USCGC Campbell Returns After Interdicting $91M in Narcotics during Eastern Pacific Ocean Patrol

The crew of USCGC Campbell (WMEC 909) stands for a photo accompanied by more than 8,000 pounds of cocaine worth an assessed street value of approximately $91.3 million in Port Everglades, Florida, Jan. 27, 2025. The Campbell crew offloaded the illegal drugs from two interdictions in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Diana Sherbs)
From U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, Feb. 5, 2025

NEWPORT, R.I. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Campbell (WMEC 909) returned to their home port in Newport, Monday, following a 63-day multi-mission patrol to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Campbell deployed in support of Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-S) to advance the primary mission of interdicting illegal narcotics in known drug trafficking zones. Campbell's crew conducted maritime safety and security missions while working to detect, deter and intercept drug-smuggling vessels.

While on patrol, Campbell interdicted a suspected drug-smuggling operation involving six panga boats engaged in illicit activity on the high seas. During the pursuit, Campbell's crew seized approximately 8,061 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated street value of more than $91 million and detained two suspected drug traffickers.

Throughout their deployment, Campbell's crew embarked and provided care for two search and rescue survivors and maintained custody of a total of 49 suspected drug smugglers suspected of engaging in illicit trafficking activities at sea.

The crew of Campbell offloaded the drugs at Port Everglades in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, January 27, and transferred 26 suspected drug smugglers to authorities, who will now face federal prosecution by the Department of Justice.

Between January 2024 and February 2025, the crew of Campbell transferred a total of 87 suspected smugglers to federal law enforcement authorities, resulting from 24 interdictions by U. S. Coast Guard cutters in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

During the patrol, Campbell's crew partnered with numerous additional Coast Guard assets during the deployment by hosting a law enforcement detachment from the Opa Locka, Florida-based Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team – South, and conducted joint patrols and at-sea transfers with Coast Guard Cutter Waesche (WMSL 751), Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754), and Coast Guard Cutter Stone (WMSL 758). These units

also leveraged international and interagency partners to ensure that U.S. Coast Guard presence resulted in both the interdiction and deterrence of illicit trafficking in the Eastern Pacific.

Prior to returning to Newport, Campbell crew members conducted three days of helicopter to deck landing qualifications at sea with multiple aircrews from the Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron based out of Jacksonville, Florida. Campbell also embarked nearly sixty personnel from other Coast Guard cutter crews for hands-on shipboard-helicopter operations training that will improve mission readiness across the cutter fleet.

“I am incredibly proud of Campbell’s crew,” said Cmdr. Jonathan Harris, commanding officer of Campbell. “We overcame many obstacles to stand vigilant watches away from our loved ones during the holiday season and worked tirelessly to prevent transnational criminal organizations from harming our communities by seizing tons of narcotics that will no longer cross our maritime borders. More importantly, we contributed to the cycle of justice by ensuring dozens of suspected drug traffickers will stand trial in the United States.”

JIATF-S, in conjunction with partner nations, works to target, detect and monitor illicit drug trafficking within the joint operating area. The organization facilitates the interdiction and apprehension of illicit traffickers to dismantle transnational criminal organizations while reducing the flow of drugs to the public. 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 Eleventh District, headquartered in Alameda, California.

Campbell is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter.

The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere. The cutter falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, which is based in Portsmouth, Virginia.

For more information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit **GoCoastGuard.com** to learn about active duty, reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found **here**.

Navy League Releases 2025-2026 Maritime Policy Statement

Shipbuilding shortfalls, readiness gaps, and emerging threats jeopardize U.S. maritime security and economic stability

Feb. 6, 2025

The Navy League of the United States is proud to announce the release of its **2025-2026 Maritime Policy Statement**, a comprehensive report outlining the strategic priorities and legislative recommendations necessary to strengthen America's sea services. This biennial publication serves as a guiding document for policymakers, industry leaders, and the public, advocating for investments that ensure the continued security, prosperity, and global leadership of the United States through maritime power.

The Maritime Policy Statement forms the foundation of the Navy

League’s Legislative Affairs Program over the course of a two-year Congress. It is both highly educational for staff members and highly actionable for legislators. Based on extensive research from members of the Navy League’s Maritime Policy Committee, this document covers all aspects of the maritime domain. It also provides policy prescriptions for Congress to address any issues impacting America’s readiness and future capabilities.

“The Maritime Policy Statement has long been a source of pride for the Navy League. I deeply appreciate the dedication and effort that goes into crafting this important document, which serves as a vital resource for Congressional offices. It not only informs policy debates in Washington, D.C., but also acts as a compelling call to action for lawmakers,” says Navy League CEO Mike Stevens, 13th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.

