

Navy to Christen Newest Attack Submarine Oregon



The attack submarine USS John Warner arrives at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut. The latest of the Virginia class, the USS Oregon, is set to be christened on Oct. 5 in Groton. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Steven Hoskins

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy will christen its newest attack submarine, the future USS Oregon, during a ceremony Oct. 5 at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, the Defense Department said in a release.

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.) will deliver the ceremony's principal address. The submarine's sponsor is Dana Richardson. She will highlight the ceremony by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow to formally christen the ship, a time-honored Navy tradition.

"The future USS Oregon will play an important role in the defense of our nation and maritime freedom," said Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer. "She stands as proof of what teamwork – from civilian to contractor to military – can accomplish. I am confident USS Oregon and her crew will ensure our Navy remains safe and strong to proudly serve our nation's interest for decades to come."

Oregon, a Virginia-class submarine designated SSN 793, is the third Navy ship to honor the state. The first USS Oregon was a brigantine ship purchased in 1841 and used for exploration until 1845.

The second Oregon (Battleship No. 3) was commissioned on July 15, 1896. Known for one of the most dramatic voyages ever undertaken by a Navy ship, Oregon sailed more than 14,000 miles in 66 days, leaving San Francisco in 1898 and travelling

south through the Straits of Magellan until finally arriving at Jupiter Inlet, Florida, where she reported for battle in the Spanish-American War. While the ship demonstrated the capabilities of a heavy battleship, it also eliminated any opposition to the construction of the Panama Canal, as the country could not afford two months to send warships from one coast to another in times of emergency. Decommissioned in 1906, she was later recommissioned in 1911 and remained in the reserve, until stricken from the Navy list in 1942.

The new attack sub Oregon is the 20th in the Virginia class and the second Block IV boat in the class. The ship began construction in fall 2014 and is expected to be delivered next fall. Block IV subs include design changes to reduce total ownership cost and increase operational availability by decreasing the planned number of depot availabilities from four to three.

Virginia-class submarines are built to operate in the world's littoral and deep waters while conducting anti-submarine warfare; anti-surface ship warfare; strike warfare; special operation forces support; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; irregular warfare; and mine warfare missions.

Their inherent stealth, endurance, mobility and firepower directly enable them to support five of the six maritime strategy core capabilities – sea control, power projection, forward presence, maritime security and deterrence.

Navy to Commission Littoral

Combat Ship Cincinnati During Oct. 5 Ceremony



The future littoral combat ship USS Cincinnati underway during acceptance trials. U.S. Navy

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy will commission its newest Independence-variant littoral combat ship, the future USS Cincinnati, during a ceremony on Oct. 5 on west pier in Gulfport, Mississippi, the Defense Department said in a release.

The principal speaker will be Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio). Former Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker will serve as the ship's sponsor. The ceremony will be highlighted by a time-honored naval tradition when Pritzker gives the first order to "man our ship and bring her to life!"

"USS Cincinnati and her crew will play an important role in the defense of our nation and maritime freedom," Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said.

"She stands as proof of what teamwork – from civilian to contractor to military – can accomplish. This fast, agile platform will deliver her motto, 'Strength in Unity' worldwide thanks to their efforts."

The future USS Cincinnati is the fifth U.S. Navy ship to honor Ohio's third largest city. The first was a stern-wheel casemate gunboat that served during the Civil War and was sunk by Confederate fire on two separate occasions. Raised both times and returned to service, she was decommissioned following the war.

The second Cincinnati was a cruiser commissioned in 1894. She served extensively in the Caribbean before, during and after the Spanish-American War before being decommissioned in 1919.

The third ship to bear the name was a light cruiser commissioned in 1924 that served around the world and earned a battle star for World War II service that included convoy escort and blockade duty. She was decommissioned in 1945 after the war ended.

The fourth Cincinnati was a Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine commissioned in 1978. The boat served for 17 years before being decommissioned in 1995.

Most Sealift Vessels Measured Up in 32-Ship 'Pressure Test,' Army General Says

Most of the ships mobilized in a severe "stress test" of the Maritime Administration's and Military Sealift Command's ability to get their aged fleets under way in a crisis did "pretty well," but the commander of the U.S. Transportation Command wants to accelerate the programs to modernize that crucial force.

"If it were up to me, we'd be doing it faster," and he discussed that objective with Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer, Army Gen. Stephen R. Lyons, commander of U.S. Transportation Command, said Oct. 2.

