Marine Corps Leaders Visit Ingalls Shipbuilding to Advance Veteran-to-Workforce Pipeline

From HII

PASCAGOULA, Miss., March 19, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII's (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division recently welcomed senior enlisted leaders from the U.S. Marine Corps for a visit focused on strengthening pathways between Marines completing active service and long-term careers in the shipbuilding industry. The visit underscored the longtime partnership between Ingalls and the Marine Corps, particularly through Ingalls' role as the nation's primary builder of amphibious warships.

"Marines bring discipline, technical aptitude and a service mindset, all qualities that can translate directly into the

complex work of shipbuilding," Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Blanchette said. "Those strengths are vital to delivering world-class warships to the U.S. Navy fleet, and we're honored to work with the Marine Corps to expand pathways for Marines transitioning to civilian careers as we continue building the amphibious platforms that keep them mission ready."

During the visit, Marine Corps leaders met with Ingalls leadership and toured the Maritime Training Academy, where they learned about the company's apprenticeship and career development programs. They also visited several areas of the shipyard, including the amphibious assault ship *Bougainville* (LHA 8), gaining a firsthand look at the craftsmanship and technical expertise required to build the platforms that many Marines call home during their worldwide service.

"Our goal is to set Marines up for success after they hang up the uniform," said Sgt. Maj. Carlos A. Ruiz, the 20th sergeant major of the Marine Corps. "This visit was instrumental in collaborating on a direct pipeline for Marines to transition seamlessly into the shipbuilding industry, using tangible and intangible skills gained through their military service."

Ingalls' decades-long history of designing and constructing amphibious warships creates a natural alignment for Marines seeking post-service careers in shipbuilding, as Marine Corps missions depend on the platforms produced at the shipyard. With more than 6,700 veterans employed across its divisions, HII recognizes that U.S. veterans bring essential leadership, technical expertise and operational insight that strengthen the shipbuilding workforce and support delivery of the world's most powerful ships and all-domain solutions for the nation's military.

Coast Guard Offloads Over $49.3 Million in Illicit Drugs Interdicted in Eastern Pacific Ocean

USCGC Foward's (WMEC-911) crew offload illicit drugs valued at more than $49.3 million at Port Everglades, Florida March 19, 2026. This offload was a result of two interdictions in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean by the crews of USCGC Spencer (WMEC-905) and Forward interdicting approximately 6,750 pounds of cocaine. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Seaman Christopher Moret)

From U.S. Coast Guard Southeast District, March 19, 2026

MIAMI – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Forward's crew offloaded

approximately 6,570 pounds of cocaine worth more than $49.3 million at Port Everglades, Thursday.

The seized contraband was the result of two interdictions in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

On Feb. 7, a maritime patrol aircraft located a suspicious vessel, and Coast Guard Cutter Spencer's embarked Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron aircrew employed airborne use-of-force tactics to disable the vessel. Spencer's boarding team interdicted the vessel and seized approximately 6,435 pounds of cocaine.

On March 8, a maritime patrol aircraft located a suspicious vessel, and Forward's embarked HITRON aircrew employed airborne use-of-force tactics to disable the vessel. Forward's crew interdicted the go-fast vessel, recovering approximately 130 pounds of cocaine.

"I'm incredibly proud of the crew for adding to the success of Operation Pacific Viper," said Cmdr. Andrew Grantham, Forward's commanding officer. "The Coast Guard and our partners are working tirelessly to stop narco-terrorists and criminal organizations before their dangerous and illegal cargos reach American shores."

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdiction operations:

- Coast Guard Cutter Forward
- Coast Guard Cutter Spencer
- Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron
- Joint Interagency Tasks Force-South

- Coast Guard Southeast District watchstanders

- Coast Guard Southwest District watchstanders

80% of interdictions of U.S.-bound drugs occur at sea. This underscores the importance of maritime interdiction in combatting the flow of illegal narcotics and protecting American communities from this deadly threat. U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force-South based in Key West conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Eastern Pacific Ocean are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the **Coast Guard's Southwest District**, headquartered in Alameda, California.

