

U.S., Indian Navies Practice Submarine Hunting in Indian Ocean



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INDIAN OCEAN (April 15, 2019) An Indian navy P8I Poseidon aircraft conducts a low altitude fly-by alongside the guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance (DDG 111) during a bilateral anti-submarine warfare exercise with the Indian navy in the Indian Ocean, April 15, 2019. Spruance is deployed to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations in support of security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ryan D. McLearnon/Released) DIEGO GARCIA, British Indian Ocean Territory (NNS) – P-8 aircraft from the U.S. and Indian navies conducted cooperative activities in the Indian Ocean on April 15, the U.S. 7th Fleet said in a release.

The U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Spruance (DDG-111) also joined the drills, which focused on anti-submarine warfare training, information sharing and coordination between maritime patrol aircraft and ships.

“The U.S. Navy is committed to engaging with regional partners in establishing common practices and developing mutual capabilities. Spruance is proud to exercise alongside the Indian navy,” said Cmdr. Matthew Smidt, commanding officer of Spruance. “We were greatly impressed by the professionalism and competency of their MPRA. The exercise was a wonderful experience and opportunity from which we learned and honed our skills.”

Spruance, based in San Diego, and P-8A aircraft from Patrol Squadron (VP) 8 “Fighting Tigers,” based in Jacksonville, Florida, are conducting routine operations in 7th Fleet. The

Indian Navy P-8I aircraft is with Naval Air Squadron 312 based at Indian Naval Station Rajali."Flying ASW (anti-submarine warfare) in the 7th Fleet AOR (area of operations) is a team event, and we eagerly seize every opportunity to work with our allies and partners," said Lt. James Lowe, pilot with VP-8. "Our goal is to further standardize our procedures so we can work more efficiently in future real-world operations. I think, in the end, we are fortunate to be able to operate out of beautiful Diego Garcia and learn about our Indian counterparts as well!"

U.S. Navy ships and aircraft train routinely with the Indian navy between annual port visits and exercises like Malabar. These events reaffirm a shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"We look forward to developing useful lessons through this engagement and laying the groundwork for future integration efforts between our Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Forces," said Cmdr. Zachary Stang, VP-8 commanding officer.

U.S. 7th Fleet provides security alongside allies and partners throughout a free and open Indo-Pacific. As the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed fleet, 7th Fleet operates roughly about 50-70 ships and submarines, and 140 aircraft with approximately 20,000 Sailors.

USS Fitzgerald Leaves Dry Dock, Continues Repairs

Pierside in Pascagoula



PASCAGOULA, Mississippi – The guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) has taken another step toward returning to the fleet as a fully ready, combat-capable ship, Naval Sea Systems Command said in a release.

The destroyer achieved a milestone in its complex repair and restoration as it successfully launched and moored pierside at Huntington Ingalls Industries' shipyard on April 16. The launch reflects more than a year's worth of effort in restoring and modernizing one of the U.S. Navy's most capable warships.

Since the ship's arrival in Pascagoula in January 2018, work has focused on restoring the integrity of the hull and topside structures that were damaged during a 2017 collision with the containership MV ACX Crystal that killed seven Sailors and injured several others, including Fitzgerald's commanding officer at the time, Cmdr. Bryce Benson.

"The complexity of this overhaul has been challenging, but our planning team at Bath Iron Works and waterfront team at HII is executing repairs and installing upgrades so that Fitzgerald returns to our Sailors lethal and mission-ready," said Rear Adm. Jim Downey, deputy commander for surface warfare and commander, Navy Regional Maintenance Center. "We're excited to have the ship back in the water, where we can begin outfitting and testing efforts in support of getting the ship and crew back underway."

To restore the impacted spaces to full operations and functionality, various hull, mechanical and electrical, combat system and command, control, communications, computers and intelligence repairs are being conducted. These repairs range from partial to complete refurbishment of impacted spaces to

replacement of equipment such as the radar and electronic warfare suite. The ship is also receiving various modernization upgrades. Due to the extent and complexity of the restoration, both repair and new construction procedures are being used.

“This undocking is a step forward and brings us that much closer to getting Fitzgerald back out to sea – where the ship belongs,” said Cmdr. Garrett Miller, Fitzgerald’s current commanding officer. “I’m proud of this crew’s hard work over the past year and look forward to returning to the fleet with enhanced warfighting capability and lethality.”

VCNO Moran: Surface Warriors Need Better Simulators, More Training from COs



WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy’s surface warriors need more and better simulators to hone their skills, the vice chief of naval operations said April 16, also noting that crews would benefit from more attention from their commanding officers.

