

# Navy Decommissions Last Coastal Patrol Ships



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ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has decommissioned its last two Cyclone-class patrol coastal ships in March 28 ceremonies at Naval Support Activity, Bahrain, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said in a release. The USS Monsoon (PC 4) and USS Chinook (PC 9) were the last of the class. They are scheduled to be transferred to the Philippine Navy.

The event marked the end of service with the 14-ship Cyclone class and the end of the coastal patrol ship – which the Navy called the patrol coastal ship – in the U.S. Navy, at least for the foreseeable future. The ships were designed to support special operations forces in coastal operations.

In early 2022, the Navy decommissioned and transferred five

patrol craft to the Royal Bahrain Naval Force: USS Tempest (PC 2), USS Typhoon (PC 5), USS Squall (PC 7), USS Firebolt (PC 10) and USS Whirlwind (PC 11). Last week, on March 21, the U.S. Navy decommissioned and transferred USS Hurricane (PC 3), USS Sirocco (PC 6) and USS Thunderbolt (PC 12) were decommissioned and transferred to the Egyptian Navy during a formal ceremony in Alexandria, Egypt.

In February and March 2021, the Navy decommissioned three PCs used for training PC crews based in Mayport, Florida, and deployed to man the 10 deployed PCs: USS Shamal, USS Zephyr, and USS Tornado.

The lead ship of the class, the former USS Cyclone, was commissioned in August 1993. It was decommissioned on February 28, 2000, and eventually transferred to the Philippine Navy during a time when the U.S. Navy and U.S. Special Operations Command saw little use for the ships. That changed with the terrorist attacks of 9-11. The PCs were tasked with homeland security missions and three were transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard, being returned to the Navy in 2011. Ten of the Navy's PCs eventually were transferred to the U.S. 5th Fleet in Bahrain for maritime security patrols.

"I'm honored to be a part of the legacy on this waterfront," said Lieutenant Commander Dre Johnson, Monsoon's last commanding officer during the ceremony, according to the Navy release. "PC Sailors are a unique bunch, and only they can understand the amount of work they've done and the pride they have in what they've accomplished."

"With 28 years of crew covering multiple generations, each one was dedicated to the mission, adapting to rapidly changing mission sets, and working together as a team to accomplish whatever obstacle that came their way," said Lieutenant Commander David Hartmann, Chinook's commanding officer.

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# Senate Seapower Chair: Committee Will Drill Down on Navy's Amphib Issue



SASEBO, Japan (Sept. 15, 2021) The amphibious dock landing ship USS Germantown (LSD 42) departs Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo, Japan (CFAS), Sept. 15, 2021. Germantown will shift home ports from Sasebo to San Diego after serving as a forward-deployed ship in U.S. 7th Fleet since Jan. 5, 2011. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jasmine Ikusebiala)

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WASHINGTON – The new chairman of the Senate's Seapower subcommittee said he plans to drill down on the issue of the

Navy's requirement for 31 large and medium amphibious warships and why the 2024 budget does not apparently support that requirement, which is law.

"I'm still mystified with the reticence of the president's budget with respect to meeting our 31 amphib requirement," said Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Virginia, speaking March 2 in his first online press conference since becoming chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee's Seapower subcommittee.

In the 2024 budget proposal, the Navy plans to decommission three old Whidbey Island-class dock landing ships (LSDs) but declined to fund any more Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ships (LPDs) over the next five years.

The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Navy to sustain a force level of 31 large and medium amphibious warships.

"Last year, when we had the hearing, all three – the SECNAV, the [Marine Corps] commandant, the CNO – all said, 'Look, we're all on the same page,'" Kaine said. "There's no difference between us. They promised that a study would be forthcoming soon. That showed that the requirement that the Marines need to basically meet their objectives and our national security objectives is 31 amphibs."

"The president's budget doesn't suggest that they're making that kind of investment to get us to 31," he said. "I've heard testimony from our Navy and Marine leadership enough to know that the 31 amphibs is the requirement and somebody's going to have to do a pretty amazing job to convince me otherwise at this point. They have been so consistent on that for a significant period of time."

Kaine said, "The Navy should know that we're really going to dig into this. We have been convinced that the number is 31 and we've yet to be told by anybody that it's not 31. So, is

there a mismatch between the SECNAV, commandant, and CNO? And with the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] is there a mismatch with OMB [Office of Management and Budget]? I don't know exactly where the mismatch is, but I think it's above the Navy. I think the Navy and Marines are completely on board on this. The consistency of this testimony has been notable. If that's the case, you're going to see a really strong bias on the committee to make sure [the Navy] has the funds for 31 and not drop below it.

