# USS Gettysburg Returns to Naval Station Norfolk from U.S. Southern Command Missions

by Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet Public Affairs, March 23, 2026

NORFOLK, Va. – The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg (CG 64) returned to Naval Station Norfolk March 23, concluding a five-month deployment supporting U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) missions.

"The 'War Horses' of USS Gettysburg conducted themselves honorably and professionally, supporting our nation by deterring narcoterrorism, maintaining security and stability in the Western Hemisphere, and enforcing U.S. sanctions," shared Capt. John Lucas, commanding officer, USS Gettysburg.

“We stand ‘GETTY ready’ to support our American warfighting team wherever and whenever we are called.”

Gettysburg brought maritime capabilities in response to Presidential executive orders and a national emergency declaration. The ship’s performance provided clarification of the military’s role in protecting the territorial integrity of the United States. Gettysburg was among U.S. military forces deployed to the Caribbean in support of the USSOUTHCOM mission, Department of War-directed operations, and the president’s priorities to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and protect the homeland.

Gettysburg worked alongside both the Iwo Jima Amphibious Readiness Group and the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group while supporting USSOUTHCOM missions.

Gettysburg is a multi-mission guided-missile cruiser capable of air warfare, undersea warfare, naval surface fire support and surface warfare, supporting carrier battle groups, amphibious forces or operating independently and as flagships of surface action groups. The ship carries approximately 350 Sailors. Commissioned on June 22, 1991, USS Gettysburg is the namesake of the Battle of Gettysburg.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime ready forces to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

For more U.S. 2nd Fleet news and photos, visit facebook.com/US2ndFleet, https://www.c2f.usff.navy.mil/, X – @US2ndFleet, and https://www.linkedin.com/company/commander-u-s-2nd-fleet.

# RIMPAC 2026 Commanders Conference Concludes in Australia

Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2026 senior leadership and staff pose for a group photo at the RIMPAC 2026 Commander's Conference in Sydney, Mar. 17, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Class Sarah Eaton)

By Commander, U.S. Third Fleet, March 20, 2026

SYDNEY – Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet concluded the Commanders Conference for Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2026, March 20, 2026, marking a key milestone in planning for the world's largest international maritime exercise.

Senior leaders and planners, representing more than 30 allied and partner nations, gathered for the five-day conference to review major elements of the upcoming exercise and build on progress achieved during the Mid-Planning Conference held in December. The in-person engagement enabled participants to strengthen professional relationships and advance coordination ahead of integrated operations during RIMPAC 2026.

U.S. Navy Capt. Brian Jamison, RIMPAC 2026 exercise director, delivered opening remarks on the first day of the conference, formally commencing the event.

“This is a very important planning milestone for execution later this summer,” said Jamison. “This is our opportunity to come together in person, to work on some of the key deliverables, and get into the teamwork that it’s going to take to make this very successful.”

U.S. Navy Vice Adm. John Wade, commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, welcomed attendees and emphasized the importance of multinational cooperation and shared commitment among participating nations.

“I want to make sure that everyone from the most senior to the most junior is thanked for your hard work that allowed us to come to beautiful Sydney, Australia, to align and synchronize with each other,” said Wade. “This exercise is an opportunity for the young men and women who have volunteered to serve to get better, to get stronger, to become more proficient and capable.”

Wade also underscored the conference’s role in ensuring RIMPAC builds successful international maritime partnerships built on trust and cooperation.

“This conference allows us to purposefully and methodically go through the plan and make sure that we’ve done our homework to ensure that we do this safely and professionally, obtain objectives strategically, operationally, and tactically, not

only collectively as a team, but each of our nations and our services," added Wade.

RIMPAC 2026 will mark the 30th iteration of the biennial exercise and will coincide with the United States' 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The exercise is designed to bring allied and partner nations together to enhance interoperability, strengthen collective maritime security and reinforce enduring cooperation across the Indo-Pacific.

First conducted in 1971, RIMPAC was initially held annually before transitioning to a biennial schedule in 1974, due to its growing scale and scope. The founding participants were the United States, Australia and Canada.

