

All Known Fires Extinguished Aboard Bonhomme Richard



An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter provides aerial firefighting support to fight the fire aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Julio Rivera

ARLINGTON, Va. – Firefighters have extinguished all known fires on the amphibious assault USS Bonhomme Richard in San Diego, the Navy announced.

“Our fire teams are investigating every space to verify the absence of fire,” Rear Adm. Philip E. Sobeck, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, said in a 1 p.m. Pacific time statement.

“Until every space is checked and there are no active fires we will not be able to commence any official investigations. We did not know the origin of the fire. We do not know the extent of the damage. It is too early to make any predictions or promises of what the future of the ship will be. We cannot make any conclusions, until the investigation is complete.”

Some reports outside the Navy indicated the fires were the result of an explosion aboard.

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The fires, which started on the morning of July 12, burned for four days and have severely damaged the ship, the sixth ship of the Wasp class. The ship, based in San Diego, was being

upgraded to operate F-35B Lightning II strike fighters, among other modernizations.

Sobeck said that 63 personnel – 40 U.S. Navy Sailors and 23 civilians – were treated for minor injuries such as heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation. None remain hospitalized.

“What we do know is that brave Sailors from commands all across San Diego worked tirelessly alongside Federal Firefighters to get this fire extinguished and I want to thank them for their efforts,” he said. “This was a Navy team effort. We had support from the air and sea. Three helicopter squadrons conducted more than 1,500 water bucket drops, fighting the fire and cooling the super structure and flight deck enabling fire crews to get onboard to fight the fire. Tugs also provided firefighting support from the waterline, cooling the ship’s hull.

“The Navy continues to work together with regulators, county and state in protecting our environment and preparing to address the community’s concerns as we move forward to the next phase,” he said. “I’d like to thank our partners from state and county, the U.S. Coast Guard, and all agencies for continued support.”