The senator said he has seen "tentative suggestion" that the level of 31 could be reached if the funds were made available next beginning next year "But that is sending a confusing message that suggests that they're not really committed to 31. I think the committee is committed to 31."

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## **AUKUS Deal Buoy Submarine Suppliers**



President Joe Biden greets British Prime Minister Rishi Surnak and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese the AUKUS bilateral meeting in San Diego, Calif, March 13, 2023. (DoD photo by Chad J. McNeeley)

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ARLINGTON, Va. – The suppliers of components and materials to the nation’s submarine shipyards praised the AUKUS agreement’s plan for building three or potentially five Virginia-class attack submarines (SSNs).

The AUKUS agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States to provide nuclear-powered attack submarines for Australia will involve supplying three Virginia-class SSNs to Australia (with an option for two more) starting in the early 2030s, followed by a new class of SSNs – the SSN-AUKUS – built in the United Kingdom in the late 2030s, followed by further SSN-AUKUS submarines built in Australia in the early 1940s.

Steven Dobos, chairman of the Submarine Industrial Base

Council, said in an interview with Seapower that the timing of when the three-to-five Virginia-class SSNs are slotted in the production presents a challenge and an opportunity.

“It’s a good problem,” Dobos said. “For years it was, are they going to fund a boat? Are they going to fund two boats? Are they going to put two Virginias in the same year? What are we going to do with Columbia? ... It comes with an extensive set of challenges, but they are all opportunities. The defense industry, and particularly the submarine industrial base, they have met the challenges of the past and I don’t think there’s anything in the future preventing it from doing it in the future with adequate planning.”

Dobos said that Congress is “extremely” supportive of the submarine industrial base, “probably more than ever.”

“I would expect to see some plus-ups put in there, but I think everybody would be happy if it went in at the president’s budget [level],” he said.

“Everything is pie in the sky until the contract is awarded,” he said. “The supply chain now is being told that they’re going to go to a larger block buy for most of this, where they’re going to package five Columbias and seven Virginias gives you visibility as to what your cadence is going to be, and that allows you to accurately staff your work force and give you the time to build up what you need.”

As with the submarine-building shipyards, the submarine suppliers face the challenges of recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce.

“As fast as we can hire skill, we lose skill for varying reasons,” said Dobos, whose own company is in Cameron, Texas. “Texas is in the middle of the oil field. You’re fighting with oil and gas [industry] for your welders, your fitters and your machinists.”

Dobos said the SIBC was pleased with the \$636 million proposed in the president's 2023 budget for supplier and workforce development.

Dobos is the president and CEO of [Butler Weldments](#) in Cameron, Texas. His company produces components for the prime contractors that build submarines, [HII's Newport News Shipbuilding](#) and [General Dynamics' Electric Boat](#). The products include foundations for heavy machinery such as turbine sub-bases for the main propulsion unit for the Virginia-class, numerous components for the Columbia-class, large fixtures for Newport News and Electric Boat to support the Columbia construction, and large power-generation frames.

The SIBC's membership includes approximately 2,000 suppliers.

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## **Navy Concludes EOC Westpac Deployment of MQ-4C Triton UAV**



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ARLINGTON, Va.— The U.S. [Navy is concluding the first deployment](#) of a detachment of MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting (MISR&T) unmanned aerial vehicles, ending the Early Operational Capability deployment of the Triton, paving the way for the UAV's Initial Operational Capability.

Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19, home-based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, deployed two MQ-4Cs to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in 2020 to provide MISR&T for the U.S. 7th Fleet while developing the concept of operations and the tactics to refine the Triton's operations. The detachment operated from Guam; Naval Air Facility Misawa, Japan; and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, the Navy said in a March 16 release.

The two MQ-4Cs deployed from VUP-19's maintenance base in Naval Air Station Point Mugu, California. While deployed, the

maintenance detachment moved to Naval Station Mayport, Florida, which is near the squadron's operations center in Jacksonville. One of the two deployed Tritons arrived in Mayport in December to be used for training.