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# U.S. Navy Opens New Expeditionary Maintenance Facility at Camp Mitchell, Rota Spain

Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota Commanding Officer Capt. Charles Chmielak, second from left, and 22nd Naval Construction Regiment (22NCR) Commodore Capt. Allen Willey, second from right, join Sailors assigned to 22NCR and NAVSTA Rota Public Works Department to cut a ribbon during the opening of a new expeditionary maintenance facility at Camp Mitchell onboard NAVSTA Rota, Spain, March 23, 2026. (U.S. Navy photo by MCC Justin Stumberg)

From Chief Mass Communication Specialist Justin Stumberg, March 24, 2026

U.S. Navy leaders, Sailors, and civilian partners marked the completion of a new expeditionary maintenance facility (EMF) during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Camp Mitchell aboard Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, Spain, March 23, 2026.

This project, led by NAVSTA Rota's Resident Officer in Charge of Construction (ROICC) in coordination with the 22nd Naval Construction Regiment (NCR), delivers modern vehicle, boat, and equipment maintenance capabilities in direct support of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion and Underwater

Construction Team assets operating across Europe and Africa.

“This facility is about readiness at the deckplate level,” said Capt. Allen Willey, 22NCR commodore. “By providing our Seabees and divers with a purpose-built maintenance space, we’re directly improving their ability to sustain equipment, respond faster, and remain mission-ready in support of fleet and combatant commander requirements.”

The $25.9 million military construction project was awarded in December 2021 and reached beneficial occupancy in December 2025. The facility replaces several aging, end-of-life buildings and consolidates maintenance and administrative functions into a single, modern structure designed specifically for expeditionary engineering forces.

“This was a complex, multi-year effort that required close coordination between installation leadership, engineers, and operational stakeholders,” said Lt. Cmdr. Joshua Owens, assigned to the NAVSTA Rota ROICC. “The end result is a facility that will support the mission and our Sailors for decades to come.”

The new EMF includes vehicle and boat maintenance bays, administrative spaces, and support areas tailored to the operational needs of forward-deployed Seabees and Navy divers. The project also involved demolition of obsolete facilities and renovations to nearby buildings to accommodate displaced operations.

“Today’s ceremony marks a direct investment in the people that comprise our fleet and win our nation’s wars,” said Naval Station Rota Commanding Officer Capt. Charles Chmielak, addressing the assembled NAVSTA Rota Public Works Seabees in attendance. “By delivering this facility, you are ensuring our expeditionary warfighters have the quality of service and operational support they need to remain the most lethal and globally dominant maritime force.”

Naval Station Rota’s strategic position at the gateway to the Mediterranean Sea makes it a critical hub for U.S. and NATO maritime operations. Infrastructure investments such as the Expeditionary Maintenance Facility enhance the installation’s ability to support maritime security, logistics, and power projection in support of U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and U.S. 6th Fleet.

22NCR commands naval construction forces for Navy Expeditionary Forces Europe-Africa/Task Force 68 across the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations to defend U.S., Allied, and partner interests.

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# PMA-226 Strengthens Alliance by Returning Historic Helicopter to Service

An iconic VH-3A Sea King returns to the skies after a modernization by Adversary and Specialized Aircraft Program Office (PMA-226) and industry partners. Now, this historic aircraft is ready to continue its service with the Egyptian Air Force, strengthening a decades-long alliance.
From Naval Air systems Command, March 23, 2026

NAS Patuxent River, Md. – In a powerful demonstration of its commitment to international partners, the Adversary and Specialized Aircraft Program Office (PMA-226) has successfully returned a historically significant VH-3A Sea King to the skies for the Egyptian Air Force. The project, completed in February, modernizes a key aviation asset and reinforces a strategic partnership built on decades of cooperation.

The effort, managed by the PMA-226 H-3 Integrated Product Team in partnership with NAVAIR’s Security Cooperation Office and industry partner Clayton International, successfully merged a legacy airframe with modern technology.

