

Integer Technologies, University of Southern Mississippi Announce \$25M Defense Contract



From Integer Technologies, [July 16, 2025](#)

Partnership will advance Navy's decision-making tech for autonomous seabed warfare

Gulfport, Miss. – July 16, 2025 – Integer Technologies and the University of Southern Mississippi announce the Office of Naval Research has awarded their team a \$25 million ceiling contract, with a fully funded initial base period of \$4.3 million. The applied research contract supports the development of novel software to help the U.S. Navy maintain maritime dominance and increase its seabed warfare capabilities.

The program, titled Intelligent Autonomous Systems for Seabed Warfare, will enhance underwater missions and data collection for unmanned vessels by improving their decision-making capabilities at the edge. This will allow unmanned vessels to adapt more effectively to changing environmental conditions and improve their ability to identify objects on the seafloor.

This program will develop innovative technology for unmanned underwater systems that can autonomously make sense of large, high-dimensional data sets in real-time. This technology augments the Navy's ability to conduct unattended missions with unmanned and autonomous platforms.

Increasing the independence, flexibility, and intelligence of these platforms provides the U.S. fleet with the reliable autonomous operations needed to achieve their mission and national security goals.

Integer and USM will work together to develop a full solution that includes edge-deployed software tools that can assess environmental, platform, and mission data to make decisions about how to best collect and process complex datasets. They will develop predictive tools that leverage advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) that can enable unmanned platforms to adapt their missions in real-time.

The program combines USM's strengths in ocean engineering and

oceanography with Integer's expertise in creating predictive software models for unmanned platforms that combine data, physics, and AI to deliver decision advantage in uncertain environments.

As part of this program, Integer has established an office at USM's Roger F. Wicker Center for Ocean Enterprise Facility (Wicker Center) in Gulfport, Miss. This location allows for close collaboration between USM's and Integer's engineers and scientists, and convenient access for in-water testing in the Gulf of America.

"This is an ideal moment for this research on software for ocean sensing and seabed warfare. USM's oceanography expertise will combine with Integer's predictive technology to help us explore and master the ocean floor, earth's last frontier. These unmanned, subsurface vessels will boost the United States' edge in undersea warfare and support the bustling blue economy along Mississippi's coast," said U.S. Senator Roger Wicker, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"The Navy's investment in cutting-edge seabed warfare technology in Mississippi reflects well on the critical role our state continues to play in advancing our national security," U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith said. "The partnership between Integer Technologies and the University of Southern Mississippi will not only strengthen the Navy's capabilities, but also bring high-skill jobs and research opportunities to the Gulf Coast. I'm proud to support initiatives that position Mississippi as a leader in defense innovation and that create opportunities for our students, engineers, and scientists."

"Integer's presence in Gulfport will be the epicenter of our work to deploy and test AI-driven software on maritime unmanned systems," said Duke Hartman, Chief Executive Officer & Cofounder at Integer. "We are grateful to Senators Wicker and Hyde-Smith, USM, and all those in the South Mississippi

community who supported this investment in the state. The beautiful Wicker Center offers direct ocean access where our team of Gulfport-based engineers will work alongside USM's ocean scientists to make unmanned systems more intelligent and effective for our military and commercial customers."

"This award demonstrates The University of Southern Mississippi's reputation as a leader in ocean research and blue economy innovation," said Kelly Lucas, Ph.D., Vice President for Research at Southern Miss. "By establishing operations at the Roger F. Wicker Center for Ocean Enterprise, Integer Technologies is bringing high-skill jobs to the Gulf Coast and creating a technology ecosystem that will attract additional partners and investments. This program exemplifies how university-industry partnerships can drive both scientific advancement and economic development in Mississippi."

Pentagon to Increase Low-Cost Drone Production in U.S.



July 16, 2025 | By David Vergun, DoD News

The Defense Department, with help from industry, will ramp up production and fielding of drones to maintain battlefield superiority.

Today at the Pentagon, 18 American-made drone prototypes were on display.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who toured the displays, said the drones that are manufactured using off-the-shelf components for rapid production are examples of disruptive thinking.

Emil Michael, undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, said the prototypes on display went from concept to development in just an average of 18 months, a process that normally takes up to six years.

The department will continue to rapidly innovate and scale up production of drones and other systems using cost, resilience, firepower and range as driving factors, which are areas DOD wants to improve upon, Michael said.

Hegseth said in a [July 10, 2025, memorandum](#) that he's rescinding restrictive policies that hindered drone production.