To protect the Homeland from ongoing trafficking of illicit narcotics from South America to the United States, the Coast Guard is accelerating our counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of Operation Pacific Viper. Since launching this operation in early August, the Coast Guard has seized over 200,000 pounds of cocaine, and apprehended 150 suspected drug smugglers.

The Coast Guard continues increased operations to interdict, seize and disrupt transshipments of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs by sea. These drugs fuel and enable cartels and transnational criminal organizations to produce and traffic illegal fentanyl, threatening the United States.

These interdictions deny criminal organizations illicit revenue. They provide critical testimonial and drug evidence as well as key intelligence for their total elimination. These interdictions relate to Homeland Security Task Force Tampa, investigations in support of Operation Take Back America,

which identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach.

Coast Guard Cutter Forward is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Portsmouth, Virginia under **U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command**.

ThayerMahan Launches SeaGuard, a UUV Defeat System to Defend Ports and Infrastructure

From ThayerMahan

GROTON, Conn., March 19, 2026 /PRNewswire/ — ThayerMahan, a leader in unmanned maritime security and acoustic intelligence solutions, today announced the official launch of SeaGuard™, the company's operationally validated, non-kinetic defeat system built to protect high-value maritime assets and infrastructure from the rapidly growing spectrum of Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle (UUV) threats.

SeaGuard enters the market as the first fully mature, fieldtested, scalable system of its kind, engineered to disrupt and defeat underwater threats without explosives or harmful emissions, addressing urgent security requirements for defense and commercial operators worldwide.

"From my time in uniform to my role today, one truth has remained constant: the underwater domain evolves rapidly, and

the threats evolve even faster," said Vice Admiral Mike Connor, U.S. Navy (Ret.), Chairman & CEO of ThayerMahan. "SeaGuard is purpose-built to help operators stay ahead of that curve. It represents a leap forward in how we protect vital maritime assets from unmanned undersea threats – reliably, safely, and at scale."

Recent global incidents have shown the critical asymmetric threat presented by UUVs, with lowcost, commercially accessible or locally developed systems able to penetrate defended harbors, approach highvalue assets, and target critical infrastructure, to significant demonstrated effect. As maritime security environments become increasingly congested and contested, traditional detection-only solutions are no longer sufficient to counter the expanding threat profile. SeaGuard provides a missioncritical protection layer for military facilities, deepwater ports, port complexes, LNG terminals, cable landing stations, and other vulnerable subsea locations.

"As the threat landscape shifts from theoretical to unmistakably real, SeaGuard gives government and commercial operators a proven, non-kinetic shield for the critical infrastructure our economy and national security rely on," said Dr. Kevin Lopes, CAPT USCG (Ret.), Vice President of Marketing & Sales at ThayerMahan. "This isn't just a solution for naval bases – it's a mission-ready system for commercial ports and strategic assets worldwide. SeaGuard's operationally validated performance means operators no longer need to rely on detection alone or accept unnecessary risk. They now have a field-tested, scalable capability they can deploy quickly, sustain easily, and trust completely to protect what matters most."

SeaGuard's operational performance has been proven across multiple evaluated exercises, where it demonstrated the ability to disrupt and defeat UUVs, deter diver and swimmer intrusion, and shield high-value assets from tampering or

sabotage. These demonstrations also confirmed its endurance, maintainability, and mission-ready architecture.

“SeaGuard is the culmination of the ThayerMahan team’s incredible effort and ingenuity,” said Andy Meecham, Chief Technology Officer at ThayerMahan. “In trials, SeaGuard consistently produced repeatable, measurable defeat effects across a wide range of conditions, validated through multienvironment testing, independent technical assessment, and sustained endurance runs. It is the only system of its kind ready to deploy today, demonstrating Technology Readiness Level 8+ performance, and we built it from the start to integrate with other port monitoring and protection systems.”

SeaGuard was designed to be modular, scalable, and rapidly deployable. Depending on operational requirements, it can be installed in expeditionary or permanent configurations. The system is safe for the environment and marine life and can be tailored to any Navy, port authority, or infrastructure operator’s security needs.