Key recommendations outlined in the report include:

- Appropriate at least $40 billion annually for the Navy Shipbuilding and Conversion budget to rapidly expand the fleet and account for the rising cost of labor and materials.

- Increase and accelerate funding for the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan to ensure the expanded submarine fleet can be properly maintained.

- Continue to support allies while investing in the production of depleted munitions to ensure that American forces have the firepower needed for a possible great power conflict.

- Incorporate National Defense Features on other vessels.

Navy funding of such features on both U.S.- and foreign-built onboard TSP and MSP vessels (e.g. TSP CONSOL systems) is needed to enhance their military utility in support of contingency operations.

- Invest in military quality of life priorities such as affordable military housing, base and barracks modernization/renovation, increased access to childcare, and food security.

The full **2025-2026 Maritime Policy Statement** is available for download here.

For more information or to schedule an interview with a Navy League representative, please contact communications@navyleague.org.

Navy F/A-18 Fleet Gets Enhanced Target Tracking as IR Search and Track System Achieves IOC

The U.S. Navy has declared initial operational capability for the F/A-18 E/F Infrared Search and Track Block II system. (U.S. Navy photo by Katie Archibald)
From Naval Air Systems Command, Feb 4, 2025

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy declared initial operational capability (IOC) for the F/A-18 E/F Infrared Search and Track (IRST) Block II system in November 2024, providing the fleet with an enhanced capability to search, detect and track airborne targets at long range.

“Reaching IRST IOC is an important milestone in our overarching efforts to deliver advanced integrated warfighting capability to the fleet,” said Rear Adm. John Lemmon, Program Executive Officer for Tactical Aircraft Programs. “IRST provides data for our aircrew to improve reaction time and survivability while remaining unaffected by radio frequency jamming.”

IRST increases aircrew situational awareness by supplementing air-to-air detection and track capabilities, and autonomously

or in combination with other sensors, supports the guidance of beyond visual range missiles. It acts as a complementary sensor to the aircraft’s AN/APG-79 fire control radar in a heavy electronic attack or radar-denied environment.

The system achieved IOC after completing Initial Operational Test and Evaluation with Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 9. The F/A-18 and EA-18G Program Office (PMA-265) partnered with military, civilian and contractor personnel from VX-31 and VX-23 to leverage a novel combination of operational and developmental test facilities and assets throughout the past year.

“IRST IOC reflects the hard work, dedication and resilience of a collaborative team of government and industry professionals in delivering this essential capability to the warfighters,” said Capt. Michael Burks, PMA-265 Program Manager.

The Navy brought IRST to the fleet through an evolutionary acquisition approach across two phased blocks. In 2011, Block I integrated an existing IRST system onto the F/A-18 fuel tank and in 2019, the fleet operated the system as a part of an early deployment. Block II added an improved sensor, upgraded processor and additional software with a first deployment planned in 2025.

The full rate production decision is scheduled for spring 2025 to authorize the U.S. Navy to fully outfit its carrier-based F/A-18E/F Super Hornet squadrons with IRST Block II.

PMA-265 is responsible for supporting, sustaining, and advancing the F/A-18A-D Hornet, F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler aircraft, providing naval aviators with capabilities that enable mission success.

USS St. Louis Supports Operation Southern Guard at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay

GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba (Feb. 2, 2025) – Sailors assigned to Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19) and Coast Guardsmen assigned to Coast Guard Cutter Resolute erect expeditionary shelter tents in support of the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay's Migrant Operations Center expansion February 2, 2025, as part of Operation Southern Guard. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Raphael Dorne)

By USNAVSOUTH/4TH FLEET PUBLIC AFFAIRS, Feb. 4, 2025

NAVAL STATION GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19) is moored at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (NSGB) and the crew is supporting the expansion of the base's Migrant Operations Center as part of Operation Southern Guard.

At the direction of the President of the United States to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. military service members are supporting removal operations led by DHS at NGSB. U.S. Southern Command has set up a Joint Task Force Migrant Operations (JTF-MIGOPS) at the Naval Station to execute the directive.

The USS St. Louis is currently deployed to the Caribbean conducting counter-illicit drug trafficking operations in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South), and participating in operations with partner nations in support of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. USS St. Louis arrived at NSGB on January 30, and the crew has been steadily assisting ever since.

“As a forward-deployed asset, our crew is ready to respond to emerging tasks and missions at a moment’s notice,” said Cmdr. Timothy J. Orth, commanding officer of the USS St. Louis. “We’re honored to work alongside our joint task force partners and play a role in this important effort, which reflects U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and U.S. Fourth Fleet’s commitment to security and cooperation.”

While USS St. Louis is moored at NSGB, the Sailors are helping to set up tents and participating in other logistics activities in expanding the Migrant Operations Center. The first phase of expansion will increase the center’s capacity to approximately 2,000 migrants, with additional phases to follow at NSGB.