"We're in the process of working with the Navy."

In late September with little advance notice, MARAD and MSC mobilized 32 of their transport and support ships from both

the forces normally on alert status and those in the Ready Reserve, which take more time and effort to get under way.

The exercise was a test of the capability of ships that are considered ancient by commercial standards and the availability of civilian mariners qualified to operate such ships, which include some of the last steam-powered vessels in the world. Independent analysts and some Navy officers have warned that the aged vessels and the declining numbers of qualified mariners could hobble the Navy's ability to transport and sustain forces committed to an overseas conflict.

Of the 32 ships activated, "I would say most of them did pretty well. We're waiting for final results. But in terms of sea trials, initial reporting, it was in the 80% to 85% range" of activating ships to task, Lyons told a Defense Writers breakfast. "Of those 32 ships, the average is 43 years old. In commercial industry it's about 15."

He added: "It was a great pressure test. We'll look at the numbers, also get the quality assessment" in a detailed report that could be available by the end of October.

Asked if he was making any progress on the three-tiered program Congress has approved to modernize the sealift and prepositioning fleets – by upgrading the newest ships, building some new ones and buying a lot of used commercial ships – Lyons said "yes," but he wants to

accelerate the effort.

“What I’d like to do in the authorization to acquire used vessels is to accelerate that. ... I know there is work now at the [Navy] Department to fund the seven,” which include two new and five used. “I’m pushing to accelerate. The Navy program now needs to be plussed up. ... But the secretary and others are in favor of finding the money.”

Lyons also expressed concern with the progress on efforts to solve a far different problem that has drawn widespread criticism from Congress and service families – the perpetual failure of commercial movers hired by the services to get household goods from one home to another in a reasonable time and in good condition.

The command issued a request for proposals two weeks ago and has gotten a lot of interest from firms willing to take on what would be a nationwide contract to provide the tens of thousands of household moves every year, Lyons said. The major failure in the existing program was the inability to hold contractors accountable and to lack of a national system with common standards and the ability to inform managers in different regions of a poor performing contractor elsewhere.

“Inside the Department, we don’t have clear lines to hold them accountable for delivering the service. ... And most of all, we have to have a consistent pattern of quality of delivery,” he said.

VT Group Acquires DELTA Resources

CHANTILLY, Va. – VT Group has acquired DELTA Resources Inc., a firm that specializes in naval systems engineering and technical services for critical U.S. Navy shipbuilding and fleet modernization programs, VT Group said a release.

Founded in 2000 and headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, DELTA Resources provides Naval Sea Systems Command and the Navy's program executive offices (PEOs) with C5I and weapons systems engineering, integrated product support and other technical services. DELTA Resources also delivers information technology, cloud implementation and cybersecurity engineering services to a customer base that also includes the U.S. Army and the Defense Information Systems Agency.

"I am excited to welcome the DELTA Resources team to VT Group," said John Hassoun, VT Group's president and CEO.

"This acquisition adds differentiated technical expertise to our portfolio of fleet modernization capabilities and positions VT Group as a leading provider of full life-cycle naval engineering services for the next generation of naval platforms and weapons systems."

DELTA Resources founder and CEO Maria Proestou added: "I am immensely proud of the DELTA Resources team, their commitment to our customers and the business we've built together. This combination is the next chapter in our story." Proestou will continue to lead DELTA Resources as a subsidiary of VT Group.

Submarine Group Two Reborn as Response to 'Great Power Competition'

NORFOLK, Va. – Taking another step in response to the re-emergence of the 'great power competition,' the U.S. Navy re-established Commander, Submarine Group (SUBGRU) Two in Norfolk, Virginia, on Sept. 30 following its hiatus since August 2014, U.S. Submarine Forces public affairs said in a release.

The move follows the re-establishment of commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, in 2018 and is aimed at enhancing the Navy's capacity to command and control its undersea warfare forces seamlessly across all of the Atlantic area, from the U.S. eastern seaboard to the Barents Sea and even into the southern Atlantic.

"The security environment continues to grow more challenging and complex – particularly in the North Atlantic," said Vice Adm. Charles Richard, commander of Submarine Forces.

"To maintain America's undersea superiority, we must increase naval power and our readiness for high-end blue water warfare. How we're organized to command that employment will be a driving factor in our success – that's why we're re-establishing Sub Group Two today."