“SeaGuard deploys where and how you need it, and our team ensures that happens fast,” said Christian Glander, President ThayerMahan Offshore and CAPT USCG (Ret.). “Years of large-scale operations have prepared us to rapidly install SeaGuard across a diverse range of locations. Port security and homeland defense depend on timely, effective underwater protection, and we are ready now to support both missions.”

About SeaGuard™

ThayerMahan’s SeaGuard is an operationally validated non-kinetic UUV denial and delay system. A scalable, modular security solution, SeaGuard delivers unmatched underwater threat mitigation for military and commercial port facilities, moored strategic assets, and critical infrastructure. When paired with advanced sensors such

as ThayerMahan’s TransparenSea®, SeaPicket®, and Outpost® acoustic intelligence solutions, SeaGuard™ provides a detect-to-defeat chain.

About ThayerMahan’s Acoustic Intelligence Solutions
ThayerMahan is the premiere provider of end-to-end unmanned acoustic intelligence solutions. TransparenSea® software, technology, and analysis drive ThayerMahan’s superior acoustic awareness, with edge processing, digital signal processing, and API integrations to watch floors and C2 systems. Outpost® and SeaPicket® deliver fixed and mobile undersea domain awareness from scalable, fully mature, productized platforms.

American Waterways Operators Issues Statement on 60-day Jones Act Waiver Announcement

ARLINGTON, Va., March 18, 2026 /PRNewswire/ — The American Waterways Operators, the national trade association of the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry, today released the following statement on the Trump Administration’s announcement of its decision to issue a 60-day waiver of the Jones Act:

“The Jones Act is fundamental to America’s supply chain reliability and national security, and this broad 60-day waiver of this vital law puts both at risk. The breadth of this waiver is especially concerning, as it will unnecessarily impact transportation markets where domestic vessel capacity is not lacking. Allowing foreign vessels to

transport cargo on U.S. waterways will introduce the price volatility of today’s international market into our domestic commerce, creating instability in our thriving domestic supply chain and undermining American jobs while having no appreciable effect on the price of gasoline.

At a time of heightened concern about terrorist threats on American soil, the Jones Act also serves as a security bulwark against foreignflag vessels with foreign crews transporting critical cargo between America’s inland and coastal ports, and ensures that American mariners remain the indispensable eyes and ears supporting the U.S. Coast Guard’s homeland security mission.

Our nation counts on the Jones Act mariners of the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry to power the American economy and help keep our communities and waterways safe. Waiving the Jones Act does not serve those interests.”

About the American Waterways Operators

The American Waterways Operators is the tugboat, towboat and barge industry’s advocate, resource and united voice for safe, sustainable and efficient transportation on America’s waterways, oceans and coasts. Industry vessels serve as a vital part of America’s supply chain and national security, moving the nation’s commerce on U.S. inland and intracoastal waterways, the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf Coasts, and the Great Lakes.

Maritime Theater Missile

Defense Forum Advances Interoperability, Relevance at Critical Time

Experts across varied aspects of integrated air and missile defense engage in a panel discussion during the Maritime Theater Missile Defense Forum (MTMD-F) at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), March 4, 2026. The MTMD-F returned to NPS for a series of engineering and program management meetings essential to advancing their critical mission. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Zadi Watkins)

From Naval Postgraduate School Public Affairs, March 19, 2026

Effective integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) requires an unparalleled level of international cooperation and interoperability, concepts on full display in current operations. The system of systems necessary to be effective,

however, requires much more than just collaborative coalition operations.

Effective IAMD also takes a persistent collaborative effort of interdisciplinary research and development with many partners, and exhaustive analyses across a broad swath of highly technical disciplines. It also demands the agility to work through stovepipes and unforeseen challenges, in addition to anticipating strategic futures.

Meeting this challenge is the Maritime Theater Missile Defense Forum (MTMD-F), an international cooperative of 12 allied nations' navies charged with achieving interoperability in all aspects of maritime theater air and missile defense. Building upon previous meetings in Monterey in 2006, 2013, 2017 and 2020, the forum and its team of engineers, technicians and National Points of Contact returned to Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) campus in February and March 2026 for a series of engineering and program management meetings essential to advancing their critical mission.