“Commanding officers need more time to train their crews,” VCNO Adm. Bill Moran said, speaking at an event of the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, and sponsored by Huntington Ingalls Industries.

“More freeplay,” Moran said.

Moran, the nominee to become the next and 32nd chief of naval

operations, was responding to a question about the results of the Navy's investigations and reviews of the 2017 collision of the destroyers USS Fitzgerald and USS John S. McCain.

The Navy has adopted 111 recommendations, Moran said, and has been implementing them at a pace such that would not "crush the fleet." The recommendations are being implemented in three tiers of priority: safety, effectiveness and excellence – moving from a culture of just meeting the standards to exceeding the standards.

Moran, a P-3 pilot, said the Navy needed to "build better simulators," noting his concern that the quality of the simulators used in the surface warfare community "were well below what I am used to in the aviation community."

"We [also] don't have the capacity I think the fleet needs," he said.

He cited the littoral combat ship community for the good quality of its training simulators and said that "we should have that for every ship class in the Navy."

"That, to me, will make the biggest difference over time," he said.

The Navy is building two new structures to house ship simulators in the fleet concentrations of Norfolk, Virginia, and San Diego. The Navy has had in place the NSST (navigation, seamanship and shiphandling trainer) for more than a decade.

Moran stressed that even with excellent simulation, Sailors need "some seawater under your legs." He praised the measures taken by the Navy's commander of surface forces, Vice Adm. Rich Brown, to restructure the career path of junior surface warfare officers to give them more time at sea earlier in their careers.

He said that COs can give more time to training their crews by

getting maintenance and schedules under control. The Navy has reduced the number of required inspections – knocking out some 60, he said – to free up crews for developing warfighting skills.

VCNO Moran: Strike Fighter Readiness Highs and Lows Getting Higher

WASHINGTON – The Navy’s vice chief of naval operations said that readiness of the strike fighter community is improving and is approaching the 80% goal set by former Defense Secretary James Mattis.

“The highs are getting higher and the lows are getting higher,” said VCNO Adm. Bill Moran, speaking of the daily readiness statistics that come in from the fleet.

Moran was answering questions April 16 at an event of the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, and sponsored by Huntington Ingalls Industries.

Moran, a P-3 pilot and now nominee for chief of naval operations, said that less than two years ago, the readiness of the F/A-18 strike fighter was less than 50% mission capable.

The running 10-day average last week was 76%, he said.

Moran said the Navy had “accepted normalization of deviancy” in a time of budget turbulence and that “naval aviation had fallen into that trap.”

He said the Navy recruited the expertise of the commercial aviation industry to look at its processes and metrics and implemented changes that helped to turn the situation around. He also said the lessons also were being applied to surface ship maintenance.

Marine Jet Power Awarded Taiwan Coast Guard Contract

UPPSALA, Sweden – Marine Jet Power (MJP) has been awarded a multiunit, multiyear contract with CSBC Shipyard to provide propulsion for 15,100-ton class vessels for the Taiwan Coast Guard (TCG), the company said in a release.

The 34-meter vessels will be built at CSBC's facility in Keelung, Taiwan. Featuring dual MJP stainless steel 750 DRB waterjets, the vessels are predicted to exceed 30 knots and will be powered by MTU inboard diesel engines.

"MJP has a long history with the Taiwan Coast Guard and, to date, we have been involved in TCG previous builds already operational; 50-ton, 100-ton and 500-ton class projects. We are excited to build TCG's next generation of 100-ton class vessels and the start of our relationship with CSBC," said Nils Morén, sales manager for MJP.

Selected for its quality and durability in the field, MJP's DRB line of waterjets are constructed from duplex stainless-steel and feature all inboard hydraulics. The mixed-flow pump design offers high performance and increased operational efficiencies resulting in lower maintenance cost and minimal service intervals.

“MJP’s all stainless-steel construction was a huge consideration for the shipyard and the end user when selecting a propulsion package,” said Michael Kuan from UDC Marine, MJP’s Taiwanese representative.

“CSBC ultimately selected MJP for durability and ease of maintenance in addition to the other long-term benefits waterjets provide to the operator over the life span of the vessels,” Kuan said.

Marine Jet Power will begin to deliver waterjets to the shipyard later this year and the 15 vessels will be constructed over the next four years.

U.S. Coast Guard Patrols Micronesian Waters in Support of Operation to Combat Illegal Fishing



HONOLULU – Crews of two U.S. Coast Guard cutters and a long-range HC-130 patrol aircraft recently completed combined operations to help combat illegal fishing across Oceania, the Coast Guard 14th District said in a release.

The crews teamed with shipriders from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as part of Operation Rai Balang 2019, a Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) mission.