SUBGRU 2 is commanded by Rear Adm. James Waters, who also assumed duties as commander, Task Force 84. CTF 84 is the theater anti-submarine warfare commander for U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

"Our motto, 'Praeparavit Regnatura,' means ready to dominate. We will prepare forces to control the undersea domain through rigorous competitive training and a thorough understanding of

our adversaries and the environment where we both operate,” Waters said. “Further, we will innovate and advance the art of theater anti-submarine warfare through complex fleet exercises and war games.”

Additionally, the command can operate as an embedded CTF within C2F when it is activated as a Maritime Command Element and to serve as the TASW commander for commander, U.S. 4th Fleet, as assigned. SUBGRU 2 will have more administrative control responsibilities delegated from Commander, Submarine Force Atlantic.

“As you carry out your day-to-day duties, you must understand that winning decisively in a potential ‘Fourth Battle of the Atlantic’ should be your guiding vision,” said Adm. Christopher Grady, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command. “The best way to prevent a fight is to be prepared to win decisively should anyone choose to threaten us. We believe in power for peace.”

Littoral Combat Ship Successfully Launches Naval Strike Missile



USS Gabrielle Giffords launches a Naval Strike Missile on Oct. 1 during exercise Pacific Griffin. The NSM is a long-range, precision-strike weapon that is designed to find and destroy enemy ships. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist Kenneth Rodriguez Santiago

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords successfully demonstrated

the capabilities of the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) on Oct. 1 during Pacific Griffin, U.S. Pacific Fleet public affairs announced in a release.

Pacific Griffin is a biennial exercise conducted in the waters near Guam aimed at enhancing combined proficiency at sea while strengthening relationships between the U.S. and Republic of Singapore navies.

“Today was a terrific accomplishment for USS Gabrielle Giffords crew and the Navy’s LCS class,” said Cmdr. Matthew Lehmann, the ship’s commanding officer. “I am very proud of all the teamwork that led to the successful launch of the NSM.”

The NSM is a long-range, precision-strike weapon that can find and destroy enemy ships at distances up to 100 nautical miles. The stealthy missile flies at sea-skimming altitude, has terrain-following capability and uses an advanced seeker for precise targeting in challenging conditions.

Rear Adm. Joey Tynch, commander of Logistics Group Western Pacific, who oversees security cooperation for the U.S. Navy in Southeast Asia, said Gabrielle Giffords’ deployment sent a crystal-clear message of the continued U.S. commitment to maritime security in the region.

“LCS packs a punch and gives potential adversaries another reason to stay awake at night,” Tynch said. “We are stronger when we sail together with our friends and partners, and LCS is an important addition to the lineup.”

The NSM aboard Gabrielle Giffords is fully operational and remains lethal. The weapon was first demonstrated on littoral combat ship USS Coronado in 2014. It meets the Navy’s over-the-horizon requirements for survivability against high-end threats, demonstrated lethality, easy upgrades and long-range strike capability.

The Gabrielle Giffords deployment marks the first time that an NSM has sailed into the Indo-Pacific region.

Gabrielle Giffords, which is on its maiden deployment, arrived in the 7th Fleet area of responsibility on Sept. 16 for a rotational deployment to the Indo-Pacific region. This marks the first time two LCS have deployed to the Indo-Pacific region at the same time. Gabrielle Giffords is the fifth LCS to deploy to U.S. 7th Fleet, following USS Freedom, USS Fort Worth, USS Coronado and the currently deployed USS Montgomery.

Gabrielle Giffords will conduct operations, exercises and port visits throughout the region as well as work alongside allied and partner navies to provide maritime security and stability, key pillars of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

NAVAIR Admiral: System Reliability Key to Aircraft Readiness

WASHINGTON – The admiral in charge of Naval Air Systems Command said that aircraft readiness hinges on reliability of the systems and the maintenance that keeps them mission-capable.

“Reliability is just as critical as lethality,” said NAVAIR’s commander, Vice Adm. Dean Peters, speaking Oct. 1 at a luncheon of the Greater Washington Council of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association in Washington, noting that the Navy had to take a different view of how to achieve more reliability as it endeavors to improve aircraft readiness.

Peters said he would like to turn all 10,000 engineers in the Naval Aviation Enterprise into reliability engineers.