“This milestone is a testament to the teamwork and dedication of our program office, contracting teams, and industry partners,” said Capt. Jason Pettitt, PMA-226 program manager. “Together, we’ve delivered a modernized aircraft that strengthens our partnership with the Egyptian Air Force and highlights the value of collaboration with our allies.”

The aircraft itself, BuNo 150615, has a rich history. It was originally delivered to the U.S. Marine Corps to support presidential missions for John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon. Its role pivoted from executive transport to diplomatic symbol during Nixon’s 1974 visit to Egypt, when he gifted the helicopter to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as a gesture of goodwill.

The recent refurbishment included installing a revitalized electrical backbone and a modern “glass panel” avionics suite, alongside upgraded communication and navigation systems. On Feb. 2, the Egyptian Air Force conducted an Acceptance Check Flight, validating the aircraft’s renewed performance.

“The Egyptian Air Force’s active involvement and commitment to quality were key to the success of this program,” Pettitt added.

Following the final installation of a custom VIP interior, the aircraft will be prepared for transport back to Egypt, where it will resume service as a flying symbol of an enduring partnership.

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# U.S. 4th Fleet Announces

# Southern Seas 2026 Deployment


From U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet Public Affairs, March 23, 2026

Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) will deploy to the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's Southern Seas 2026 deployment.

Nimitz and Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gridley (DDG 101) are scheduled to conduct passing exercises

and operations at sea with partner nation maritime forces as the ships circumnavigate the continent of South America. Southern Seas 2026 will feature subject matter expert exchanges and provide the opportunity for distinguished visitors from partner nations to see aircraft carrier operations up close. Engagements are planned with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Uruguay, with port visits planned for Brazil, Chile, Panama, and Jamaica.

”The Southern Seas 2026 deployment provides a unique opportunity to enhance interoperability and increase proficiency with our partner-nation forces across the maritime domain,” said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “Deployments like this demonstrate our unwavering commitment to ensuring a secure and stable Western Hemisphere. This mission is a shining example of our dedication to strengthening maritime partnerships, building trust, and working together to counter shared threats.”

“We look forward to continuing the Nimitz legacy of teamwork as we engage with and train alongside our regional partners,” said Rear Adm. Cassidy Norman, commander, Carrier Strike Group 11.

Southern Seas 2026 marks the 11th iteration of the exercise to the region since 2007. Like the previous deployments, Southern Seas 2026 will foster goodwill, strengthen maritime partnerships, counter threats, and build our team.

Nimitz-class aircraft carriers are the pinnacle of mobile projection of naval air power and forward operational presence. No other weapons system has the responsiveness, endurance, multi-dimensional might, inherent battlespace awareness, or command and control capabilities of a carrier strike group and embarked air wing.

The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group consists of Nimitz, its flagship; embarked staff of Carrier Strike Group 11; DESRON 9; embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17; and Gridley.
CVW 17 consists of six squadrons flying F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers, C-2A Greyhounds, and MH-60R/S Sea Hawks.

These squadrons include Helicopter Maritime Squadron (HSM) 73, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 6, Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 22, VFA-137, and Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 139.

USNAVSOUTH/FOURTHFLT is the trusted maritime partner for Caribbean, Central and South America maritime forces improving regional unity and security.

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# USS Mustin Returns to Forward-Deployed Naval Forces in Yokosuka

From Chief Mass Communication Specialist Taylor DiMartino, Commander, Destroyer Squadron 15 Public Affairs, March 23, 2026

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin (DDG 89) arrived at Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) March 23, 2026, marking its return to U.S. 7th Fleet after nearly five years in San Diego. The ship was previously forward-deployed to Yokosuka from 2006 to 2021.

Mustin recently completed a major modernization period while in the U.S., enhancing its combat capabilities and ensuring it, and its crew, are ready to meet the dynamic challenges of the region.