The two deployed Tritons were of the baseline Integrated Functional Capability (IFC) 3 configuration. The squadron has since received newer versions in the IFC 4 configuration, which are equipped with a more capable sensor suite that will allow them to replace the Navy's fleet of EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft. The MQ-4C will supplement the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

VUP-19 is scheduled to bring the Triton to Initial Operational Capability later in 2023 when it deploys a full "orbit" of Tritons to the 7th Fleet's Task Force 72. With a full orbit, a squadron detachment will be able to maintain a Triton on patrol 24/7.

Last October, [Seapower reported](#) that Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, said the fleet is working to build up an orbit "to learn our way through some of the capabilities that an EP-3 [Aries II Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft] might bring back. It will be a different way of processing the information than we do with our EP-3s, so we're working as a Navy to see how we seamlessly transition."

"VUP-19 plans to introduce this capability to more fleet areas around the globe, paving the way for future Navy unmanned systems," the Navy release said.

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# Marine Commandant is Bullish on Flight II LPD Capabilities



The Flight I amphibious transport dock ships USS San Antonio (LPD 17) and USS New York (LPD 21) in 2011 off the coast of Virginia. They are being succeeded by the Flight II LPD. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Edwin F. Bryan*  
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WASHINGTON – The Marine Corps commandant praised the Flight II version of the San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship (LPD) and re-iterated his position that 31 large and medium amphibious warships is the minimum needed to enable amphibious power projection for the Marine Corps.

“The Flight II program is a huge success,” said General David H. Berger, speaking in a conversation with Defense One

reporter Caitlin Kennedy during the March 16 Defense One State of the Marine Corps webcast. "To us, the Flight II is exactly what we need to replace the LSD."

The Flight II LPD is designed to replace the old Whidbey Island-class dock landing ships (LSDs). With the Navy's 2023 budget, the Navy had planned to retire four LSDs, but Congress refused to consent and prohibited the Navy from decommissioning them. In the 2024 budget proposal, the Navy is requesting to retire three of the LSDs.

However, the Navy is planning to gap procurement of the Flight II ships for at least five years in the 2024 Future Years Defense Plan while it evaluates the requirements of the Navy and Marine Corps and the construction costs of the ships.

"The decommissioning of the older ones [LSDs] and a strategic pause [in LPD Flight II procurement] causes a dilemma," Berger said.

The Navy in 2014 decided to use the Flight I LPD hull as the basis for the Flight II design as a cost-saving measure. Berger said the cost of a Flight II ship was \$1.62 billion, compared to \$2 billion for a Flight I ship.

The commandant also said that the number large and medium amphibious warships needed was nothing less than 31, noting that if the number drops below 31, the nation will lack the Marine presence to respond to crises. He pointed to lack of an amphibious ready group and associated Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Mediterranean Sea to respond to the need disaster relief following the recent earthquake in Türkiye.

"If the net number of amphibious ships starts to drop ... and you don't have the amphibious ships that you need – we have the Marines, the Navy has the Sailors – the limiting factor here is the number of ships," he said. "If that happens, you can't respond in the timeline, you can't respond when the need is urgent. This is the underpinning of our national strategy ...

the ability to support allies and partners and deter something from happening. You need to be forward to do that.”

Berger also re-iterated his support for Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael Gilday’s number one priority of readiness. The commandant said the funds for ship maintenance the Navy proposed in the 2024 budget, “were absolutely a step in the right direction.”

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## **Amphib Suppliers to Navy Cite Need for Consistency in Ship Orders**



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ARLINGTON, Va. – The companies supplying components and materials to the shipbuilders who produce the amphibious

warfare ships for the U.S. Navy say that consistency in ship orders brings economies to the work and stability to the industrial base.

“The last few years have been fits and starts on numerous ships in the budget,” said David Forster, chairman of the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Council (AWIBC) and vice president for Global Strategy for Rolls-Royce North America Inc. in an interview with Seapower. “What we have not seen is a consistent shipbuilding program has been substantiated over a FYDP [Future Years Defense Plan] that allows our suppliers the ability to actually plan the work and apply some sort of business practices.”

The [AWIBC](#) “is an organization of amphibious warship suppliers who advocate for Congress to provide funding for the sustained and stable construction of amphibious warships vital to the mission of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. The amphibious warship industrial base is comprised of 614 companies in 38 states and 226 Congressional Districts provide parts worth over \$1.78 billion for the construction of amphibious warships,” according to an email from the company.

“The industrial base can take a lot more work than it currently has,” Forster said. “In order to do that, you do need a plan which allows the industrial base to respond.”