"Drones are the biggest battlefield innovation in a generation, accounting for most of this year's casualties in Ukraine. Our adversaries collectively produce millions of cheap drones each year," he said, noting the U.S. military is lacking needed quantities of lethal small drones.

The secretary said there are three goals:

- Prioritizing the purchase of American-made drones and parts with help from industry's private capital;
- Arming combat units with low-cost drones made by America's world-leading engineers and artificial intelligence experts; and
- Training with drones in realistic battlefield scenarios, led by leaders who are not risk averse.

President Donald J. Trump signed a June 6, 2025, [executive order to speed up U.S. drone production](#) using the latest innovative industry technologies.

The president said he supports reducing regulatory uncertainty and streamlining approval and certification processes for safe and secure drone production.

Also, the Federal Aviation Administration and DOD will coordinate to streamline the approval processes to expand access to airspace for conducting drone training, Trump said.

Blue Water Autonomy Opens Office in DC, Hires Leader From DARPA's NOMARS



BOSTON, July 17, 2025 /PRNewswire/ – Blue Water Autonomy, Inc., the technology company building autonomous ships for the U.S. Navy, today announced the opening of a Washington, D.C. office and the hiring of Ryan Maatta, a principal engineer with broad and recent experience delivering the most advanced autonomous ships.

“The establishment of Blue Water Autonomy’s Washington, D.C. office is a natural next step for us,” said CEO Rylan Hamilton. “This third location supports our growing company and increases our workforce options while improving Blue Water’s accessibility for our Navy customer.”

The expanded footprint in the capital comes as Blue Water Autonomy's unmanned ship segment shows increased urgency and attention. The latest defense budget authorization includes \$2.1B in Medium Unmanned Surface Vessel funding, and the U.S. Navy recently held a Future Unmanned Surface Vessel industry day to outline its plans for new vessel development.

Blue Water Autonomy also announced the addition of Ryan Maatta to its growing team. Ryan brings decades of marine engineering and operations experience, and most recently held a senior technical leadership on USX-1 Defiant – the vessel built for DARPA's No Manning Required Ship (NOMARS) Program.

"We're a team of hands-on builders, and his multiple shipboard tours as chief engineer makes him a great addition to the team," said CTO Scott N. Miller. Miller, who has taken 100+ commercial products to market, including iRobot's Roomba, leads Blue Water Autonomy's growing technology team, many of them veterans of Boston's robotics hub. Maatta's arrival comes just weeks after Blue Water welcomed COO Tim Glinatsis, formerly of General Dynamics NASSCO and Bath Iron Works.

USS Toledo Arrives at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam



JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii (July 12, 2025) – Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Toledo (SSN 769) arrives at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam during its change of homeport, July 12, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Scott Barnes)

From MC1 Scott Barnes of Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, July 12, 2025

The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Toledo (SSN 769) arrived at its new homeport of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, from its previous homeport of Portsmouth, Virginia, July 12, 2025. The Toledo joined Submarine Squadron 7 as their fourth Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine.

“Our crew is excited to finally arrive in Pearl Harbor after completing an important maintenance period in Hampton Roads,” said Cmdr. Dustin Kraemer, commanding officer of the Toledo. “Our crew looks forward to the new chapter for Toledo and the

opportunities while operating throughout the Indo-Pacific.”

The Toledo returned to the fleet April 19, 2025, following successful completion of its engineered overhaul at Norfolk Naval Shipyard. The maintenance period included refurbishment and modernization to extend the submarine’s operational life in support of operations throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, welcomed the Toledo to Pearl Harbor, stating, “The Toledo team has demonstrated professionalism and commitment in completing their extended maintenance and getting the ship back to sea. Toledo joins the Pacific Submarine Force as a tested and capable submarine for years to come.”

Capt. Corey Poorman, commander, Submarine Squadron 7, met the Toledo pierside upon arrival to welcome the crew to the island. “The Squadron 7 Ohana enthusiastically welcomes the crew and families of the Toledo with Hawaii’s enriched culture and spirit of aloha,” said Poorman. “Our team looks forward to continuing the training and certification of Toledo’s crew in defense of our nation and its allies and partners.”

Commissioned on Feb. 24, 1995, the Toledo was named for the city of Toledo, Ohio. The submarine has a crew of approximately 12 officers and 98 enlisted Sailors. The Toledo’s ability to support a multitude of missions, to include anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and strike warfare, makes Toledo one of the most capable submarines in the world.

