challenges across the maritime environment. Key areas of discussion included leveraging upcoming multinational exercises such as PANAMAX and UNITAS to ensure seamless teamwork against common threats.

“The challenges we face in the maritime domain, stemming from illicit trafficking demand a unified response to ensure regional stability,” said Rear Adm. Sardiello. “Through these annual maritime staff talks, we continue to strengthen our partnership and expand operational commitments that increase our combined readiness and effectiveness across the maritime domain.”

As part of the MST, both the U.S. and Colombian delegations delivered presentations on their respective mission objectives and ongoing maritime operations. The agenda also included tours of the COTECMAR Shipyard, the Almirante Padilla Naval Academy, and other key naval facilities in Cartagena, providing the U.S. delegation with firsthand insight into Colombia’s naval capabilities and strategic infrastructure.

The event concluded with the signing of minutes by Rear Adm. Sardiello and Vice Adm. Serrano, formally documenting the key agreements reached and solidifying a collaborative path forward. Both leaders reiterated their shared commitment to the robust and lasting partnership between the United States and Colombia.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet serves as a trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central, and South American maritime forces, working to promote unity, security, and stability throughout the region.

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# **Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, U.S. complete exercise Sea Dragon 2026**



Sea Dragon anti-submarine warfare (ASW) competition participants pose for a group photo at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, March 18, 2026. Participating nations include Royal Australian Air Force, Royal New Zealand Air Force, Indian Navy, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, and the United States Navy. Sea Dragon is a U.S.-led, multinational exercise

designed to train anti-submarine warfare tactics and to operate together in response to maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist First Class Ryan A. LeCompte)

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam – Exercise Sea Dragon 2026 successfully concluded at Andersen Air Force Base, marking the completion of 20 days of intensive multinational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) training, March 28.

Hosted by U.S. Navy Commander, Task Force (CTF) 72, two U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon aircraft from Patrol and Reconnaissance Squadron (VP) 4 and VP-45, joined a multilateral force of P-8A aircraft from the Indian Navy (IN), Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF).

Sea Dragon 2026 continues to enhance the shared maritime domain awareness interoperability developed during previous iterations. This iteration improved on participating nations' ability to conduct multinational ASW operations inside a complex and dynamic exercise environment.

“What we do in Sea Dragon builds more than skill—it establishes a ASW team across nations. The shared experience empowers us to fight together more effectively,” said Lt. Paolo Aguilar, assigned to VP-4.

VP-45 naval aviator Lt. Caitlin Tucker stated, “Exercises like Sea Dragon highlight the strength of our partnerships and alliances. They show that together, we’re stronger, more capable, and ready to deter any aggressor in the Indo-Pacific.”

Sea Dragon 2026 featured a structured training format to include a mobile ASW training target, referred to as the MK-30 “Sled”, for tracking drills. The exercise also featured a U.S. Navy anti-submarine warfare exercise (ASWEX), where exercise participants engaged in a hunt to locate an active U.S. Navy submarine in the area. This year, forces operated in the

vicinity of Saipan to employ recoverable exercise torpedoes, and demonstrate expansion of capabilities trained among the five nations.

As with previous years, Sea Dragon 2026 included a competitive component in which each nation's performance was assessed and graded to earn the Dragon Belt award, testing each nation's ASW tactics and response effectiveness in a realistic scenario.

This year, VP-3 of the JMSDF emerged victoriously, securing the Dragon Belt for 2026. The Dragon Belt was previously held by the RAAF since their victory in 2025.

Exercises like Sea Dragon 2026 demonstrate the U.S. Navy's commitment to regional security and strengthening maritime partnerships with allied and partner nations. Exercise Sea Dragon has been held annually since 2019.

VP-4, part of CTF-72, is stationed in Whidbey Island, Washington, and is currently deployed to Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan. VP-45, also part of CTF-72, is stationed in Jacksonville, Florida, and is currently deployed to Misawa Air Base in Misawa, Japan. Throughout the deployments, both squadrons will be conducting maritime patrol and reconnaissance and theater outreach operations within the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

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# Navy Commissions Submarine USS Massachusetts



March 30, 2026 | By [Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Kaitlin Young, Submarine Readiness Squadron 32](#) | \_\_

The Navy commissioned the submarine USS Massachusetts in a traditional ceremony held March 28 at Boston Harbor.

