Two DDGs from Truman Strike Group Return Home

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gravely (DDG 107) returns to Naval Station Norfolk after a regularly scheduled deployment in support of maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts, June 23. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Nathan T. Beard*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The USS Gravely (DDG 107) returned to Naval Station Norfolk June 24, becoming the first ship of the strike group to return home. USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109) followed on June 26, returning to its homeport of Naval Station Mayport, Florida.

USS Gravely participated in numerous exercises during its time in European waters, including Neptune Strike 2022, Cold Response, Operation Songwright, Dynamic Manta, Neptune Shield 2022, and Hedgehog 22 with forces from Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom, according to a release.

“Exercises with our allies and partners allowed for a more cohesive alliance and fluid operations,” Cmdr. Hunter Washburn, Gravely’s commanding officer said in the release. “Operating with allies and partners is paramount to further developing our communication and operational capabilities to ensure mission readiness at a moment’s notice.”

USS Jason Dunham also operated in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility, but also spent part of its deployment perated with the U.S. 5th Fleet in the Middle East. The DDG escorted ships through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait multiple times.

During operations in U.S. 6th Fleet, the DDG operated with Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe ships, the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 and the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group.

“In the Mediterranean, Jason Dunham took part in NATO-led activity Neptune Shield 22, demonstrating NATO’s ability to integrate the high-end maritime warfare capabilities of allied aircraft carrier strike groups, amphibious ready groups and marine expeditionary units to support the defense of the alliance,” according to a release.

Navy Orders Two More MQ-4C Triton UAVs

An MQ-4C Triton takes to the skies over the California desert as the Triton low-rate initial production schedule progresses. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Navy has ordered two more MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles from Northrop Grumman, the Defense Department said June 22.

The Naval Air Systems Command, Patuxent River, Maryland, awarded Northrop Grumman Systems a $248.2 million contract modification to procure two MQ-4Cs as an addition to Lot 5 low-rate initial production.

The contract modification follows two other contracts awarded in June to Northrop Grumman for the Triton program.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded Northrop Grumman a $15.1 million contract modification on June 14 to incorporate production engineering change proposals that modify MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft system production UAVs to an integrated functional capability 4.0 multiple intelligence configuration for the Navy and the government of Australia.

Another contract issued June 16 awarded the company $20.5 million to incorporate IFC-4 for MQ-4Cs construction numbers B13 through B15.

The MQ-4C's IFC-4 is designed to bring an enhanced multi-mission sensor capability as part of the Navy's Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting transition plan. The Triton in the IFC-4 configuration is designed to complement the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and eventually will enable the Navy to retire its EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft. The initial operational capability for the Triton will be declared in 2023 when IFC-4-configured Tritons are deployed in enough quantity to field one complete orbit.

Work on the two additional UAVs is expected to be completed in February 2027.

Navy's RQ-4A BAMS-D UAVs End 13-Year Mideast Deployment

The Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Demonstrator returned from 5th Fleet to Patuxent River, Maryland, June 17 after accruing more than 42,500 flight hours and over 2,000 oversea missions during a 13-year deployment. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has brought home from the Middle East its last deployed RQ-4A Global Hawk Broad-Area Maritime Surveillance – Demonstrator (BAMS-D) unmanned aerial vehicle, culminating a 13-year span of operations that began as a six-month experiment.

According to a June 22 release from the Naval Air Systems Command, the RQ-4A returned to its home base, Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, from the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility on June 17.

The Navy had deployed the RQ-4A to Southwest Asia since 2009 as a component of the BAMS-D program. Five Block 10 RQ-4As were acquired from the U.S. Air Force and were based at Patuxent River and operated in sequence over the years by detachments of Patrol Reconnaissance Wings 5, 2, and 11. The detachment kept at least one RQ-4A in the rotation to a base in the Persian Gulf region. One was lost in a mishap in Maryland in June 2012. Another was shot down June 19, 2019, in an unprovoked attack in international airspace over the Strait

of Hormuz by an Iranian surface-to-air missile.