The importance of that mission, and its relevance to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle's recently released Fighting Instructions, is why NPS placed a high priority on supporting the multi-week forum of both classified and unclassified program management and technical interchanges, said NPS president retired U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau.

"The conversations you will have this week – about integrated air and missile defense, sensor fusion, battle management, hypersonic threats, and coalition interoperability – are no longer just about future force design concepts. They reflect present operational reality," Rondeau said in welcoming the MTMD-F to campus.

"IAMD capability development must begin years before the commencement of operations," added retired U.S. Navy Capt. John Hammerer, IAMD warfare chair at NPS. "Essential

developmental efforts spanning the disciplines of systems engineering, modeling and simulation, acquisition, interoperability testing, and operational testing begin years before real world operations."

NPS, and the technical leaders the institution graduates, are critical to this development, Hammerer says.

"Take U.S. Navy efforts to use directed energy for terminal defense, highlighted in the CNO's Fighting Instructions," he continued. "NPS graduate Cmdr. Brian Curran, a Meyer Scholar who earned his PhD in laser physics, is now using that acquired expertise to lead [Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems] (PEO IWS) to accelerate fielding of shipboard lasers."

The MTMD-F keeps essential development on track across multiple technical teams and lines of effort. Leading each navy's efforts is the MTMD-F's National Point of Contact (NPOC) forum. Belgian Navy Capt. Philippe De Cock, the current NPOC chair, says the forum's focus on innovation, analysis and expertise in maritime IAMD – qualities shared at NPS – are critical enablers to its mission.

"The forum was born from a shared appreciation that only a small, agile partnership of nations with subject matter expertise could move quickly enough to anticipate trends and solve the critical problems of maritime missile defense interoperability facing allied nations," De Cock said. "The concentration of subject matter expertise for data analysis and maritime IAMD operations makes the forum-NPS partnership mutually beneficial."

"NPS is an ideal venue for forum collaboration," echoed U.S. Navy Capt. John Mastriani, U.S. NPOC. "The combination of secure facilities, adaptive layout and combat systems engineering expertise make this a highly productive place for

the forum’s technical projects, working groups and leadership to meet.”

Current NPS students and faculty were able to engage with MTMD-F representatives, gaining a deeper perspective on the technical, procedural and operational challenges that enable interoperability in maritime missile defense. NPS’ popular Meyer Scholar program, initiated by Hammerer, prepares officers to contribute to this essential capability by advancing their technical understanding of naval combat systems, from concept to employment.

“Meyer Scholars take on this work in addition to their normal coursework,” Rondeau said. The program combines NPS’ rigorous graduate education with a focused combat systems curriculum, operationally relevant seminars, industry visits and research tied to real-world warfare system challenges.

“Meyer Scholars are trained to lead interoperability rather than chase it, by understanding the technical, tactical, and programmatic dimensions of integrated air and missile defense, and to translate emerging technologies into fleet-ready capabilities,” she said.

Looking ahead, student and faculty participation in MTMD-F discussions identified potential pathways for further NPS contributions to IAMD interoperability and collaboration. The forum highlighted promising opportunities for IAMD-related research at NPS in areas such as:

- Support for the post-mission analysis of combat systems performance following At Sea Demonstration/Formidable Shield (ASD/FS), Pacific Dragon (PD), and Hardware in the Loop (HWIL) test events.

- The Ballistic Missile Defense Integration (BMDi) Project, which accelerates the development of BMD

support, sensor and weapon capabilities.

- The Interoperability and Common Tactical Picture (IaCTP) Project, which promotes the development of a common operating picture across an international task group by analyzing and promoting standardization in datalink systems implementation.

- The Force Level Operational Architecture Technical Standard (FLOATS) Project, a platform-agnostic standard for combat-systems data exchange.