The ceremony culminated a yearslong process to bring the Massachusetts into service. It is the fifth Navy vessel named after the commonwealth of Massachusetts, following the most recent, USS Massachusetts, a battleship that participated in nearly every major Pacific campaign from 1943 to 1945 and earned 11 battle stars for its [World War II](#) service.

Navy Cmdr. Michael Siedsma, the Massachusetts' commanding officer, spoke proudly of his crew's efforts.

“To the crew, the plank owners, the ‘Iron Patriots’ of the USS Massachusetts, we did it,” he said. “Your hard work and unshakable dedication [are] evident. I am amazed and humbled by what we have accomplished.”

Sheryl Sandberg, the ship’s sponsor, gave the traditional order to “man our ship and bring her to life.” The crew responded, “Aye, aye, ma’am,” before ceremonially running aboard the submarine.

Sandberg spoke about the Navy’s enduring legacy.

“In three months, our nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. But as many of you here know, the Navy already celebrated this milestone last October. What does that tell us? It tells us: We don’t have a Navy because we have a country; we have a country because we had a Navy!”

Following the hoisting of the colors and commissioning pennant, Navy Adm. William Houston, director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, highlighted the crew’s hard work and the unit’s role in national defense.

“[The] Massachusetts is playing an incredible role in our security,” he said. “Your crew represents the best that our Navy and our nation [have to offer]. You train relentlessly to bring this warship to life and earned the trust placed on you.”

The Massachusetts is the 12th Virginia-class submarine and was christened at the Newport News Shipbuilding yard in Newport News, Virginia, May 6, 2023.

As it joins the fleet, the Massachusetts brings significant warfighting capability, underscoring the nation’s asymmetrical advantage at sea. Virginia-class submarines have enhanced stealth, sophisticated surveillance capabilities and special warfare enhancements that enable them to meet the

Navy's multimission requirements.

Each Virginia-class submarine is 7,800 tons, 377 feet in length and has a beam of 34 feet. It is designed with a reactor plant that does not require refueling during the planned life of the ship, reducing life-cycle costs while increasing underway time.

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## **Coast Guard Cutter Stratton returns to California following 3-month deployment**



The Legend-class USCGC Stratton (WMSL 752) assumed escort duties of motor tanker Sophia and escorted the vessel from an anchorage south of Puerto Rico to an at-sea transfer with

Venezuela for further disposition, Jan. 27, 2026. (U.S. Coast Guard courtesy photo.)

From U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, March 29, 2026

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton (WMSL 752) returned to their home port in Alameda, Monday after sailing more than 16,000 nautical miles and completing a 79-day patrol in the Caribbean.

Stratton departed Alameda Jan. 4 and transited through the Panama Canal to support ongoing operations in the Caribbean, preventing the illicit trade of crude oil in violation of international sanctions. On Jan. 25, Stratton assumed escort duties of motor tanker Sophia and escorted the vessel from anchorage south of Puerto Rico to an at-sea transfer with Venezuela for further disposition.

Additionally, while transiting in the Eastern Pacific, Stratton's crew operated in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South to detect, monitor, and intercept illicit narcotics. Stratton's crew interdicted one fishing vessel at sea, exercising the North American Maritime Security Initiative (NAMSI) standard operating procedures. Enacting NAMSI and boarding the vessel at sea allowed for the transfer of the vessel to the Mexican Navy for further disposition.

During the patrol, Stratton conducted a fueling-at-sea evolution with USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) and helicopter vertical replenishments with Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen crews to resupply the cutter while deployed in the Caribbean. Additionally, the crew exercised helicopter deck landing operations with an MH-60 aircrew from the USS Lake Erie (CG 70) and Coast Guard Air Station Ventura, displaying Stratton's interoperability across different agencies and platforms.

"The Stratton crew looks forward to returning to Alameda

to reunite with our friends and family,” said Capt. Dorothy Hernaez, Stratton’s commanding officer. “This was a demanding and dynamic patrol that tested our resilience and capabilities across a wide spectrum of operations. This patrol demonstrated Stratton’s essential role as a multi-mission platform capable of adapting to an evolving operational environment.”