“Mustin Nation is proud to return to Japan,” said Mustin commanding officer, Cmdr. Christina Appleman. “Our arrival has a special meaning for our Sailors and their families. We are rejoining a phenomenal team here in the 7th Fleet, and are eager to work alongside our allies and partners in the region. We bring with us the spirit of our ship’s motto, ‘Always Be

Bold,’ and are ready to ensure security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”

Capt. David Huljack, commanding officer of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, welcomed Mustin’s return, highlighting its importance to the squadron’s mission.

“Welcoming USS Mustin back to the DESRON 15 family is a significant moment for us,” said Huljack. “This ship and its crew bring a renewed strength and vital capability to our surface force.Their return to the tip of the spear is a clear demonstration of our commitment to maritime security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”

Commissioned July 26, 2003, Mustin is a multi-mission platform capable of conducting a wide range of operations, from maritime security and anti-submarine warfare to ballistic missile defense. The destroyer is named for the Mustin family, which has a long and distinguished history of service in the U.S. Navy.

The ship’s return to Yokosuka is a testament to the U.S. Navy’s enduring commitment to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka provides critical support to U.S. 7th Fleet, the largest of the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed fleets. CFAY’s strategic location and extensive facilities are vital for maintaining readiness and supporting maritime operations throughout the Western Pacific.

Mustin is forward-deployed and assigned to DESRON 15, the Navy’s largest DESRON and the U.S. 7th Fleet’s principal surface force.

U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.

# HII Celebrates 2025 Graduates of The Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School

From HII

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., March 21, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII (NYSE: HII) hosted commencement exercises today, celebrating 128 graduates of the company’s Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School. The ceremony was held at Liberty Live Church in Hampton.

Linda McMahon, U.S. secretary of education, delivered the keynote commencement address.

“On the eve of America’s 250th anniversary, I am reminded of how much we have relied on skilled workers to build and sustain our nation,” McMahon told graduates. “Today, you join that proud tradition. This path you have chosen is one of purpose, opportunity, and lasting impact, and it will help carry our country forward for generations to come.”

HII hosted McMahon at NNS Friday for a tour of the shipyard and The Apprentice School. McMahon also participated in a roundtable discussion with shipbuilders focused on workforce development and national security.

At graduation Saturday, NNS President Kari Wilkinson addressed the graduates as the shipyard’s newest leaders.

“What an incredible accomplishment this day represents, and it is one deserving of the highest praise and celebration,” Wilkinson said. “Thank you for your commitment and your dedication and for being on this team of professionals doing the work of the nation.”

Founded in 1919, The Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School has been accredited since 1982 by the Council on Occupational Education. Certification to grant associate degrees and confer degrees on its own came in July 2020, after the school was approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to operate as a postsecondary institution.

Alex Edwards received the Homer L. Ferguson Award, which recognizes the apprentice graduating with the highest average in combined required academic and craft grades.

Edwards began his career with HII in 2018 as an electrician at NNS. He entered The Apprentice School in 2022 to further his education and expand his career options. He currently works as a deck electrician on aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74), which is undergoing refueling and complex

overhaul at NNS.

During his address, Edwards acknowledged the support the class has received from family and friends and asked graduates to reflect on their achievements, while focusing on accomplishing their next goals.

“Each of us now has a degree that is a reminder to us that we can accomplish a goal that we commit ourselves to,” Edwards said. “My question to each of you is: What is the next goal you are going to commit to? I believe that each of us can achieve the goals we set if we commit 100 percent of ourselves to them.”

Replay coverage of the ceremony is available at: https://hii.com/events/apprentice-school-graduation/.

The following is a profile of the graduating class:

- Thirteen graduates earned highest honors, a combination of academic and craft grades that determine overall performance. Thirty-two earned high honors and 13 earned honors.

- One hundred and five graduates earned an Associate of Applied Science in maritime technology degree.

- Sixty-nine graduates completed Frontline FAST, an accelerated skills training program for potential foremen.

- Thirty graduates were inducted into The National Society of Leadership Success.

- Six graduates are military veterans or are currently

serving in the armed services as reservists and guardsmen.

- Twenty-four graduates earned Gold Athletic awards.