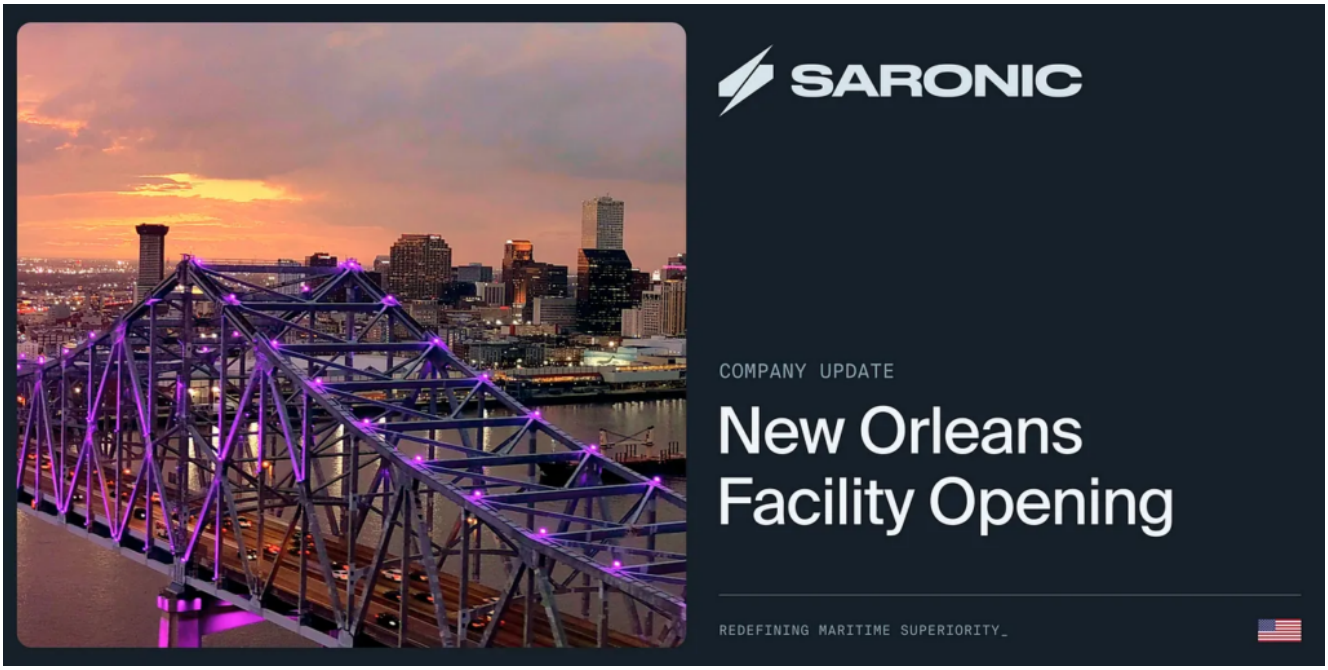
- The Force Threat Evaluation and Effects Coordination (FTE2C) Project, an effort to develop and compare decision support systems and coordinate kinetic and non-kinetic effects across the Coalition Task Group.

As Rondeau stressed to the group, the importance of these developments could not be a more evident call to action.

“The missile defense mission is active, consequential, and demanding of your excellence in both technology and leadership,” she said. “That reality sharpens the purpose of this essential forum and follow-on actions for national security and homeland defense.”

Saronic Announces New

Downtown New Orleans Office to Accelerate Autonomous Shipbuilding



From Saronic, March 18, 2026

Saronic today announced it is opening a nearly 15,000 square foot office in downtown New Orleans. The new space will serve as a key engineering and technical hub to support the company's expanding shipbuilding operations in Louisiana. By establishing a strong presence in the city, Saronic is deepening its roots in one of the nation's most historic and capable maritime regions — one with a strong, highly skilled maritime workforce.

The new office will house hardware engineers, naval architects, marine engineers, and experts in system testing to support the design and development of Marauder, Saronic's 180-foot autonomous ship. These vessels are produced at scale at the company's shipyard in Franklin, Louisiana, which is undergoing a substantial expansion to further strengthen the state's role in helping drive next-generation maritime

manufacturing. The office will provide vital technical connectivity across Saronic’s Louisiana operations, linking advanced engineering and design functions with production and manufacturing capabilities in Franklin.