Forster pointed out that the shipyards need time to ramp up to meet increased production requirements, by hiring and training more skilled workers, ordering more materials, and building or installing more infrastructure and equipment.

“I think the industrial base has the capacity for more shipbuilding,” he said. “It’s not the instantaneous response that everyone would like it to be. But, given enough lead-time, as well as enough information, the industrial base can do almost anything you really want it to do.”

Asked about the 31-ship floor set for the amphibious warship

fleet, Forster did not take a position.

“We’re going to let that conversation play within the requirements-setting side of the house, whether that’s the warfare modelers, the Pentagon, Congress,” he said. “We’re standing by, ready to support whatever that requirement is, whether it’s 31 as [Congress] mandated last year in the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act or whether it’s some other number. ... We’re just hoping for consistency in shipbuilding rather than a particular number.”

The Navy’s proposed 2024 budget would fund completion of the fourth America-class amphibious assault ship (LHA), but the associated FYDP would not fund any Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious dock ships (LPDs) for at least five years. The ships are built at HII’s Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

“If we can get the LPDs to about every two-year centers and LHAs to about every four-year centers, what that allows the industrial base to do is apply some of that economic strategy to offset inflation, come through with some investment on whether it’s new capability, new material, new processes, or allows them to invest in workers and retain those workers,” Forster said.

The proposed medium landing ship, scheduled to be funded in 2025 and designed to support Marine littoral regiments, would be an opportunity to strengthen the industrial base.

“That ship does offer opportunity to the other yards which are not the big hull builders,” Forster said. “From an industrial base [perspective], that’s pretty good. That helps sustain the industrial base. It also provides resources into the suppliers.”

“We remain committed to landing ship medium, and for LPD, we’re taking a look at the – the acquisition strategy moving forward, again, to make sure that we would have the right

capabilities at the right price, and working with industry partners to put – put together that plan moving forward,” said Undersecretary of the Navy Eric Raven, briefing reporters March 13 on the 2024 budget. ... We received a direction from OSD [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] but this will be an integrated team moving forward for that assessment.”

Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, deputy secretary of the Navy for Budget, also briefing the reporters, said the “intent here is not a either/or between a LPD or a medium landing ship, it’s a both, so it’s an end game, and we have time to get this right. ... I believe the services are fundamentally aligned on this requirement. Both service chiefs like 31 [large and medium amphibious warships] as a requirement, both service chiefs like multi-year procurements, both service chiefs want to buy in a predictable future. And so, if we can do a study and actually lower the cost of this, that’s all to the good of the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps.”

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## **Navy Requests 9 Battle Force Ships, 88 Aircraft for Fiscal 2024**



PACIFIC OCEAN (March 8, 2022) An F-35C Lightning II from the “Rough Raiders” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 125, taxis on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN68). Nimitz is underway conducting routine operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jared Mancuso)

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ARLINGTON, Va. – The [Navy Department is requesting funds](#) for nine battle force ships and 88 aircraft in its fiscal 2024 budget proposal. The service also plans to decommission 11 battle force ships, some before the expiration of their service life.

The 2024 request at \$255.8 billion represents an \$11.1 billion or 4.5% increase over the 2023 budget enacted by Congress, according to Undersecretary of the Navy Eric Raven and Rear Adm. John Gumbleton, deputy secretary of the Navy for Budget, briefing reporters March 13 at the Pentagon.

# Ships

The nine ships in the \$32.8 billion ship construction request include one Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN), two Block V Virginia-class attack submarines (and advance funding for four more), two Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, two Constellation-class guided-missile frigates, one John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, and one new-design submarine tender.

Ship construction funding includes \$5.8 billion for the first and second increments of the second Columbia-class, Wisconsin (SSBN 827). Funding also is requested for the Ford-class aircraft carrier program: the seventh increment for the third, Enterprise (CVN 80), and the sixth increment for the Dorie Miller (CVN 81).

The budget allocates \$1.8 billion for the final increment of the Fallujah (LHA 9), the fourth America-class amphibious assault ship.

Of note, no funding is provided for any more Flight II San Antonio-class landing platform dock ships throughout the Future Years Defense Plan. Procurement of the new medium landing ship is planned for fiscal 2025 and the next-generation logistic ship is planned for 2027.