“BAMS-D has been a singular force multiplier for 5th Fleet and U.S. Central Command and has provided invaluable insights into the use of unmanned air systems as part of an overall concept of operations for naval ISR,” said Dave Seagle, BAMS-D deputy program manager, who has led the program since its inception, in the release.

BAMS-D provided more than 50% of maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance in theater accruing over 42,500 flight hours in 2,069 overseas missions, the Navy said.

“By 2013, BAMS-D had ramped up its capabilities to 15 24-hour missions every month, supplementing its first deployed aircraft with a second aircraft,” Seagle said. “Through the next nine years, BAMS-D provided uninterrupted operations and collected almost 1.4 million ISR scenes, highlighted over 11,500 targets of interest and provided the fleet with over 15,000 tactical reports, becoming an indispensable asset for the warfighter. One of many notable achievements occurred as recently as August 2021 when BAMS-D provided ISR coverage to non-combatant evacuation operations during the U.S. drawdown in Afghanistan.

“Despite the aging of the system and limited spares available, BAMS-D’s incredible operations and maintenance team achieved an overall mission availability rate of 96%, with more than 94% of scheduled missions completed,” he said.

The BAMS-D Integrated Sensor Suite featured electro-optical/infrared, synthetic aperture radar, ground moving target indicator and wide-area search modes retained from the Air Force production system. To improve performance in the maritime environment, LR-100 electronic surveillance sensors, Automatic Identification System receiver, inverse synthetic-aperture radar, and maritime search and maritime moving target

indicator radar modes were integrated into the demonstrator system. The ground segment consisted of three launch and recovery elements, two mission control elements and a Navy-designed tactical auxiliary ground station.

In the Navy's 2022 budget request, divestment of the RQ-4A Global Hawk Broad-Area Maritime Surveillance-Demonstrator UAV had been planned for acceleration from 2023 to 2022, with the savings invested in higher priorities.

The BAMS-D is being replaced by a Global hawk derivative, the MQ-4C Triton, which has been deployed to the Western Pacific in an Early Operational Capability deployment. The Triton with an upgraded sensor capability will be deployed in 2023.

Navy Orders Third Constellation-Class Frigate from Fincantieri Marinette Marine

An artist’s rendering of the Constellation-class guided missile frigate. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has exercised a contract option to order the third Constellation-class guided-missile frigate (FFG) from Fincantieri Marinette Marine.

The Naval Sea Systems Command awarded Marinette Marine Corp., Marinette, Wisconsin, was awarded a $536.9 million “fixed-price incentive (firm target) and firm-fixed-price modification to previously awarded contract” for the future USS Chesapeake (FFG 64), the Defense Department announced June 16.

The order follows the $553.8 million contract option exercised on May 20, 2021, for the second ship of the class, the future USS Congress (FFG 63).

The Marinette Marine shipyard is currently working on the detailed design for the first ship of the class, the future USS Constellation (FFG 62). Cutting of first steel is scheduled for later this year.

The Navy has a requirement for 20 frigates. Marinette Marine is now under contract for the first three FFGs with options for seven more.

The Constellation class FFG is based largely on the Italian FREMM frigate.

Work on the latest contract option is expected to be completed by August 2028.

Navy Contracts Northrop Grumman for Multi-Int Upgrades for MQ-4C Triton UAVs

A Northrop Grumman Corp. MQ-4C Triton takes to the skies over the California desert as the Triton low-rate initial production schedule progresses. Known as B8, this is the first production Triton to be upgraded to the multi-intelligence configuration to meet the Navy's critical maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting needs. B8 was delivered to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, on Feb. 1. *NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has awarded Northrop Grumman two contracts to upgrade MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles with a multi-intelligence collection capability.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded Northrop Grumman Systems Corp. of San Diego a $15.1 million contract modification to a previously awarded, fixed-price incentive contract to provide "additional labor and material to incorporate production engineering change proposals that modify MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft system production assets to an Integrated Functional Capability 4.0 [IFC-4] multiple intelligence configuration for the Navy and the government of Australia," according to a June

14 Defense Department contract announcement.

Another contract issued June 16 awarded the company $20.5 million to incorporate IFC-4 for MQ-4Cs construction numbers B13 through B15.