For three weeks, U.S. Coast Guard cutters Sequoia (WLB-215) and Kiska (WPB-1336) embarked FSM shipriders to patrol the FSM

exclusive economic zone and on the high seas, supported by the HC-130.

In addition to the Coast Guard and FSM combined operations, Operation Rai Balang also involved ships and aircraft from the remaining Pacific Quadrilateral Defense Partners – Australia, New Zealand and France – in support of other Pacific Island countries across Oceania.

Illegal, unregulated and underreported fishing threatens resource security and sovereignty. Enforcing international fishing regulations on the high seas and helping Pacific island countries protect their waters from illegal fishing promotes maritime governance and reinforces a rules-based international order that is essential to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

“The U.S. Coast Guard and our Pacific Quadrilateral Defense Partners have two decades of experience working together with Pacific Island countries to help ensure resource security and the viability of tuna stocks in the Pacific,” said Capt. Riley Gatewood, chief of enforcement for U.S. Coast Guard 14th District.

“Working with experts from these nations and regional leaders like the [FSM] is vital to ensuring food security and the rule of law in Oceania. Working together we are helping to sustain and increase a secure, free and open Indo-Pacific,” Gatewood added.

Estimates show that illegal fishing accounts for about 30 percent of all fishing activity worldwide, representing up to 26 million tons of fish illegally harvested each year, valued at between \$10 billion and \$23 billion.

“IUU fishing can act as a nexus for economic, social and political instability or unwanted influence of countries looking to gain a foothold in the region – all having direct economic and security implications for the United States if

not effectively controlled,” said Lt. Cmdr. Conor Sullivan, of fisheries enforcement for the Coast Guard 14th District.

The U.S. bilateral shiprider arrangement with FSM is only one of 11 such agreements across Oceania. The Coast Guard regularly conducts bilateral fisheries law enforcement with these Pacific Island Countries, often as part of planned FFA operations across the region.

Experts Voice Concerns at Forum Over Navy’s 30-Year Shipbuilding Plan

The Navy’s current 30-year plan to achieve a 355-ship fleet may be unworkable because it does not account for the rapidly growing cost of manning and sustaining the force, the almost certain cost overruns for new ship classes it plans to develop and the erosion of shipyard skills from not refueling the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman and delaying purchase of the next amphibious assault ship.

Those were among the problems with the Navy’s shipbuilding plan and fiscal 2020 budget presented by five government and private-sector experts on naval issue at a Heritage Foundation forum April 15.

The speakers, who included Ronald O’Rourke and Eric Labs, the highly regarded naval analysts at the Congressional Research Service and the Congressional Budget Office, also cited concerns about the increased maintenance costs for the Arleigh Burke destroyers the Navy plans to keep in service an extra 15 years and the proposal to buy 10 large unmanned surface

vessels without any firm idea of how they would be equipped or would operate.

Bryan Clark, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and a retired submarine officer, said the cost of manning and sustaining the fleet is growing faster than the rising cost of building a larger force, due to the concerns about gaps in ship manning and reduced ship readiness.

Because the planned future fleet will cost “way more to man and sustain ... this plan may be unachievable or undesirable,” Clark said.

O’Rourke also cited the growing cost of sustaining the fleet and Jerry Hendrix, vice president of the Telemus Group and a retired Navy officer, noted that the latest 30-year plan promises to reach the 355-ship fleet based on extending the service life of the early DDG-51s from 30 to 45 years, despite the historic record that for ships kept past year 30 the maintenance cost “increases significantly.”

Labs said another problem with the ambitious shipbuilding plan was the history of significant cost overruns for all the recent first ships in a new class of vessels, while the Navy wants to introduce six new ship types in the next five years.

O’Rourke and Labs listed the proposal to retire the Truman in 2024 rather than conducting the usual midlife nuclear refueling and overhaul to keep it in service for another 25 years as a major change in this year’s budget. Labs said that would take the carrier force down temporarily to nine and then back to 10 but would not sustain the 12 required by law for decades.

Labs said skipping the Truman refueling would deplete the Newport News Shipbuilding workforce’s knowledge on how to do that work and would reduce their ability to do refueling in the future. He also warned that the plan to delay the next LHA

amphibious ship until 2024 would create a seven-year construction gap that would “impact the efficiency of the shipbuilding workforce.”

Early congressional hearings on the Navy’s budget indicated that Congress was not likely to allow the Truman’s early retirement.

Bryan McGrath, managing director of the FerryBridge Group and another retired Navy officer, said the plans to buy unmanned surface vessels and more small manned combatants, such as the new guided-missile frigates, would be a way to offset the higher costs of manning and sustaining the larger fleet. But he noted that the budget proposal for the large unmanned ships did not include any details on what sensors or weapons they would carry and no concept of operations showing how they would be deployed.