Commissioned in 2012, Stratton is one of ten Legend-class national security cutters, and one of four homeported in Alameda. National security cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, and can hold a crew of up to 170. National security cutters routinely conduct operations throughout the world, where their unmatched combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

The namesake of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton is Capt. Dorothy Stratton, who led the service’s all-female reserve force during World War II. Dorothy Stratton was the first female commissioned officer in the Coast Guard and commanded more than 10,000 personnel. The ship’s motto is “We Can’t Afford Not To.”

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**Portsmouth Naval Shipyard  
Undocks USS Albany Ahead of**

# Schedule at Naval Submarine Base New London



GROTON, Conn. (March 26, 2026) – The Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Albany (SSN 753) undocks from the floating dry dock, Auxiliary Repair Dry Dock (RDM 4), on Wednesday, March 26, 2026 at Submarine Base New London in Groton, Conn. (U.S. Navy photo by Neil Boorjian)

From Hanna Lanoie, March 30, 2026

GROTON, Conn. – Portsmouth Naval Shipyard safely undocked Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Albany (SSN 753) March 26 at Naval Submarine Base (SUBASE) New London, marking a significant milestone in its maintenance and modernization availability.

Albany arrived at SUBASE New London in summer 2025, and has since undergone repairs, structural inspections, and replacements of mechanical and electrical systems. This extensive work enhances the submarine's capabilities,

modernizes critical systems and equips Sailors – the engine that powers the fleet – with the most advanced undersea platform possible, ready to meet operational demands.

To support the availability, an advanced team of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard personnel spent much of 2025 coordinating with SUBASE New London to prepare facilities and support a large temporary duty workforce. At peak manning, more than 400 PNSY personnel were deployed to New London to execute the effort.

“Despite the inherent challenges of executing an off-yard availability, compounded by multiple winter storms, the teaming demonstrated by the crew of Albany and the shipyard workforce drove through every obstacle, completing Albany’s docking period ahead of schedule,” said Capt. Jesse Nice, shipyard commander. “This speaks to the resilience of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard team and the impact that a focused team of experts can have to safely accomplish great things at the pace the nation needs.”

Completion of a submarine’s docking period is a critical first step in its return to the fleet and directly supports the Navy’s focus on combat-ready platforms, increasing operational availability and contributing to credible, sustained deterrence.

“The early undocking of Albany is a significant accomplishment and a direct result of the one team, one fight mentality of my crew and our Portsmouth teammates,” said Cmdr. Adam Nebenzahl, commanding officer. “This milestone puts us one step closer to rejoining the fleet. We are eager to get back to sea and contribute to our nation’s defense.”

As America’s leader in attack submarine maintenance, repair, and modernization, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard delivers the decisive edge required to master an era of evolving threats. It stands at the forefront of America’s commitment to peace through strength, delivering combat-ready submarines that are

lethal, resilient, and prepared to win. Through a focus on innovation, accountability, and fostering a culture of warfighting excellence, PNSY strengthens the maritime industrial base and invests in its highly-skilled workforce. The work done at the shipyard is a direct contribution to national security. Submarines leave the shipyard more capable than ever before, ensuring the U.S. Navy remains the most dominant maritime force and that the nation's warfighters are prepared for any mission, anywhere in the world.

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## **MARAD Invests Over \$13 to Bolster U.S. Marine Highway Infrastructure Across America**



From the U.S. Maritime Administration, Friday, March 27, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration (MARAD) today invested \$13,280,351 million in 11 marine highway projects across seven states through the U.S. Marine Highway Program.

The funding will support public and private partners in developing supply chains on marine highway routes—including the transportation of waste in Oregon and the improvement of barge docks in Pennsylvania—to ensure resiliency.

“Investing in marine highways will strengthen the Great Lakes

economy and other regional communities,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy. “We’ll deliver jobs, boost provide a boost for local industries, and strengthen infrastructure our economy relies on.”

“The marine highway program is a vital opportunity to expand the nation’s freight capacity,” said MARAD Administrator Steve Carmel. “By fully integrating our navigable waterways into the national transportation system, we keep the American economy moving forward.”