The company expects to hire more than 350 skilled workers across its operations in Louisiana this year. To help build a strong talent pipeline, Saronic is partnering with universities and technical institutions, offering internships and early-career opportunities for students pursuing jobs in engineering, naval architecture, and other marine disciplines. The company is also working with Louisiana Economic Development to build and integrate training programs into the workforce development process across the region.

“Louisiana has been at the center of American shipbuilding for generations, and New Orleans gives us direct access to the people and technical skills that make that possible,” said Dino Mavrookas, Co-Founder and CEO of Saronic. “This facility builds on our growing investment in the state and strengthens the connection between our teams and Gulf Coast operations, allowing us to move faster as we field and deploy autonomous surface vessels and ships for both defense and commercial partners.”

“This is a strong win for New Orleans and for our growing maritime and engineering economy. Saronic’s decision to open their facilities in downtown New Orleans shows that companies see our city as a place where innovation, maritime expertise, and world-class talent come together,” said Deputy Mayor Jenny Mains. “This investment brings high-quality technical and engineering opportunities for our workforce and aligns with Mayor Helena Moreno’s 100-day plan to attract the next generation of industries and jobs to our city.”

Hiring for Key Roles in Louisiana

Across all of Saronic’s operations, the company is united by a

culture of ownership, accountability, and mission-driven innovation. Full-time employees share in the company’s success through equity participation and receive a comprehensive benefits package designed to support both personal and professional growth. Team members are offered comprehensive health coverage, a 401(k) plan with company matching, generous paid time off and holidays, and fully paid parental leave. Saronic also provides supplemental benefits that support family building, overall wellness, and long-term financial security.

Master Boat Builders Signs Contract with Austal USA to Fabricate Modules for T-ATS Program

Photo from Master Boat Builders

Agreement marks the first formal production contract under the companies' strategic outsourcing partnership

From Master Boat Builders Inc.

CODEN, Ala. - Master Boat Builders, Inc. ("Master Boat") announced it has signed a contract with Austal USA to fabricate modules for the U.S. Navy's Navajo-class Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship (T-ATS) program. The contract establishes Master Boat as a key subcontractor contributing to the construction and delivery of critical vessels that enhance the Navy's and the Trump Administration's push to diversify and strengthen the domestic shipbuilding industrial base through distributed production.

The partnership between the two Alabama-based shipyards reflects a significant milestone for Master Boat as it expands its participation in government defense shipbuilding programs.

Under the agreement, Master Boat will provide specialized shipbuilding support and fabrication services that will contribute to the construction of advanced naval vessels designed to perform a range of missions including open-ocean towing, salvage operations, humanitarian assistance, and environmental response.

“This contract is a direct result of the partnership we built with Austal USA last year, and it validates what we’ve been saying all along – regional shipyards like ours can take on complex defense work and deliver,” said Garrett Rice, President of Master Boat Builders. “We’re not competing with the major yards. We’re adding capacity that the Navy needs right now. Our proximity to Austal USA, our experienced workforce, and our new investment in dedicated defense infrastructure all position us to support this program and others that follow.”

Under the contract, Master Boat will fabricate two T-ATS hull modules at its Coden, Alabama, shipyard, located approximately 30 minutes from Austal USA’s Mobile facility. The modules will be constructed to Austal USA’s production design and specifications, and through the collaboration, Master Boat will gain valuable experience working within U.S. Navy technical standards and production requirements of large-scale programs. The partnership also supports workforce development and strengthens regional shipbuilding capacity along the Gulf Coast. Upon completion, the modules will be transported to Austal USA’s Mobile shipyard for final erection and outfitting.

“Master Boat has proven itself as a capable and reliable partner, and this contract is a natural next step in our collaboration,” said Gene Miller, Interim President of Austal USA. “By distributing module fabrication to a qualified yard right here on the Gulf Coast, we’re expanding throughput, reducing schedule risk, and strengthening the industrial base that supports our warfighters. This is the model the Navy has

asked the industry to pursue, and we're delivering on it."