O’Rourke and others said buying the unmanned ships was part of the new acquisition policy of acquiring new technology and putting it into the fleet quickly for testing.

Coast Guard Interdicts Suspected Smuggler, 11 Cuban Migrants 41 Miles South of Key West



KEY WEST, Florida – The Coast Guard interdicted 11 migrants and a suspected smuggler April 12 about 41 miles south of Key West attempting to illegally enter the United States, the

Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

Coast Guard 7th District watchstanders received a notification from Cuban border security reporting an illegal vessel departure with an unknown number of passengers aboard.

The Coast Guard Cutter Isaac Mayo (WPC-1112) crew arrived on scene after a Customs and Border Patrol Air and Marine Operations aircraft crew sighted the 30-foot center console with four adult Cuban males, five Cuban adult females, one Cuban minor aboard and embarked them with no medical concerns.

The 10 Cuban nationals were transferred to the Coast Guard Cutter Charles Sexton (WPC-1108) and will be transferred back to their home. The suspected smuggler and a male migrant were taken into custody.

“The waters of the Caribbean and Florida Straits are dangerous for migrants on illegal voyages, in vessels with little or no safety gear,” said Lt. Otis Leonard, duty enforcement officer at Coast Guard 7th District. “The Coast Guard and its partner agencies continue to maintain a strong presence along our maritime border and will continue to interdict and rescue those who embark on these illegal and ill-advised voyages.”

Coast Guard Cutters Charles Sexton and Isaac Mayo are 154-foot fast-response cutters homeported in Florida.

Coast Guard Interdicts 9 Cuban Migrants on Cay Sal

CAY SAL, Bahamas – The Coast Guard interdicted nine Cuban migrants April 12 on Cay Sal, the Coast Guard 7th District

said in a release.

Coast Guard 7th District watchstanders received a notification from a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft crew reporting two people hiding in nearby bushes. The Coast Guard Cutter Charles Sexton (WPC-1108) crew arrived on scene and deployed a boarding team ashore to investigate the situation. The Charles Sexton boarding team was able to locate the nine Cuban nationals and embarked them with no medical concerns.

The nine Cuban nationals were transferred to Bahamian Immigration officials in Freeport, Bahamas, by the Coast Guard Cutter Robert Yered (WPC-1104) crew and will be transferred back to their home.

“It’s the second time this month that we’ve seen a case like this and its why maintain our presence in the Caribbean Sea and Florida Straits,” said Lt. Patrick Leavitt, command duty officer at Coast Guard 7th District. “The Coast Guard will remain consistent with the missions of protecting the safety of life at sea and enforcing our federal laws.”

Coast Guard Cutters Robert Yered and Charles Sexton are 154-foot fast-response cutters homeported in Florida.

Future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. Keel Authenticated



PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The keel for the future USS Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) was ceremoniously laid during a ceremony at Huntington Ingalls Industries Ingalls Shipbuilding Division

on April 12, the Naval Sea Systems Command said in a release.

Shana McCool and Kate Oja are the ship's sponsors and granddaughters of the namesake and authenticated the keel by etching their initials into the keel plate. This tradition symbolically recognizes the joining of modular components and is the ceremonial beginning of the ship.

"We are honored to have Ms. McCool and Ms. Oja with us today to recognize this major ship event," said Capt. Brian Metcalf, LPD 17 class program manager for Program Executive Office Ships. "The San Antonio class has proven essential to expeditionary warfighters, and we are excited to bring the 13th and final ship of the Flight I configuration to the fleet."

The ship is named in honor of Navy veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Capt. Richard M. McCool Jr. and is the Navy's 13th San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship. McCool was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1945 for the heroism he displayed after his ship was attacked by kamikaze aircraft in the Battle of Okinawa. Despite suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, he led efforts to battle a blazing fire on his ship and rescue injured sailors.

Fabrication on LPD 29 began on July 30 and the ship is scheduled to be delivered in 2023. Eleven San Antonio-class ships have been delivered to date, the most recent being USS Portland (LPD 27), which was commissioned in 2018. LPDs 28 and 29 will serve as transition ships to LPD 30, the first ship of the Flight II. LPD 17 Flight II ships will replace the Navy's aging LSD 41/49 class ships.

The LPD 17 San Antonio class amphibious transport dock ships are designed to transport and deploy combat and support elements of Marine expeditionary units and brigades. The LPD 17 Flight I ships carry about 720 troops and can transport air cushion or amphibious assault vehicles. These ships support

amphibious assault, special operations and expeditionary warfare missions through the 21st century.