One challenge to achieving high readiness is the lagging provision of things like vital spare parts, technical manuals and ground support equipment. Peters cited the 2003 introduction of the Marine Corps' UH-1Y Venom helicopter to replace the UH-1N in Afghanistan and Iraq. He said the UH-1Y deployed with inadequate spare parts, manuals and ground support equipment as the Navy continued to buy the aircraft while shorting the necessary support.

"We are mesmerized by quantities," Peters said, explaining that Congress often is focused more on the aircraft – the "above-line costs" – rather than the supporting items – the "below-line" costs.

"This is just not the way to align our fleet," he said.

The admiral said the Navy is establishing a new program executive office for common parts, such as radios and other systems used in multiple platforms, with a civilian program executive officer, to raise the procurement of such systems to a higher visibility.

He pointed out that throwing money and spare parts at the Navy is not going to solve the readiness problem, but that the sea service needed to change its way of fostering reliability and maintenance, balancing sustainment with new capability.

Peters praised fleet readiness centers for their progress in improving the readiness of Navy and Marine Corps aircraft. The Navy consulted with airlines to see what they did to sustain high aircraft availability. He said that every supporting function had to own the outcome.

"It's really about bringing accountability to everyone involved," the admiral said.

One factor in improvement was bringing the management, planning, logistics and maintenance all at the same site.

Peters said the Navy established a reliability control board to identify the factors that degrade aircraft readiness.

For one example, the Navy found that a component of the E-2D's APY-9 radar was lasting only 600 hours rather than 6,000 hours.

In another example, an F/A-18 that had been inducted into a fleet readiness center had not flown a single hour since it emerged from its last induction six years prior.

Peters said the fleet readiness centers at Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore, California, and NAS Oceana, Virginia, delivered 36 F/A-18 strike fighters in fiscal 2019, each of which was completed in 60 days and flown within seven days after delivery.

The 80% readiness goal for the F/A-18 fleet that then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis set was met and exceeded by the Navy. The goal of 341 of 550 aircraft to be mission-capable was exceeded, reaching 379 aircraft on Oct. 1.

"People are starting to believe we can do it," Peters said. "It's not all about efficiency."

General Atomics Wins Contract for Supporting Hypersonic

Glide Body Prototype Development

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – General Atomics Electromagnetic Systems (GA-EMS) has been awarded a contract by the U.S. Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office (RCCTO) to further the development of the Common Hypersonic Glide Body (CHGB) and Flight Test Vehicle in support of the U.S. Army Long Range Hypersonic Weapon and the U.S. Navy's Intermediate Range Conventional Prompt Strike Program, the company said in a release.

The contract award follows work performed by GA-EMS under a previous contract with the Army Space and Missile Defense Command for the Advanced Hypersonic Weapon technology demonstration program.

"As new threats continue to emerge, advancing the development and flight testing of hypersonic vehicle prototypes has become an urgent priority," said Scott Forney, president of GA-EMS.

"Over the past 13 years, we have worked closely with the Army and Sandia National Laboratories to design, manufacture and test hypersonic glide body components and technologies. We look forward to leveraging that expertise as this critical capability transitions out of the lab and into a production-ready asset to support the warfighter."

GA-EMS will provide manufacturing, production, engineering and technical support to integrate, test and evaluate CHGB and flight test vehicles through system and subsystem-level ground and flight test activities.

Deliverables include the manufacture of components, test and integration of vehicle flight components and assemblies, flight test planning and execution and simulation, validation and verification support.

Faller: Partnerships Vital in Countering Threats



Adm. Craig S. Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command, speaks Sept. 30 at the Gen. Bernard W. Rogers Strategic Issues Forum, an event sponsored by the Association of the United States Army and the Navy League of the United States. Danielle Lucey

ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of U.S. forces in Latin America and the Caribbean Sea said that the U.S. strategy in the region is designed to secure a prosperous hemisphere and to counter threats that would undermine the security of the region, including the issues brought about by the increasing great power competition.

“The best way to counter threats is partnership,” said Adm. Craig S. Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command, speaking Sept. 30 at the Gen. Bernard W. Rogers Strategic Issues Forum, an event sponsored by the Association of the United States Army and the Navy League of the United States.

Strengthening partnerships “wins in life, wins in war,” Faller said.

Strengthening partnerships is Faller’s top priority as he works with the nations of the region and their militaries. He said that partnership is the best way to achieve his second priority, countering threats to the region. His third priority is to “build our team,” strengthening the forces available to secure the peace in the region.