The proposed budget also funds the procurement of two LCU 1700-class utility landing craft; two used ships for conversion to sealift ships; and the service-life extension of one air-cushion landing craft (LCAC). Procurement of the LCAC 100-class ship-to-shore connector is gapped for 2024, with resumption planned for 2025.

Procurement of the Large Unmanned Surface Vessel and the Orca Extra-Large Unmanned Undersea Vehicle are funded for 2025 and 2026, respectively.

The Navy plans to retire 11 ships, including eight which would be retired before the normal end-of service life. The ships to be retired include: one Los Angeles-class attack submarine, five Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers, two Independence-class littoral combat ships, and three dock landing ships.

Under the 2024 plan, the Navy's battle force would decline by one ship to 293 ships.

## Aircraft

The budget proposal included \$17.3 billion for the procurement of 88 aircraft for the Navy and Marine Corps. This includes 16 F-35B and 19 F-35C Lightning IIs; 26 T-54A multi-engine training aircraft; two KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport; 15 CH-53K King Stallion heavy-lift helicopters; five MQ-9A Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs); two MQ-4C Triton UAVs; and three MQ-25A Stingray UAVs.

Gumbleton said this budget request completes the procurement of the KC-130J (at 88 aircraft); the MQ-4C (at 22 aircraft), and MQ-9A (at 18 aircraft). The Navy's stated requirement was for 68 MQ-4Cs, so this truncation represents a change in direction. The Navy Air Reserve has an unfunded requirement for 32 C-130J transports.

As expected, the Navy has not requested any F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters. It remains to be seen if Congress will again fund more Super Hornets out of concern for the Navy's strike fighter shortfall.

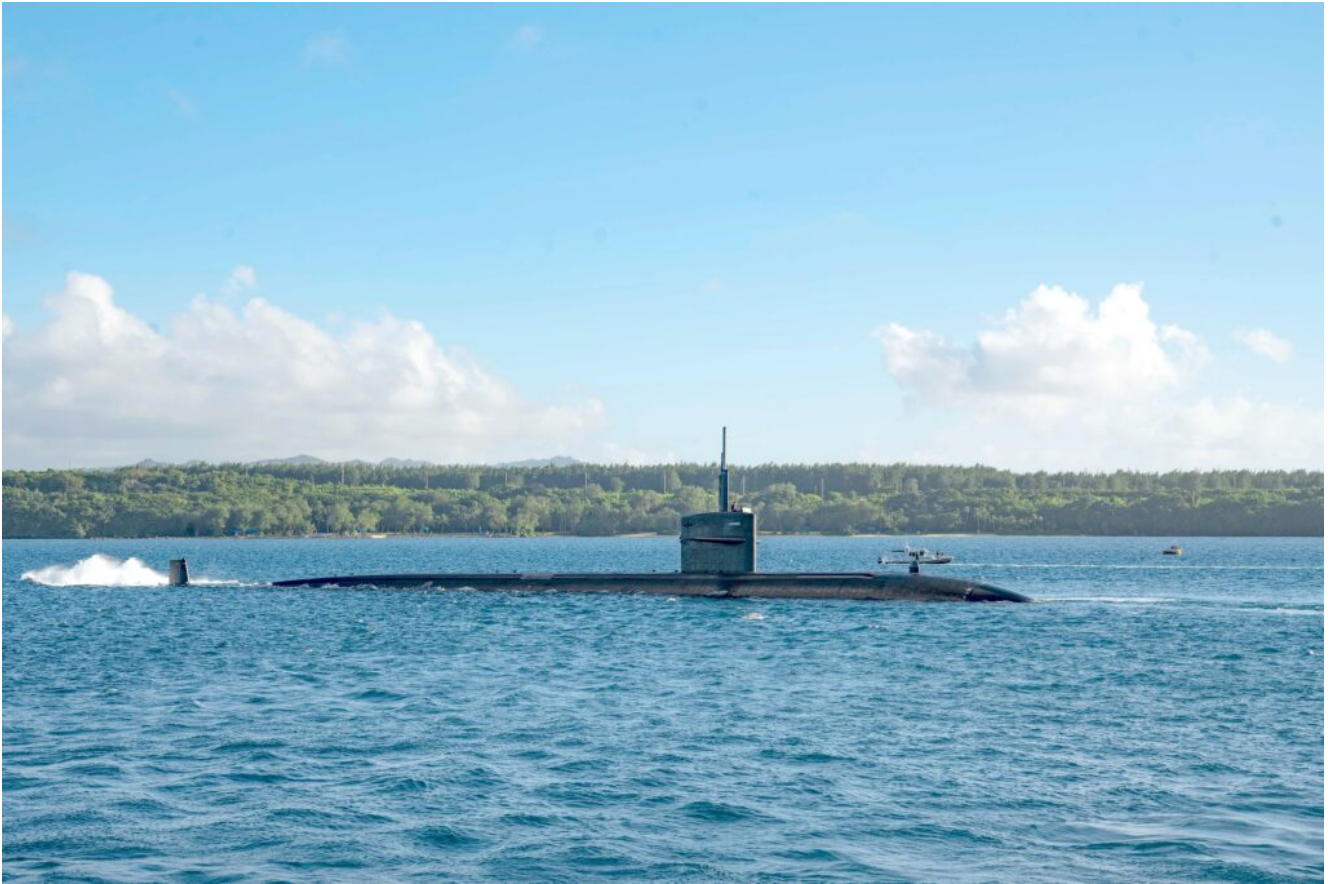
The 2024 plan would leave the Navy and Marine Corps aircraft fleet at 3,998 aircraft, slightly under the 2023 total of 4,012.