The contract follows Master Boat's announcement to construct a new $60 million, 150,000-square-foot manufacturing facility dedicated exclusively to government and defense shipbuilding programs. Located directly across Bayou Coden from the company's existing yard, the 20-acre site will feature a state-of-the-art assembly building optimized for serial production of steel and aluminum ships and modules for Navy and Coast Guard programs. Prior to the new facility's completion, T-ATS module fabrication will take place at Master Boat's existing facility. Master Boat currently employs more than 400 people at its Coden shipyard and expects the new defense facility to support approximately 200 additional jobs upon completion. The companies also continue to co-invest in workforce development initiatives to train and equip the next generation of Gulf Coast shipbuilders.

The T-ATS program is designed to replace aging fleet ocean tugs and rescue and salvage ships with a modern, multi-mission platform capable of towing disabled vessels, conducting salvage and recovery operations, supporting diving missions, and assisting with humanitarian and disaster response. Austal USA has already launched the first two 263-foot ships in the program, demonstrating continued progress in delivering these important capabilities to the Navy. Master Boat's role in the program contributes to the broader maritime industrial base that supports naval shipbuilding across the United States. The collaboration between regional shipyards and suppliers strengthens domestic manufacturing capacity and ensures the timely delivery of mission-critical vessels to the fleet.

Hegseth Draws Distinction Between Epic Fury, Previous Conflicts

March 19, 2026 | By Matthew Olay, DoW News

During a Pentagon briefing today on Operation Epic Fury, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said the current conflict with Iran differs from the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“[Some people] want you [the American people] to think, just 19 days into this conflict, that we’re somehow spinning toward an endless abyss, or a ‘forever war,’ or a quagmire. Nothing could be further from the truth,” Hegseth said.

“Hear it from me, one of hundreds of thousands who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, who watched previous [administrations] squander American credibility — this is not those wars,” he continued.

The secretary went on to say the current campaign in Iran is laser-focused and decisive, and the U.S. objectives of destroying Iran’s missiles and missile launchers, eradicating the country’s navy and ensuring Iran never gets a nuclear weapon remain unchanged.

As evidence of the progress being made over close to three weeks, Hegseth said all Iranian ballistic missile and one-way drone attacks are down 90% since combat operations began Feb. 28.

Additionally, he said U.S. Central Command forces have damaged or sunk more than 120 Iranian naval vessels, including all 11 of the regime’s submarines.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joined Hegseth at the briefing and provided an update

on battle damage.

“Centcom remains on plan to achieve our military objectives, and [we] remain unrelenting in our pursuit of Iranian missile capabilities, [drone] capabilities … [Iran’s] navy and … their industrial base,” Caine said.

In the air, Caine said the U.S. military yesterday dropped 5,000-pound penetrator bombs into underground Iranian storage facilities housing coastal defense cruise missiles and other additional support equipment.

He also said that Centcom forces are flying further to the east and penetrating deeper into Iranian airspace to hunt and kill one-way attack aircraft, limiting Iran’s ability to project power outside its borders.

Additionally, Caine said A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft are hunting and killing fast attack watercraft in the Strait of Hormuz, and AH-64 Apache helicopters have joined the fight on the battlespace’s southern flank.

During the briefing, both Hegseth and Caine paid tribute to the U.S. airmen who lost their lives in a KC-135 Stratotanker crash in Iraq, March 12.

Both leaders were at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware yesterday for the return of the six fallen service members’ remains.

Hegseth said the overwhelming sentiment he and Caine heard from the family members of the fallen was that the campaign in Iran must be completed to honor the ultimate sacrifice those airmen made.

“My response, along with that of [President Donald J. Trump], was simple: Of course, we will finish this. We will honor their sacrifice. Their sacrifice only [hardens] our commitment,” Hegseth said.

Navy Reshapes Warfighting Acquisition System

Establishes 5 Portfolio Acquisition Executive Organizations
From the Navy Office of Information, March 16, 2026

Washington, DC – The Department of the Navy (DON) today announced the establishment of five Portfolio Acquisition Executive organizations: PAE Industrial Operations, PAE Marine Corps, PAE Maritime, PAE Strategic Systems Programs and PAE Undersea. With these directives, the Navy is fully engaged in making the PAE model the new operational standard for the acquisition enterprise, injecting urgency and a ruthless focus on accelerated delivery.