Submarine Squadron 7 is responsible for providing training, material, and personnel readiness support to two Virginia-class submarines and four Los Angeles-class submarines.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet Submarine Force provides strategic deterrence, anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, precision land strike, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and early warning, and special warfare capabilities around the globe.

HASC Marks National Defense Authorization Bill

Edited by Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

Arlington, Va. – The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) filed the bill for the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, the bill's leaders, Committee Chairman Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Sen. Jack Reed (D- R.I.) announced in a July 16 release.

Some announced naval-related provisions are listed below:

- Authorizes procurement for not more than five Columbia-class submarines.
- Authorizes a block buy of up to 15 Medium Landing Ships (LSM) to support testing and experimentation of the Marine Littoral Regiment formation.
- Limits funding for TAGOS Ship unless the Secretary of the Navy provides information on the Navy's management of the program and an assessment of alternative solutions for the mission.

- Requires the Navy, in implementing the Medium Landing Ship and Light Replenishment Oiler programs, to utilize a Vessel Construction Manager (VCM) acquisition strategy, employing commercial design standards, construction practices, and an external entity to contract for construction.

- Exempts unmanned surface vessels and unmanned underwater vehicles from the Senior Technical Authority requirement and limits certain technical requirements from the Chief Engineer of the Naval Sea Systems Command without prior approval of the program manager.

- Modifies certification requirements of operational demonstrations for propulsion and electrical systems of large and medium unmanned surface vessels to increase industrial base participation.

- Limits funding to certain Navy-developed software for autonomy and command and control of unmanned surface vessels.

- Directs a briefing to the congressional defense committees to prioritize innovative, commercially driven solutions to deliver a scalable medium unmanned surface vessel (MUSV) capability that meets the urgent needs of the fleet while fostering a competitive industrial base.

- Requires the Navy to move leadership for conventional surface ship maintenance to the Type Commanders, delegates decision-making authority to project managers, port engineers, and ship commanding officers, and

directs a new contracting strategy that emphasizes workload stability and collaborative planning.

- Requires the Navy to investigate, and where feasible qualify and fully integrate, 23 advanced technologies and processes into Navy surface ship readiness.
- Supports amphibious warship production and readiness by limiting funding of the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense if the 30-year shipbuilding plan does not comply with the statutory requirement for 31 amphibious ships, 15 defines “temporarily unavailable” within the 31 amphibious ship requirements, and requires a plan to maintain and extend the service lives of amphibious ships
- Requires DOD to develop a comprehensive plan to establish a government-controlled open mission systems computing environment for all variants and blocks of the F-35 aircraft operated by the DOD.
- Directs the Navy and Air Force to conduct a comparative study, independent of the air vehicle manufacturer, on the two propeller systems on the C-130J platform.
- Accelerates development of the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile and creates a supplementary parallel pathway for rapid fielding.
- Strongly encourages the Secretary of Defense to invite the naval forces of Taiwan to the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise, as appropriate, and requires a

notification and justification if the Secretary chooses not to do so.

- Requires the Navy to develop options for two sources of domestic solid rocket motors in the Navy Modular Missile program.
- Directs a briefing on opportunities for the Irregular Warfare Technical Support Directorate to complement innovation efforts by Naval Special Warfare Command for research, experimentation, and prototyping of unmanned maritime vessels.
- Authorizes personnel end strength for the active component at 344,600 for the Navy; 172,300 for the Marine Corps; 57,500 for the Navy Reserve; 33,600 for the Marine Corps Reserve; and 7,000 for the Coast Guard Reserve.

[Read the FY26 NDAA Bill Language.](#)

[Read the FY26 NDAA Executive Summary.](#)

USNS Comfort Arrives in Dominican Republic for CP25



PUERTO PLATA, Dominican Republic (July 15, 2025) Sailors assigned to the Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) load medical site cargo aboard Comfort in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic during Continuing Promise 2025, July 15, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Alfredo Marron)

[From Petty Officer 2nd Class Alfredo Marron – U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command](#)

PUERTO PLATA, Dominican Republic – The Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) arrived in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic for the fourth mission stop of Continuing Promise 2025 (CP25), July 15, 2025.

“It is an honor and a privilege to leave our footprint in the Dominican Republic,” said Capt. Grace Key, commanding officer, Medical Treatment Facility aboard Comfort. “From the medical site and community relations, to the repairs the Seabees will make to the facilities, we will strengthen our partnership with the people of the Dominican Republic.”

Comfort and Dominican medical professionals will work side-by-

side to provide medical care to the community of Puerto Plata. By working together and exchanging knowledge, the Dominican Republic and partners in the region can maintain regional stability as a team and work collectively in the event of natural disasters, medical catastrophes, or regional conflict.