“The best way to counter threats is partnership.”

Adm. Craig S. Faller, U.S. Southern Command

Faller pointed out as good news that 27 of the nations in his area of responsibility are democracies. He also noted that some nations, such as Colombia, are now not only providing their own defense but are providing security assistance to other nations in the region.

The admiral stressed the importance of promoting shared values – professionalism, respect for law, respect for human rights – as a means to address the regional problems of weak democracies and institutional corruption and of countering transnational criminal organizations engaged in activities such as drug running, human trafficking, weapons running and illegal fishing and mining. He said that combatting international terrorism, such as that sponsored by Iran, comes under the purview of U.S. Special Operations Command.

Faller said he considered Russia and China to be “malign actors” in the region that have “moved in a way that all of us should find alarming.”

China is working on 60 seaport access deals across the hemisphere, 56 in the Southern Command region, he said.

Faller said that 67% of the goods that pass through the Panama Canal are U.S. goods, but he noted that China has signed 45 agreements with Panama during the last U.S. administration “and locked up port deals at either end of the canal.”

“I do consider China a threat to the democracy, to the stability of this neighborhood,” Faller said, noting the support of China and Russia for Venezuela’s Maduro regime. He also said that Maduro’s presidential guard is provided by Cuba.

He said that the Panama Canal is vulnerable to terrorist and cyber threats.

Faller praised the partnership between the United States and Brazil during World War II, when the U.S. 4th Fleet was based

in Brazil, and the two countries operated together to counter the German submarine threat in the Atlantic.

“Brazil would say they should be part of NATO, and I don’t disagree with them,” he said. “There is a lot of opportunity there.”

The admiral also stressed the importance of the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which is the southernmost U.S. facility in the region. The U.S. stages aircraft at Soto Cano in Honduras and has some pier space in Curacao, an island owned by The Netherlands.

The 4th Fleet has no ships permanently assigned to the Southern Command, but Faller is looking forward to one ship being assigned there. Typically, five Coast Guard cutters are in the region on drug and migrant interdiction missions.

HII Completes Dry Dock Work on George Washington



The final piece of the new main mast of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington is installed at Huntington Ingalls Industries Newport News Shipbuilding in March. With the dry dock portion of its refueling and complex overhaul complete, the ship is now in an outfitting berth, scheduled for delivery to the fleet in late 2021. Huntington Ingalls Industries/Matt Hildreth

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Newport News Shipbuilding division has completed the dry dock portion of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington’s refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH).

Following the recent flooding of more than 100 million gallons of water into the dry dock, George Washington was successfully moved to an outfitting berth, where it will begin final outfitting and testing. The overhaul is more than two-thirds complete and on track to be finished in late 2021.

“Getting George Washington out of the dry dock and back into the water is an important milestone in the overhaul process for shipbuilders, Sailors and our government partners,” said Chris Miner, Newport News’ vice president of in-service aircraft carrier programs.

“Over the next 24 months, we will focus on readying the ship for the next 25 years of its operational life. Once our work is complete, George Washington will leave Newport News Shipbuilding as the world’s most technologically advanced Nimitz-class warship.”

During the dry dock phase of the RCOH, George Washington underwent significant upgrades and extensive repair work both inside and outside the ship. In addition to defueling and refueling its nuclear power plant, Newport News shipbuilders have re-preserved about 600 tanks and replaced thousands of valves, pumps and piping components.

On the outside, they performed major structural updates to the island, mast and antenna tower; upgraded all aircraft launch and recovery equipment; painted the ship’s hull, including sea chests and freeboard; updated the propeller shafts; and installed refurbished propellers.

During the next phase of the complex engineering and construction project, shipbuilders will finish the overhaul and installation of the ship’s major components and test its electronics, combat and propulsion systems before the carrier is redelivered to the Navy. This period also will be dedicated to improving the ship’s living areas, including crew living spaces, galleys and mess decks.

“Taking the ship successfully out of the dry dock and over to our waterside pier marks a significant moment in the ship’s history and in our RCOH period,” said Capt. Kenneth A. Strong, the carrier’s commanding officer.

“With the ship back in the water, we can turn our attention to our next major milestones and finishing our maintenance period to return this vital national asset back to the fleet.”

USS George Washington arrived at Newport News in August 2017 and is the sixth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier to undergo its RCOH midlife refueling overhaul and maintenance availability.