The Apprentice School accepts more than 200 apprentices per year. The school offers four- to eight-year, tuition-free apprenticeships in 19 trades and six optional programs. Apprentices work a 40-hour week and are paid for all work, including time spent in academic classes.

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# Joint Statement Reaffirming a Shared Commitment to Defense Industrial Resilience


From the Department of War, March 20, 2026

We, the National Armaments Directors and senior government officials of the member nations of the Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR), convened for our 2nd Annual Plenary meeting, virtually, on March 18, 2026, to reaffirm our commitment to accelerating defense industrial cooperation.

We reaffirmed the PIPIR Statement of Core Vision and Terms of Reference, discussed the collective challenges and opportunities to defense industrial cooperation in the Indo-

Pacific, and endorsed the 2026 roadmap for PIPIR workstream initiatives.

We also endorsed the accession of Thailand and the United Kingdom to PIPIR, welcoming them as the 15th and 16th members, respectively, to join our Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic partnership. Collectively, we are committed to strengthening defense industrial resilience to promote the continued regional security, economic security, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific.

We discussed current capacity shortfalls and resilience challenges in the global defense industrial base that impede our ability to meet combined operational needs but acknowledged positive momentum through PIPIR in addressing barriers to increased armaments cooperation. We further reaffirmed our commitment to exploring avenues across the Partnership to strengthen defense industrial base integration to de-risk supply chains, expand forward sustainment capacity, remove policy and regulatory impediments to cooperation, and accelerate production of key systems and components.

We discussed the significant progress that has been achieved through PIPIR since its establishment, recalling the announcement of two marquee initiatives by the U.S. Secretary of War at the Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2025, including the development of a forward repair capability for P-8 radar systems in Australia and the development of standards for small unmanned aerial systems across the Indo-Pacific. We agreed to the following next steps for these marquee initiatives:

- Expanding the scope of the regional sustainment hub in Australia to support additional P-8 operators in the Indo-Pacific, a project recently announced at the Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2025.

- Endorsing four Statements of Intent to foster cooperation on small unmanned aerial systems' battery and small motor development through executing an industry survey and sharing results among participants, pursuing reciprocal standards and a common procurement policy, and identifying efforts towards a future battery project.

We agreed that PIPIR continues to make tangible progress toward addressing barriers and accelerating defense industrial collaboration to promote a stronger, more resilient, more integrated, defense industrial base. We also reaffirmed the importance of multilateral frameworks such as PIPIR to help facilitate the rapid delivery of relevant capabilities to our combined defense forces. In doing so, we took measure of the progress made since our last plenary on these efforts:

- Building on the success of the Multinational Armaments Resilience Seminar, the first Indo-Pacific focused multinational armaments cooperation course, to be executed on a yearly basis, and co-hosted by the Department of War's Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies and rotating PIPIR members.

- Continuing our campaign of learning through multiple industrial base-focused subject-matter expert exchanges, tabletop exercises, and collaborative learning events.

We also discussed and endorsed several new lines of effort that will strengthen the Partnership by creating more opportunities for collaboration and will advance defense industrial resilience in the Indo-Pacific and globally:

- Committing to a project that will explore feasibility and opportunity to establish a forward-deployed

F100/F110 engine repair hub in Japan, which, will support regional sustainment for F-15 and F-16 platforms operated by the United States Air Force and partner nations.

- Progressing the effort to establish a CH-47 Chinook T-55 engine repair hub in the Republic of Korea, a project recently announced at the US-ROK Logistics Cooperations Committee in July 2025.

- Establishment of a new Solid Rocket Motor (SRM) production initiative between the US and Japan, chaired by Japan.

- Expanding energetics and munitions development by assessing the potential for interest and funding for the 30mm-by-173mm ammunition load, assemble, and pack line effort with the Philippines.

- Supporting regional co-production opportunities by exploring modular UAV projects across many mission sets.

- Instituting new tools and techniques, such as a project development guide, that provides a methodology to identify and assess future collaborations resulting in enhanced project efficiency and efficacy, information sharing, and transparency among governments, industry partners, and stakeholders.