The MQ-4C's IFC-4 is designed to bring an enhanced multi-mission sensor capability as part of the Navy's Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting transition plan. The Triton in the IFC-4 configuration is designed to complement the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft and eventually will enable the Navy to retire its EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft. The initial operational capability for the Triton will be declared in 2023 when IFC-4-configured Tritons are deployed in enough quantity to field one complete orbit.

The first production MQ-4C Triton unmanned aerial vehicle to be upgraded to the multi-intelligence configuration was delivered to the U.S. Navy at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, on Feb. 1. The Triton, designated B8 by the manufacturer, Northrop Grumman, went through a 30-month modification period to the new configuration.

The two MQ-4Cs that were deployed to Guam for the U.S. 7th Fleet's Task Force 72 by Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19) as part of the early operational capability deployment were in the baseline IFC-3 configuration. One has returned to VUP-19's facility at Naval Station Mayport, Florida, to support training.

Work on the new contract is expected to be completed in April 2025.

Marine Gen. Smith: 'Expeditionary Foraging' a Component of Light, Mobile Logistics

U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Eric M. Smith, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, speaks at the ribbon cutting ceremony at Modern Day Marine 2022 in Washington D.C. on May 10. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / photo by Cpl. Ellen Schaaf*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Marine Corps warfighting concept of Expeditionary Advance Base Operations needs light, mobile logistics to operate inside an enemy's weapon engagement zone, the Corps' assistant commandant said. Among other types of support, those logistics include "expeditionary foraging."

Gen. Eric M. Smith, speaking on Force Design 2030 in a June 15 webinar of the Stimson Center, a Washington think tank, used

the term “expeditionary foraging” to describe contracting with local merchants and vendors to supply disaggregated forces with goods and services that cannot be supplied by sealift or stockpiled because of the need to preserve mobility.

The term “foraging” brings to the mind of an American military historian an image of a soldier in the 19th century “requisitioning” – often stealing – chickens or other food sources from a local farmer to feed a moving army. The term “forage” was even applied to the type of caps – forage caps – worn by soldiers of the era.

Smith has no such thing in mind with the concept of expeditionary foraging. He cited the need to reorganize the 18 Marine combat logistics battalions to “deal with small, 80-to-100-Marine units who are strategically placed in order to facilitate fleet and joint maneuver. They have to be able to support those disaggregated units.

“Those disaggregated units have to need less,” Smith said. “We have a little pushback on this. It’s called ‘expeditionary foraging.’

“Expeditionary foraging is what we do today,” he said. “When we go to the Philippines, we have a contracting officer for a large exercise like Balikatan. That contracting officer pays a Filipino citizen for the use of a vehicle, for food, for water. We do that now. Why would we not do that in conflict? We will be in competition with an adversary for those same assets.

“But first you contract it if you can,” he said. “And then you utilize those assets that exist within any nation before you bring it yourself. It’s standard infantry business. … Expeditionary foraging doesn’t mean you’re out there with a tin cup asking for a handout. We do it now with contracting officers. One of the things we’re working to do is to place those contracting officers forward with those units. They can

contract for gravel, trucks, petroleum, all those things that, the more I procure locally, the less I have to bring."

Smith said the logistics commands of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps are still needed to support forward-deployed forces, but "we have to blunt [the enemy] in the first few days, so, yes, we take risks to do that. … We can't build 'iron mountains' [of munitions and supplies] anymore. Those days have ended."