## **Marine Corps Vehicles**

The Marine Corps plans to procure 80 personnel variants of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle and 396 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles in 2024. The Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) and Long Range Fires (LRF) programs would continue development and testing of the Remotely Operated Ground Unit Expeditionary (ROGUE) Fires vehicle, an “unmanned ground vehicle based on a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) chassis mounting a missile launcher system,” the Navy’s budget briefing book said. The 2024 budget souls continue procurement of NMESIS systems as well as funding for 90 Naval Strike Missiles and, for the LRF, 34 Tactical Tomahawk missiles.

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## **Navy Integrates Information Warfare Teams on Submarines**



NAVAL BASE GUAM (Jan. 17, 2023) The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Key West (SSN 722) departs Apra Harbor, Guam, Jan. 17, 2023. Key West is one of five submarines assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron 15. Commander, Submarine Squadron 15 is responsible for providing training, material and personnel readiness support to multiple Los Angeles-class fast attack submarines and is located at Polaris Point, Naval Base Guam. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Eric Uhden)

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ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has begun integrating information warfare teams in submarines to increase the boats’ tactical information warfare combat capabilities, a senior admiral said.

“We partnered with [Vice Adm. William J. Houston, commander, Naval Submarine Forces] and the submarine force last year to put Information Warfare officers and Sailors as permanent party, as part of submarine crews,” said Vice Adm. Kelly Aeschbach, commander, Navy Information Forces, speaking March at the online Defense One State of the Navy seminar.

“We piloted the effort on two submarines, where we have an officer and three Sailors who have integrated with the crew and are allowing the crew to focus on the execution of their submarine duties,” Aeschbach said.

The Information Warfare teams on board use their expertise to help the submarine crew with “electronic warfare, intelligence preparation of the environment, and the other requirements they have in terms of cyber security and assured communications,” she said.

“The feedback so far has been really positive and I’m optimistic that we’re probably going to move out with permanent integration of information warfare personnel on submarines, which I think is really powerful addition to the great work that our submarine force already does for us.” the admiral said.

Aeschbach said that in the past information warfare personnel teams were deployed on board submarines for certain missions or operations but were not integrated full-time.

“The submarine force recognized how challenging and competitive the undersea environment is now, that it would really be force multiplier ... permanently embedded to bring that expertise to bear in support of their operations,” she said.

The admiral did not specify the class(es) of the two submarines with the integrated teams.

Aeschbach also said the Navy has established the Fleet Information Warfare Command Pacific, led by Rear Adm. Michael J. Vernazza, “focused at the flag level on the delivery and integration of our information capabilities [in the Pacific Fleet] and I think it is really helping us move at the operational level of war in the completed integration of what we can deliver in space, cyber, intelligence, weather, etc., all of the capabilities that are in the information

# Australia Announces Formation of MQ-4C Triton UAS Squadron



Australia's first MQ-4C Triton autonomous maritime patrol aircraft poses for its first official portraits after emerging from the Northrop Grumman Palmdale paint booth.

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ARLINGTON, Va. – The Royal Australian Air Force has re-activated a historic squadron to operate its forthcoming MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles announced at the Avalon

Air Show last week that 9 Squadron is “being re-formed after a break of 34 years,” according to a release from the Australian Department of Defence of a March 3 transcript of an interview with Australian officials at the air show.