“Throughout Continuing Promise, the clinical staff and personnel have welcomed us with open arms at every port visit,” said Lt. j.g. Althea Caraballo, the Puerto Plata medical site assistant officer in charge. “I am excited to be in Dominican Republic and very inspired by our partnerships and the opportunity to expand our professional and cultural horizons.”

Medical care during the Dominican Republic mission stop will be provided at Polideportivo, Puerto Plata and will include services in adult medicine, pediatrics, dental, optometry, women’s health, dermatology, cardiology, physical therapy, nutrition, preventative medicine, radiology, and pharmacy.

“This mission is a valuable opportunity to deepen cooperation between the United States and the Dominican Republic, particularly in the areas of security and humanitarian assistance,” said Lt. Col. Lowell D. Krusinger, senior defense official/defense attaché, U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo. “We’re proud to see U.S. and Dominican medical professionals working shoulder to shoulder aboard the USNS Comfort, including seven Dominican providers who are lending their expertise to benefit communities across six countries on the ship’s tour.”

Additionally, Comfort’s medical personnel will conduct subject matter expert exchanges (SMEE) with Dominican health professionals, to include tactical combat casualty care (TCCC) and round tables on preventative medicine, nutrition, and wound care. U.S. Army veterinarians embarked aboard Comfort

from the 248th Medical Detachment Veterinary Service Support will conduct a dairy farming SMEE and K-9 tactical causality combat care.

This visit marks the sixth Continuing Promise visits the Dominican Republic and the fifth visit from Comfort. The last time Comfort visited the Dominican Republic was during Continuing Promise 2022, where the medical team treated 4,435 patients at sites in Santo Domingo and Azua, as well as conducted 87 surgeries aboard Comfort.

“I am excited to be here as we bring the same service offered to other countries to my home country,” said Dominican Republic 1st Lt. Luiz Rameriez, doctor of obstetrics and gynecology embarked aboard Comfort. “I am excited for the U.S. service members to tour our facilities and to see how we can improve and impact the overall health of the population.”

The CP25 mission in Dominican Republic also includes a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) SMEE and a table-top exercise with local responders. Sailors aboard Comfort will also support the region through a variety of community relations events to include a beach clean-up and performances from the U.S. Fleet Forces band “Unchartered Waters.”

“This mission is a blessing, there are people not as fortunate to receive advanced medical care and we are able to provide it while we are here,” said Hospitalman Joseclaudia Garcia, a food service associate assigned to Comfort with Dominican heritage. “The Dominican people will really feel very appreciated that we get to share these engagements with them. I am very excited my fellow service members will get to experience my culture first hand!”

CP25 marks the 16th mission to the region since 2007 and the eighth aboard Comfort. The mission will foster goodwill,

strengthen existing partnerships with partner nations, and encourage the establishment of new partnerships among countries, non-federal entities, and international organizations.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

Learn more about USNAVSOUTH/4th Fleet news and photos, visit [facebook.com/NAVSOUTH4THFLT](https://www.fourthfleet.navy.mil/), <https://www.fourthfleet.navy.mil/>, X – @NAVSOUTH4THFLT, and <https://www.linkedin.com/company/u-s-naval-forces-southern-command-u-s-4th-fleet>

Fincantieri Brings Together Thought Leaders to Discuss U.S. Shipbuilding Renaissance

[Release From Fincantieri](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 16, 2025 – Fincantieri, the global leader in high-complexity shipbuilding, hosted “FULL SPEED AHEAD: The U.S. Shipbuilding Renaissance” yesterday in Washington, D.C., bringing together senior voices from government, industry, and the national security community to examine the strategic future of American maritime power.

The event opened with remarks from George Moutafis, newly appointed CEO of Fincantieri Marine Group (FMG), and Jan Allman, CEO of Fincantieri Marinette Marine, who reaffirmed the company's long-term commitment to the United States through its unique "System of Shipyards" across Wisconsin. This advanced industrial network—operating in Marinette, Sturgeon Bay, Green Bay and Florida—employs more than 3,000 people and stands as a cornerstone of Midwest manufacturing resurgence.

Moderated by Vice Adm. Rick Hunt, President of FMG, the expert panel featured Dr. Cynthia Cook (Center for Strategic and International Studies), Hon. Russell Rumbaugh (Atlantic Council), and Dr. Stacie Pettyjohn (Center for a New American Security). The discussion focused on the evolving defense-industrial landscape and how the U.S. can rebuild a resilient, sovereign shipbuilding base.