### **Additional Information:**

U.S. Marine Highways are a vital component of America’s transportation infrastructure, offering a reliable way to move goods while easing congestion on our nation’s busy road and rail systems. The network spans 27,139 miles across 41 states, Washington, D.C., and all five U.S. territories. The 35 designated routes underpin U.S. supply chains, critical infrastructure, and maritime workforce development.

Under the Trump Administration’s America First agenda, all Marine Highway Grants award recipients must apply, comply with, and implement all requirements of the “Buy America, Build America” provisions.

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**CNO completes multi-stop  
Indo-Pacific engagement,  
reinforcing partnerships and**

# forward presence



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle visited the USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) while the ship was in port in Sydney, Australia, March 21, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Joe Cardona Gonzalez)

[From the Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs, March 27, 2029](#)

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle traveled more than 18,000 miles across the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility during a multi-stop visit to Australia and Singapore, underscoring the U.S. Navy's enduring commitment to allies, partners and forward-deployed forces in the region.

The trip began in Sydney, Australia, on March 19, where Caudle joined dozens of naval leaders from around the world in celebrating the 125th birthday of the Royal Australian Navy.

During the visit, he met with Australia's chief of navy, Vice Adm. Mark Hammond, to discuss deepening maritime cooperation and enhancing interoperability between the two navies.

"Our alliance with Australia is built on more than shared interests, it's built on shared values, trust and decades of operating side by side," Caudle said. "As we look to the future, our ability to integrate seamlessly across domains ensures we remain ready to meet any challenge together."

In Singapore, Caudle attended a senior leader engagement with the Republic of Singapore's chief of navy, Rear Adm. Sean Wat, reinforcing the importance of regional partnerships in maintaining stability and security in the Indo-Pacific.

"Singapore is a vital maritime partner at the crossroads of global commerce," Caudle said. "Our partnership reflects a shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, where the rule of law prevails and all nations can prosper."

While in Perth, Australia, Caudle met with U.S. Consul General Colleen Altstock, highlighting the critical role of diplomatic and military coordination in advancing U.S. interests abroad.

During his travels, Caudle also engaged directly with Sailors assigned to USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) and USS Tulsa (LCS-16), recognizing their professionalism and the essential role they play in maintaining a forward presence.

"Our forward-deployed Sailors are the backbone of our Navy's ability to operate where it matters, when it matters," Caudle said. "Their dedication, resilience and warfighting readiness send a clear message of commitment to our allies and deterrence to potential adversaries."

Caudle also toured HMAS Stirling, where he received updates on infrastructure upgrades, quality-of-service improvements and

maintenance enhancements designed to support continued port visits by U.S. Navy submarines. The changes observed since Caudle's last visit in 2024 were impressive and represent a significant step forward in achieving the milestones of the AUKUS agreement.

"The investments being made at HMAS Stirling demonstrate our shared resolve to ensure maritime security and stability across the Indo-Pacific," Caudle said. "Together, we are building a more integrated and capable force that can respond to evolving challenges and meet emerging threats head on."

Production facilities operated by Anduril Industries and Saronic Technologies were also on Caudle's itinerary, where he was briefed on ongoing development in autonomous surface and subsurface platforms.

The engagements highlighted the growing interest in advanced technologies in enhancing maritime awareness, expanding operational reach and accelerating the ability to integrate unmanned systems into the future fleet.

"Autonomous systems are rapidly changing the character of naval warfare," Caudle said. "Our partnerships with innovative industry partners help us move faster, think differently and deliver the capabilities our Sailors need to maintain a decisive advantage at sea." These technologies are examples of the tailored offsets described in Caudle's recently released U.S. Navy Fighting Instructions.

The 10-day trip highlighted the U.S. Navy's differentiated value to the Joint Force and the nation through ongoing efforts to strengthen alliances and partnerships, enhance interoperability and maintain a credible forward presence across the Indo-Pacific region.

The U.S. Navy, forward-deployed and globally

integrated, operates alongside allies and partners to ensure security, deter aggression and uphold the free flow of commerce that underpins global prosperity.