Four Crew Members Survive MH-60S Crash

An MH-60S Seahawk Helicopter flies over the Pacific Ocean in this 2018 photo. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. — A Navy MH-60S Seahawk helicopter crashed June

9 near El Centro, California, but all four crew members on board survived and were safely recovered, commander, Naval Air Force Pacific public affairs office, said in a release. One crew member suffered non-life-threatening injuries.

The MH-60S was assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Three based at Naval Air Station North Island, California. HSC-3 if the fleet replacement squadron for the U.S. Pacific Fleet's MH-60S squadrons.

Navy SSBN PEO: Data Clearly Supports Building More than 12 Columbia Subs

General Dynamics Electric Boat welder Maria Betance-Pizarro

welds the initials of the sponsor of the future U.S. Navy ballistic missile submarine District of Columbia onto a metal plate at a ceremony at the Electric Boat facility in Quonset Point, Rhode Island, June 4. Looking on are the ship's sponsor, U.S. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-District of Columbia), and officials from Electric Boat, other members of Congress, and officers of the U.S. Navy. *U.S. NAVY / GENERAL DYNAMICS ELECTRIC BOAT*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The admiral in charge of building the Navy's next-generation nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarine said there may be an advantage to building more than the 12 planned boats.

"I have clear data that says, 'It clearly makes more sense to have more than 12 [Columbia-class SSBNs] to meet the current requirements that [U.S.] Strategic Command has defined for us,'" said Rear Adm. Scott Pappano, program executive officer for Strategic Submarines, speaking during a June 9 Hudson Strategic Forces Seminar in Washington.

"I have the data that will show the risks of what the current program of record is, and here is how those risks are mitigated if I go to 13 or 14 or 15 or 16, how that affects those requirements," Pappano said. "It's probably a late '20s decision, sometimes before the end of the next block that we are doing."

The current U.S. Nuclear Posture Review defines the requirement for "at least" 12 Columbia-class SSBNs.

Pappano said building extra SSBNs would not be a technological problem but a matter making decisions early enough to keep submarine programs on schedule.

"It's really getting both the cadence for the Columbia class and to be able to get back on cadence for Virginia [attack submarine]," he said.

The contract for building the first new SSBN, the future USS District of Columbia, calls for delivery 84 months of formal

program start. Pappano's goal is to deliver the boat in 78 months. With the construction started during the COVID-19 pandemic, construction "got a little bit slower start than we wanted" so it was lagging slightly behind 78 months but still ahead of the required maximum of 84 months.

"It's not only delivering [the lead ship] on time … but we've got to get the cadence right for the rest of the class," he said. "We have to be delivering Columbia class at a one-per-year cadence [in fiscal 2026]."

With the future USS District of Columbia and USS Wisconsin under contract, the Navy originally had planned to build the next three boats in the next block to get economic order quantity of the SSBNs and the Virginia-class SSNs.

"We're working right now with our stakeholders to include five boats in the second block," he said, to make that block buy in 2026 and "at least a five-ship block" for the third block.

The 12 Columbia-class SSBNs will be replacing the 14 Ohio-class SSBNs that each are scheduled to be retired at 42 years of service. The first of the Ohio SSBNs to be retired will be inactivated in 2027.

"There is going to be a period of time [for] much of the '30s we have to have 10 ships ready for sea, out of a depot period, and we're going to have exactly 10 for a lot of that time," Pappano said. "If you look at it month by month, there are periods where we might dip below nine."

He said the Navy is looking at starting advance procurement for each boat "a little bit early… about six monthsish" for Columbia boats two through 12, a plan supported in the 2023 budget request.

The first Columbia-class SSBN is required to be on patrol in the first quarter of fiscal 2031. Pappano said the Navy is looking at squeezing more service life out of five Ohio-class

boats with short service-life extensions of the boats that are in the best condition. The admiral said that fiscal 2026 would be the time to make the decision, with the first Ohio extension completed in fiscal 2029, and each taking three years.