Closing the event, Pierroberto Folgiero, CEO and Managing Director of Fincantieri, stated: "This is a defining moment for American shipbuilding—and Fincantieri is here to stay. We are not just investing in infrastructure; we are investing in the future of maritime security, industrial innovation, and the skilled workforce that powers it. With a new management team leading our U.S. operations, we are accelerating our commitment to deliver next-generation capabilities in full alignment with U.S. strategic priorities."

Looking ahead, Fincantieri is focused on strengthening every dimension of its U.S. presence. The company is advancing innovation across its operations to deliver mission-driven platforms and digitalized shipyards. It is also expanding its supplier base to ensure long-term industrial sustainability while investing in the training and upskilling of the next generation of American shipbuilders. The company's Sustainable Shipyards™ model is setting a new standard for environmental and operational excellence, making shipbuilding not only stronger, but cleaner and more future-ready.

With more than \$800 million invested in U.S. facilities and over 900 suppliers across 43 states, Fincantieri brings to the table a proven industrial model, a resilient supply chain, and an experienced workforce of over 3,000 employees in Wisconsin. Leveraging its global expertise and advanced capabilities, Fincantieri stands ready to support the United States in strengthening its shipbuilding industrial base—through innovation, execution excellence, and long-term strategic partnership.

Yemeni Partners Successfully Interdict Iranian Weapons Shipment Bound for Houthis



[From U.S. Central Command, July 16, 2025](#)

TAMPA, Fla. – Congratulations to the Yemeni National

Resistance Forces (NRF), led by Gen. Tareq Saleh, for the largest seizure of Iranian advanced conventional weapons in their history.

The NRF intercepted and seized over 750 tons of munitions and hardware to include hundreds of advanced cruise, anti-ship, and anti-aircraft missiles, warheads and seekers, components as well as hundreds of drone engines, air defense equipment, radar systems, and communications equipment. According to the NRF, there were manuals in Farsi and many of the systems were manufactured by a company affiliated with the Iranian Ministry of Defense that is sanctioned by the United States. The illegal shipment was intended for use by the Iranian-backed Houthis

The actions of the NRF support the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) and are a direct reflection of their commitment to a safe Yemen, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, commander of CENTCOM, praised the actions of the NRF saying, "We commend the legitimate government forces of Yemen who continue to interdict the flow of Iranian munitions bound for the Houthis. The interdiction of this massive Iranian shipment shows that Iran remains the most destabilizing actor in the region. Limiting the free flow of Iranian support to the Houthis is critical to regional security, stability, and freedom of navigation."

USNS Comfort Departs Ecuador

After Third CP25 Mission Stop



MANTA, Ecuador (July 9, 2025) Hospitalman Christopher Olheiser and Logistics Specialist 3rd class Daniel Clerge, both assigned to the Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), load medical supplies onto Comfort in Manta, Ecuador during Continuing Promise 2025, July 9, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Thomas Boatright)

By USNAVSOUTH/4TH FLEET PUBLIC AFFAIRS, July 14, 2025

MANTA, Ecuador – The Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) departed Manta, Ecuador following the third mission stop of Continuing Promise 2025 (CP25), July 10, 2025.

Throughout the six-day visit to Ecuador, Comfort's crew worked alongside Ecuador providing medical care to the people of Ecuador, renovating dilapidated infrastructure and training side-by-side with the Ecuadorian military.

During the CP25 visit to Ecuador, the Comfort's team of U.S., Canadian, Dominican Republican, and Ecuadorian medical professionals, assisted 2,767 patients from Manta and surrounding communities. The team filled 2,486 prescriptions, conducted nine CT scans, and distributed 694 pairs of glasses and 584 pairs of sunglasses. Additionally, the Comfort surgery team performed 48 surgeries to include cataract extraction, cleft lip repair, soft tissue mass removal, and hernia repair.

"Alongside our Ecuadorian partners, the Navy team continues to deepen our relationships and promote a shared commitment to the region," said Capt. Ryan Kendall, commodore, Destroyer Squadron 40 and Continuing Promise 2025 mission commander. "Through medical care, subject matter expert exchanges, and military to military training, we are enhancing our combined ability to respond to crises and disaster response."

In addition to medical exchanges and care, veterinarians from the U.S. Army 248th Detachment for Veterinary Support Services conducted subject matter expert exchanges with cattle ranchers in Ropafuertes as well as K-9 training with the Ecuadorian military.