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# NAVAIR Selects Near Earth Autonomy to Enable Uncrewed Ship-to-Shore Operations in Contested Maritime Environments

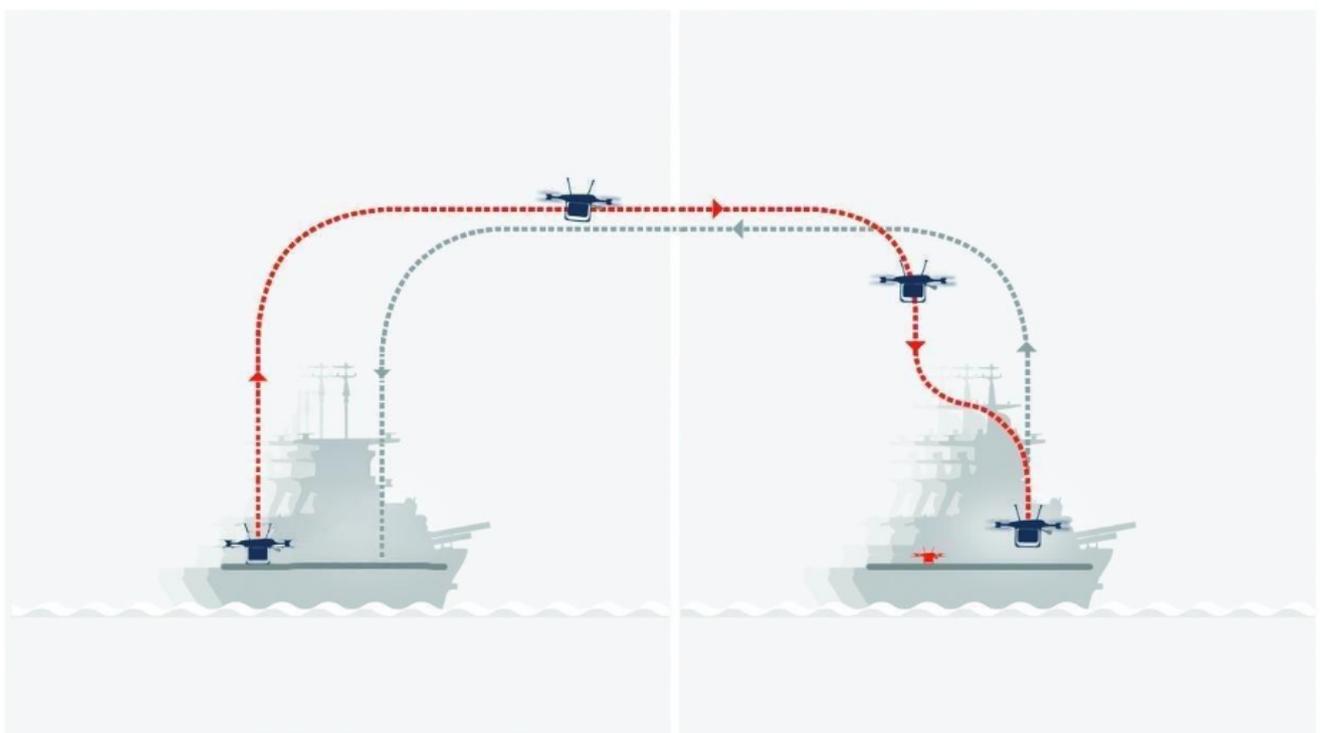


Illustration of UAS with Near Earth's Compact Firefly System  
Conducting Maritime Logistics

*Resilient Uncrewed Logistics in GPS-Denied Maritime  
Environments*

**PITTSBURGH, Pa.** – March 27, 2026 / The [Naval Air Systems Command](#) has awarded [Near Earth Autonomy](#) (Near Earth) a contract to develop an aircraft-agnostic autonomy solution for ship-to-shore and shore-to-ship operations through an Other Transaction Agreement (OTA) under the Naval Aviation Systems Consortium (NASC). The work will advance the U.S. Marine Corps' capabilities for uncrewed logistics missions in contested maritime environments.

Most uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) operations rely on infrastructure, including GPS and continuous data. When these are unavailable or denied, it becomes more difficult, or outright impossible, to complete missions. Near Earth directly addresses these challenges by enabling UAS to conduct complex maritime logistics, in shore-to-ship, ship-to-ship, and ship-to-shore transfers, without reliance on external infrastructure. This capability significantly increases operational resilience for naval forces.