# Advanced Shipbuilding ‘Factory of the Future’ Opens in Alabama


*Facility will help accelerate submarine production*

From the Navy Office of Information, March 20, 2026

Funded in part by Navy investments provided in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), the advanced manufacturing company Hadrian officially opened a new facility in Cherokee, Alabama March 20th that will boost production of U.S. Navy nuclear submarines.

The 2.2 million square foot site will host a highly-automated "factory of the future," known as F4, which will mass produce components for Virginia-class attack submarines and Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines. The Navy's $900 million investment of OBBBA funds combine with $1.5 billion in private capital for a total investment of more than $2.4 billion. According to Hadrian, up to 1,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs are being created in the venture.

"Both chambers of Congress delivered the generational investment required to rebuild our shipbuilding capacity, bring those jobs back to Alabama and put American skilled laborers back at the center of American strength," said Secretary of the Navy John C. Phelan. "I look forward to building on this progress together in the months ahead, because we are just getting started. This factory is the first of three facilities designed to address the most critical bottlenecks in the maritime industrial base."

Using advanced manufacturing techniques, workers at the new factory will be able to mass produce components that are needed to build Virginia-class and Columbia-class submarines. A dedicated production plant focused on these components frees up submarine shipyards in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Virginia to focus more resources on submarine module production, increasing capacity in the submarine industrial base.

"We call this distributed shipbuilding, and it's a key tenet of our plan to achieve required shipbuilding production rates," said Mr. Jason Potter, Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development &

Acquisition (ASN RDA). “These factories of the future might be several states away from the yards where the ships are ultimately built, but by taking on this work they reduce bottlenecks, having a profound effect on the speed of delivery.”

The Factory 4 project is estimated to take 18-24 months from initiation to full-rate production, including stand-up of automated production facilities, qualification of components, compliance qualifications like submarine safety program (SUBSAFE), and low-rate initial production. By the third year, the facilities will operate sustainably through delivery of submarine product lines.

**Congressman Aderholt Joined U.S. Navy Secretary and Alabama Delegation: Ribbon Cutting on $2.4 Billion Submarine Factory in Cherokee**

From the Office of Congressman Robert Aderholt, March 23, 2026

CHEROKEE, Ala. – On Friday, Congressman Robert Aderholt (AL-04) spoke alongside local and national leaders at a landmark ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new $2.4 billion public-private defense industrial facility in Cherokee, Alabama.

The facility in Barton Riverfront Industrial Park is part of a broader public-private effort to strengthen the U.S. maritime industrial base, representing more than $2 billion in combined investment and up to 1,000 new manufacturing jobs for the area.

*“It was a privilege to help open an event that has been years in the making, an effort that many worked toward and believed in. This 2.2 million square foot facility will now be a symbol of U.S. defense, anchoring shipbuilding and maritime production in Northwest Alabama. Proving that maritime dominance is not just a coastal priority.*

*This project didn't happen by accident. It happened because people believed in this community, and because we made a deliberate effort to bring opportunities back to places that had been overlooked.*

*This facility is only part of a much larger opportunity, and I intend to keep working until that full potential is realized. Because that's what this community has always done. America needs sea power more than ever, and Alabama is up to the challenge. We will build a 21st century collaborative campus here that no conventional shipyard or industrial park can rival.*

*With the leadership of President Trump and Republican majorities in Congress, we passed the One Big Beautiful Bill, legislation focused on restoring American strength. And I worked to ensure that communities like ours were part of that vision. Alongside my colleagues in the Alabama delegation, we helped turn that vision into reality right here at home.*

*By investing in workforce training and building the right partnerships, we made sure Alabama's Fourth Congressional District would be ready when opportunity came and ready to compete for the kind of jobs that strengthen both our economy and our national security. And Friday, we saw that work pay off.*

*This facility will help bring thousands of manufacturing jobs and new opportunities to Northwest Alabama. But just as importantly, it will help restore America's ability to produce the tools necessary to defend freedom and maintain strength at sea.*