Pappano said one advantage of extending an Ohio-class boat is during the 2036-2039 time frame, a submarine will be needed to test-launch the D5LE2 version of the Trident ballistic missile in support of the Strategic Systems Program. This would avoid having to take a submarine off the strategic deterrence patrol cycle to test the missiles.

Navy Air Reserve Begins Transition to P-8A Poseidon Aircraft

A P-8A and P-3C fly over Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, in 2010. *U.S. NAVY / Liz Goettee*

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy Air Reserve has begun to retire its P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft and upgrade to the P-8A Poseidon MPA.

Current and former members of Patrol Squadron 62 (VP-62), based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, gathered June 4 at the squadron's hangar to bid farewell to the squadron's P-3Cs as the squadron begins its transition to the P-8A.

The transition will leave VP-69 at NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, as the last reserve VP squadron to operate the Orion. VP-69 is scheduled to begin transition to the P-8A in fiscal 2023.

The 12 active-component fleet VP squadrons began transition in 2012 and completed the upgrade to the P-8A in 2020.

For many years, the Navy was uncertain as to whether the two reserve VP squadrons would be able to upgrade to the P-8A.

Eventually, the Navy’s program of record was increased to procure enough P-8As to equip the two reserve squadrons.

The two reserve VP squadrons are very active in augmenting the fleet squadrons in operations and exercises. With more than 300 Sailors assigned, VP-62 is manned by a staff of full-time support personnel, selective reservists and a few active-component personnel.

At the height of the Cold War, the Navy Reserve fielded 13 VP squadrons equipped with Orions.

Chief of Navy Reserve: Top Budget Equipment Priority is C-130J Transport Aircraft

A C-130T Hercules, assigned to the "Condors" of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VR) 64, recovers at Naval Air Facility Misawa, Japan. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Benjamin Ringers*

WASHINGTON – The admiral in charge of the Navy's reserve force told Congress his top budget equipment priority is to acquire C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft to recapitalize the legacy C-130T fleet.

Testifying before the Senate Appropriations Committee's Defense subcommittee, Vice Adm. John B. Mustin, chief of Navy Reserve, said the C-130J is necessary to replace the C-130Ts and KC-130Ts – with an average age of more than 30 years – serving in five of the Navy Reserve's fleet logistics support squadrons.

"Procurement of the more capable C-130J aircraft variant to replace the three-decade-old C-130 airframes is the Reserve's number one equipment priority," Mustin said. "Last year, Navy Reserve fleet logistics squadrons flew 26,000 hours and moved 24 million pounds of cargo at a cost avoidance of a billion

dollars. However, the current C-130 fleet is challenged to meet sustained fleet logistics requirements. Modern KC-130Js will realize an additional $200 million in annual transportation cost savings.

The five Navy Air Reserve fleet logistics squadrons operate 19 C-130Ts and 11 KC-130Ts. Five other KC-130Ts are operated by the two Navy test wings to support test and evaluation activities. The KC-130Ts were transferred from the Marine Corps Reserve when its two reserve Marine aerial refueler/transport squadrons upgraded to the KC-130J, a process completed in April 2021.

“There is no active-duty counterpart to what we do [with the C-130] in the reserve force,” Mustin said. “That’s our intra-theater lift. Certainly, working with the Air National Guard and the Air Force, we’re able get from CONUS into theater whether that’s in the EUCOM area or INDO-PACOM. Once there, however, transition to strike groups and distributed U.S. Navy is impossible without C-130s.

“We’ve got C-40s – smaller capability – but if we want to transfer an F-35 engine, we’ve got to have the C-130s,” he said.

Mustin noted that with the age of the C-130 aircraft “our mission-capable rates are lower, and we struggle to maintain given that we are the only service – active or reserve – to continue to fly what is called the Tango variant [C-130Y/KC-130T]. The incessant demand from not only our fleet commanders but combatant commanders drive my urgency to recapitalize there.”