“There’s a lot of lineage to this Squadron,” Marles said. “9 Squadron was originally formed in 1939. It did maritime surveillance during the Second World War. It saw service during the Vietnam War and for the keen military historians among you, you will have noticed that 9 Squadrons insignia is on the tail of the Triton. And 9 Squadron will be reformed to operate this capability the Triton uncrewed aircraft. It will be based at RAAF base Edinburgh although the airframes that you see behind me will actually operate out of Tindal.”

Marles said the Triton “will be able to provide the persistent reconnaissance and surveillance, of our northern maritime approaches which is so important in terms of the defence of our nation. It’s also going to be really useful in terms of surveilling illegal fishing both in our own waters, but also the waters of our Pacific neighbours. So, it’s a really exciting capability.”

Air Marshal Robert Chipman, chief of the Royal Australian Air Force, noted that 9 Squadron saw operational service in World War II with the Navy, “flying from our cruisers, HMA Ships, Hobart, Perth, Sydney, Canberra and Australia from the Arctic all the way down to the Southwest Pacific. And 22 servicemen lost their lives in World War II serving with 9 Squadron. In Vietnam, the Squadron was involved in some of the most iconic battles with the Australian Army, including the Battle of Long Tan, and two crewmen lost their lives in the Vietnam War. So, it is a Squadron have a lot of history. On the emblem, you’ll see an Australian native bird- it’s the black browed albatross. The black browed albatross is renowned for spending a long time on in overwater flights, which makes it the perfect symbol, for the perfect Squadron for us to establish the MQ-4 Triton capability.”

Australia has three Tritons – built by Northrop Grumman – on order. The first is scheduled for delivery in 2024. Chipman said that the Air Force has had personnel training to operate and maintain the Triton for “a number of years.”

“Congratulations to the Royal Australian Air Force on the reactivation of the historic No. 9 Squadron,” said Jane Bishop, vice president and general manager, global surveillance, Northrop Grumman. “We’re honored the squadron will be operating Australia’s MC-4C Triton uncrewed aircraft for their most demanding maritime ISR missions, and we look forward to delivering the first RAAF Triton in 2024.”

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**Admiral: Navy Reserve Needs  
32 C-130J Transports by  
2030**



MISAWA, Japan (July 12, 2021) A C-130T Hercules, assigned to the Condors of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VR) 64, recovers at Naval Air Facility (NAF) Misawa. NAF Misawa provides aviation and ground logistic support and services to all permanent and transient U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps forces in Northern Japan. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Benjamin Ringers)

WASHINGTON – The recapitalization of the Navy Air Reserve’s fleet of C-130 Hercules transport aircraft with modern C-130J Super Hercules aircraft remains the top procurement priority of the Navy Reserve, the Chief of Navy Reserve said, pointing out the challenge of sustaining high mission-capable rates for the existing fleet of C-130s.

The Navy Air Reserve’s C-130T and KC-130T Hercules, “are in every theater around the globe right now and they are the most responsive intra-theater lift capability of any service,” said Vice Adm. John B. Mustin, speaking March 1, 2023, in an online conversation with retired Rear Adm. Frank Thorp IV, president

and CEO of the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington in one of the memorial's SITREP Speaker Series events.

“And that’s a Reserve-only mission,” Mustin said. “There are no active-duty [fleet logistics] C-130s. Mine are on average over three decades old, which means the mission-capable rates are low [and] the pressure on the supply chain is challenging. Lockheed doesn’t make them anymore because they’ve transitioned to C-130J/KC-130J; I’m flying [C-130T] ‘Tangoes.’ Every other service that flies Hercs – active and reserve – has transitioned to Juliets. I’m the only one flying Tangoes.”

Five Navy Air Reserve fleet logistics squadrons operate a total of 16 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.

“We are in the process now – and the CNO [chief of naval operations] has identified this as a priority in his Navigation Plan – to recapitalize the Navy Reserve Herc fleet by 2030. So, I need 32 of these by 2030,” he said. “But they’re not cheap. So, we’re pursuing the first on the Navy’s Unfunded Priority List to kick-start in [fiscal 2024] the procurement of those new airplanes.”

Last June, Mustin testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee’s Defense subcommittee Congress that a fleet of “[m]odern KC-130Js will realize an additional \$200 million in annual transportation cost savings.”