*I want to thank Secretary of the Navy John C. Phelan, Senator Tuberville, Senator Britt, Senator Wicker, and Armed Services Chairman Mike Rogers. We all worked diligently in the crafting of the One Big Beautiful Bill to make this happen today. But government alone doesn't build something like this.*

*Thank you to AE Industrial Partners and AE Shoals, Hadrian, Retirement Systems of Alabama, and the Shoals Economic Development Authority for believing in this vision and making a generational investment.*

*This is just the beginning of a stronger region, a stronger workforce, and a stronger United States of America.”*

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# Northrop Grumman’s Talon IQ Flies Shield AI’s Hivemind Software


Northrop Grumman’s Talon IQ  — onboard Scaled Composites’

Model 437 – demonstrated a successful mission autonomy flight with Shield AI’s Hivemind software in Mojave, Calif. (Photo Credit: Northrop Grumman)

**Northrop Grumman’s Talon IQ Flies Shield AI’s Hivemind Software**

*Openarchitecture testbed accelerates AIdriven combat capability*

From Northrop Gruman, March 19, 2026

MOJAVE, Calif. – March 19, 2026 – Northrop Grumman’s (NYSE: NOC) Talon IQ™ testbed completed its first partner mission autonomy flight with Shield AI’s Hivemind software, showcasing a readytofly platform that accelerates innovation, cuts development costs and eliminates the need to build a dedicated airframe for every new autonomy solution.

- **Partner-Powered Autonomy:** During the flight, Shield AI’s Hivemind software successfully commanded the aircraft, executing combat air patrol and target engagement maneuvers. Talon IQ then seamlessly swapped back to Northrop Grumman’s own Prism autonomy software.

- **OpenArchitecture and Compliance:** The flight demonstrated how Talon IQ’s plugandplay design can host thirdparty AI platforms and meet U.S. Government Reference Architectures (GRAs), the standards that ensure defense technology components interoperate securely and reliably.

- **Greater Speed, Lower Cost:** Hivemind took to the sky after a singleday hardwareintheloop test, proving an AI package can move from lab to realworld flight rapidly with Talon IQ and its GRA-compliant ecosystem.

**Experts:**

“We are accelerating autonomous flight innovation with Talon IQ. By integrating Shield AI’s Hivemind into our testbed, we’ve demonstrated an open architecture platform that propels plug and play mission autonomy forward at unprecedented speed,” said Tom Jones, corporate vice president and president, Northrop Grumman Aeronautics Systems.

“Autonomy only scales if it can move quickly from lab to flight,” said Christian Gutierrez, vice president of Hivemind Solutions at Shield AI. “Talon IQ provides a strong environment for maturing mission autonomy, and this integration shows how Hivemind can transition onto new aircraft with minimal modification, accelerating the path to operational capability. We appreciate Northrop Grumman’s collaboration and the opportunity to demonstrate mission autonomy within the Talon IQ ecosystem.”

**Details on Talon IQ:**

Talon IQ™ is the nextgeneration autonomous testbed ecosystem in Northrop Grumman’s Project Talon portfolio. Utilizing the Scaled Composites Model 437 aircraft, it provides an openarchitecture, modular ecosystem that lets partners develop, integrate and flighttest missionautonomy software on proven flightautonomy hardware.

Northrop Grumman’s own Prism mission autonomy software has already commanded the same Model 437 airframe, establishing Talon IQ as a flightproven platform. The system is deliberately designed as a collaborative ecosystem that accelerates modular missionautonomy solutions and enables rapid iteration to meet the evolving demands of future customers.

**Details on Hivemind software:**

Hivemind is Shield AI’s platform-agnostic, GRA-compliant

mission autonomy software that assumes the role of a human pilot or operator, enabling unmanned systems to sense, decide, and act. Unlike traditional autopilots that simply follow preplanned routes, Hivemind can reroute around or engage dynamic obstacles, execute collaborative tactics with peer systems and piloted aircraft, respond to unexpected conditions, and complete missions safely and effectively as part of a human-machine team.