[Near Earth's Firefly compact autonomy system](#) is designed for integration with a wide variety of aircraft. Weighing just 2 pounds, Firefly is light enough to be incorporated into a broad range of Class 3 and Class 4 aircraft, greatly expanding its applicability across the uncrewed aviation ecosystem. It has been successfully integrated on platforms including BAE, L3 Harris, and Pterodynamics. Multiple capabilities will be matured under the contract, including autonomous confined area operations, ship recovery in emissions-controlled (EMCON) environments, and GPS-free navigation.

This contract with the Navy is a key next step, maturing our autonomous systems performance for maritime missions," said Sanjiv Singh, CEO of Near Earth Autonomy. "We will build upon our past work on compact systems for uncrewed aerial logistics. This effort supports the Navy's ability to perform resilient, reliable maritime operations across aircraft."

This development will build on Near Earth's 13+ years of innovation for defense programs. The progression began with [Autonomous Aerial Cargo/Utility System \(AACUS\)](#), which pioneered rotorcraft autonomy for Marine Corps resupply. Building on this, Near Earth miniaturized the [Joint Capability Technology Demonstration \(JCTD\) system for Unmanned Logistics Systems Air \(ULS-A\)](#), proving autonomy for small UAS in confined areas. NAVAIR selected Near Earth Autonomy for the USMC [Aerial Logistics Connector Program](#) to demonstrate optimized logistics using rotorcraft. The Firefly system represents the latest advancement, enabling small cargo UAS operations for programs like the [Marine Corps' Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System \(TRUAS\)](#).

This contract will be validated through a series of test events to validate requirements, refine operational procedures, and systematically verify system performance. These tests will culminate in a final demonstration with the [Naval Air Systems Command](#) at Patuxent River in September 2026, showcasing a full range of capabilities, including ship searching, deck tracking, night operations, and autonomous flights between moving vessels.

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**U.S. Coast Guard, CNMI partners strengthen maritime security presence in Saipan's waters**



Members of the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boarding Team conduct a joint patrol with the CNMI Department of Public Safety – Marine Unit personnel on March 20, 2026, in Saipan. From March 18-22, conducted joint underway and shoreside operations alongside the CNMI Department of Public Safety, Saipan Marine Unit, and Saipan Customs and Biosecurity, reinforcing direct lines of communication and cooperation that strengthen maritime domain awareness across the CNMI’s waters and surrounding exclusive economic zone. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Farrell)

From U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia, March 26, 2026

SAIPAN, CNMI – Federal and local maritime law enforcement agencies patrolled Saipan’s waters and port together in mid-March, boarding six small vessels and launching new coordination channels that expand the CNMI’s ability to monitor and respond to threats in its surrounding waters.

From March 18-22, the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Boarding Team conducted joint underway and shoreside operations alongside

the CNMI Department of Public Safety Saipan Marine Unit and CNMI Customs and Biosecurity. Teams engaged 12 vessel contacts and completed six small vessel security boardings, while a joint patrol of the Port of Saipan marked the first combined shoreside operation between the U.S. Coast Guard and Customs and Biosecurity.

The operation also brought together key agency leaders for the first time. SBT members met with an ICE Homeland Security Investigations representative, the assistant director of the CNMI Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the newly appointed chief of the DPS's Saipan Marine Unit – reinforcing direct lines of communication and cooperation that strengthen maritime domain awareness across the CNMI's waters and surrounding exclusive economic zone.

“The Marianas sit at the center of Western Pacific maritime activity: commercial traffic, fishing, small vessels moving between islands,” said Lt. j.g. Thomas Forames-Su, supervisor of the SBT. “These operations are about more than boardings. We're strengthening the relationships and shared awareness that let us and our partners act faster and more cohesively.”

Maritime domain awareness is a shared responsibility across federal, local, and community stakeholders. The CNMI's economy depends heavily on the free flow of maritime commerce, fishing, and tourism, all of which require safe and well-monitored waters. Joint operations, like this one, strengthen the network of agencies and protect those interests every day.

Building on the momentum from this week's operations, the U.S. Coast Guard and CNMI partners are planning additional joint patrols, dockside security boardings, and coordinated cutter operations, like the USCGC Frederick Hatch's recent patrol, in the waters around Saipan and to the north. Agencies are also working to deepen communication protocols and formalize interagency coordination agreements to expand joint response

capabilities across the region.