Marines assigned to Marine Force Security Regiment, FAST Battalion, Bravo Company, 5th Platoon conducted a three-day subject matter expert exchange with the Ecuadorian Navy, strengthening partnerships and continuing to enhance our combined capabilities.

Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11 conducted construction, electrical, plumbing, and engineering support for two Manta schools, Escuela Republica Del Ecuador and Unidad Educativa El Porvenir.

"This was an incredible mission stop, I saw a lot of my own

upbringing in the situations of these people we were working with," said Construction Electrician 3rd Class Francisco Espinozavares, a Seabee assigned to NMCB 11. "I felt a lot of mixed emotions, joy, pride, and a sense that we were doing something meaningful, and it put into perspective how fortunate I am."

Comfort's community relations team participated in two beach cleanups, painting and beautification at Gil Delgado Elementary and Verdi Cervillos Hospital, a community soccer game, beach volleyball match, and a mural painting at Port Captaincy in Manta. The crews' interpersonal relations towards the people of Ecuador created the necessary catalyst to help create and strengthen the bonds between the U.S. and Ecuador.

"We are so thankful for all of you," said Nury Zambrano, a teacher for Gil Delgado Elementary. "You are the best, and we are so grateful for all that you did here for us and are eagerly waiting for you to return."

The United States Fleet Forces Band "Uncharted Waters" performed at five locations throughout Manta, reaching a total audience of 1,150 members.

Next, Comfort is scheduled to transfer the Panama Canal and sail toward Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, its fourth mission stop for CP25.

CP25 marks the 16th mission to the region since 2007, the eighth aboard Comfort and fifth time Comfort has visited Ecuador during previous CP missions. The mission will foster goodwill, strengthen existing partnerships with partner nations, and encourage the establishment of new partnerships among countries, non-federal entities, and international organizations.

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports

U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships in order to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region.

Learn more about USNAVSOUTH/4th Fleet news and photos, visit [facebook.com/NAVSOUTH4THFLT](https://www.fourthfleet.navy.mil/), <https://www.fourthfleet.navy.mil/>, X [@NAVSOUTH4THFLT](https://twitter.com/NAVSOUTH4THFLT), and <https://www.linkedin.com/company/u-s-naval-forces-southern-command-u-s-4th-fleet>.

Stratom to Deliver Advanced Automated Refueling System for Uncrewed Navy Vessels



SBIR Phase I award supports development of a fully autonomous at-sea fueling system that extends range and reduces risk for autonomous surface vehicles

From Stratom, July 15, 2025

LOUISVILLE, Colo. – July 15, 2025 – As the Navy expands its fleet of uncrewed surface vehicles (USV), [Stratom](#) has been selected for a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research contract to develop an autonomous refueling system that could redefine naval refueling and logistics at sea.

As the leading developer of autonomous vehicles and refueling

robotic systems for logistics and operational applications, the contract will leverage Stratom's Deployable Onboard Refueling Interface, or DORI, an automated system designed to let USVs refuel without human intervention.

"Autonomous refueling is truly a force multiplier – and the next step toward a fully autonomous maritime force," said Mark Gordon, CEO of Stratom. "With DORI, we're engineering a practical, scalable way for uncrewed vessels to stay on mission longer, without relying on vulnerable crewed interventions."

Building upon existing naval refueling infrastructure while introducing targeted automation, Stratom's DORI system integrates a hose retrieval system, perception sensors, an automated reel mechanism and a quick-release coupling for emergency disconnects. By enabling USVs to safely and reliably refuel while underway without human intervention, the system will extend operational endurance, reduce personnel risk and increase mission flexibility in contested or distributed environments.

The Phase I effort will validate the technical feasibility of the system's automated reel mechanism and include concept refinement, small-scale prototyping, trade studies and integration of commercial bunkering best practices. These activities will ensure the proposed method is technically feasible and aligned with operational requirements.

Looking ahead, Stratom also sees strong potential for commercial deployment of DORI in ship-to-ship (STS) bunkering, a key refueling process in commercial shipping and global maritime logistics. Automating STS bunkering could reduce high-traffic port congestion, improve safety and cut operating costs for long-haul shipping fleets.

Stratom brings deep experience to the development effort, successfully transitioning [robotic refueling systems developed](#)

[for the Army](#) and Navy into commercial applications. [RAPID](#), the company's autonomous refueling, recharging and liquid transfer platform for robotic ground and aircraft refueling, proves the value of automating complex fueling operations through increased uptime, reduced labor demands and enhanced safety.