The organizational changes are key initiatives of Secretary Hegseth's directive to transform to a warfighting acquisition system and a key tenet of Secretary Phelan's Golden Fleet initiative to change how the Navy is doing business to drive

accountability and performance.

“In a time where our warfighters are on the frontline and the nature of warfare is changing at a rapid pace, the Department of the Navy needs a warfighting acquisition system that better responds to those at the tip of the spear,” said Secretary of the Navy John C. Phelan. “Every acquisition decision ties directly to deterrence, and if deterrence fails, decisive victory. With the establishment of PAEs, we are instilling a war-fighting mindset to accelerate delivery to the fight.”

Under the PAE model, leaders are empowered —and expected— to make disciplined, data-driven trade-offs across cost, schedule, and performance, with a clear priority on time to field. Additionally, each PAE is responsible for understanding and actively managing the industrial base supporting their portfolio, including production capacity, supply chain risk, and opportunities to expand or diversify suppliers.

The Department of the Navy has empowered five senior acquisition leaders as the interim Portfolio Acquisition Executives, making them the single accountable official for key portfolios:

PAE Industrial Operations: Vice Adm. James P. Downey

PAE Marine Corps: Lt. Gen. Eric Austin

PAE Maritime: Mr. Christopher Miller

PAE / DPRM Strategic Systems Programs: Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe

PAE Undersea / DRPM Submarines: Vice Adm. Robert Gaucher

These reforms will create a warfighting acquisition system that aligns authority with responsibility, reduces unnecessary bureaucracy, empowers program managers, and delivers capability to the Navy and Marine Corps at speed and scale.

“PAEs will have direct authority not only for program offices

but also over associated technical, contracting, and sustainment functions, providing true cradle-to-grave control to deliver fully integrated capability," said Mr. Jason Potter, Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition (ASN RDA). "We are moving from a compliance-based bureaucracy to having outcome-focused organizations, fundamentally changing how we do business."

Department of the Navy acquisition reform efforts have progressed aggressively since the establishment of the DON Rapid Capabilities Office (DON-RCO) and establishment of PAE Robotics and Autonomous Systems in December 2025, which Vice Adm. Seiko Okano, Principal Military Deputy to ASN(RDA), says is helping to establish a culture of speed and measured risk across the warfighting acquisition system.

"Our acquisition workforce is critical to our warfighting capability, and not being deployed does not excuse us from having a warfighting ethos," said Vice Adm. Seiko Okano. "Each PAE will operate with a digital first mind-set – we will align on data and eliminate non-value-added layers of program reviews and bureaucracy to identify risks earlier and enable faster and more informed decision making."

Additionally, each PAE will operate with a dedicated Rapid Capability Cell, closely linked to the Department of the Navy's Rapid Capabilities Office. These cells will focus on rapidly identifying opportunities to adopt commercial technology, conduct rapid prototyping, and accelerate fielding when urgent operational needs arise.

Transition study efforts continue across the aviation, industrial infrastructure, mission systems, and munitions programs. These efforts are progressing and will be announced as they are formally established.

Coast Guard interdicts 11 aliens near Imperial Beach

The Coast Guard interdicted 11 suspected aliens approximately 7 miles west of Imperial Beach, Sunday. At approximately 12:57 p.m., crew members aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Sea Otter (WPB-87362) observed a vessel transiting into U.S. waters and dispatched a boarding team to intercept.

U.S. Coast Guard Southwest District, March 16, 2026

SAN DIEGO — The Coast Guard interdicted 11 suspected aliens approximately 7 miles west of Imperial Beach, Sunday.

At approximately 12:57 p.m., crew members aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Sea Otter (WPB-87362) observed a vessel transiting into U.S. waters and dispatched a boarding team to intercept.

The Sea Otter’s boarding team interdicted the vessel and identified 11 suspected aliens aboard, all claiming Mexican nationality.

A Coast Guard Station San Diego boat crew assisted by transporting the vessel and all 11 suspected aliens to Border Patrol at Ballast Point.