U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay is a critical forward-operating base that enables the United States to maintain persistent presence in the Caribbean, support regional security objectives, and defend the Homeland.

“In support of DHS, we often practice our migrant contingency plan at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay” said Rear Adm.

Carlos Sardiello, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet. “The naval station routinely provides support to joint and interagency operations like this.”

U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet integrates and deploys all-domain combat power to expose, deter, degrade malign influences and activities, prevent and to respond to crises, and, if necessary, conduct decisive operations to prevail in conflict in the USSOUTHCOM AOR to protect the Homeland, ensure freedom of action in the maritime domain, protect U.S. interests throughout the region and enhance U.S. Alliances and partnerships.

Marine Corps Passes Fiscal 2024 Audit

HEADQUARTERS, MARINE CORPS – For the second year in a row, independent auditors verified that the Marine Corps' financial records are materially accurate, complete, and compliant with federal regulations and issued an unmodified opinion for Fiscal Year 2024.

This repeat achievement reinforces the service's reputation for accountability, discipline, and leadership; and this is only the second time such success has been achieved for a military service in Department of Defense history and twice attributed to the Marines.

The findings produced by the audit help the service to more efficiently and accurately plan, program, budget, and spend funds appropriated by Congress.

The Marine Corps' audit process enabled accurate global tracking and reporting of financial transactions, inventory of facilities, equipment and assets, and accounting for taxpayer dollars spent during the last fiscal year. The auditors also tested the Marines Corps' network, key business systems, and internal controls.

"I am immensely proud of this historic achievement and the hard work done by the thousands of Marines, sailors, and civilians across the Marine Corps that made this happen," said Gen. Eric M. Smith, Commandant of the Marine Corps. "Their efforts tell the American people that a dollar invested in the Marine Corps is a dollar well spent. Passing a second annual audit demonstrates our commitment to being good stewards of our nation's tax dollars and is part of how we distinguish ourselves as a professional warfighting organization. Make no mistake, passing an audit makes us more ready to fight when our nation calls."

Since becoming the first service to pass an annual financial audit, the Marine Corps took additional steps to stabilize its new accounting system and procedures. Independent public accountants contracted by the Department of Defense Inspector General audited all records. Financial management personnel also gained more hands-on experience, which set conditions for a smoother audit this year.

"The Marine Corps culture has always emphasized accountability to yourself, your fellow Marines, your unit, down to the lowest tactical levels," said LtGen. James Adams III, Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources. "But financial reporting for $49 billion in financial assets requires a holistic view from the ground level up to the highest service levels. The audit process demonstrates Marines' inherent

integrity – opening up and illuminating potential audit mistakes and inventory miscounts across the entire chain of command. That can be an uncomfortable experience for Marine leaders of all ranks. Now magnify that across an entire service. By educating all Marines on the importance of accurate counts, and through our use of independent audit and inspection teams, we were able to gain an accurate accounting of the resources entrusted to the Corps."

The auditor's final report, enclosed in the Marine Corps' Fiscal Year 2024 Agency Financial Report, highlights seven areas for the Marine Corps to improve upon, referred to as material weaknesses.

The Marine Corps will continue to drive to eliminate these weaknesses through systems improvement and internal controls. While doing this, the Corps will still prioritize the accurate counting and management of its global assets, a challenging task given the vast scope of its operations. By repeating and refining this process, the Corps aims to develop a more fluid and efficient enterprise resource planning system, ultimately positioning itself for long-term mission success and accountability.

The Agency Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2024 is available at: https://www.pandr.marines.mil/

NAVWAR at WEST 2025: Future of Multi-Domain Warfare

Demands Agility, Audacious Innovation

Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command representatives explain their mission and capabilities to industry partners during WEST Conference 2025. WEST connects military, industry, and academia experts together to find innovative solutions to enhance operational capabilities that overcome complex challenges and evolving threats. (U.S. Navy photo by Ramon Go)
From Lily Chen, Naval Information Warfare Systems Command, Feb. 4, 2025

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – At the 2025 WEST Conference in San Diego, Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR) reinforced its commitment to driving technological innovation and strengthening the Navy's operational advantage. Through dynamic discussions, strategic engagements and live demonstrations, NAVWAR emphasized the need to rethink

conventional approaches to warfare, as well as the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools to outpace emerging threats.

As the premier naval conference and exposition on the West Coast, WEST offered industry and academia experts the valuable opportunity to engage with U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard leaders. Co-sponsored by Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association (AFCEA) International and the U.S. Naval Institute (USNI), thousands of people attended at the San Diego Convention Center Jan. 28-30 to discuss the landscape of increasingly complex challenges in alignment with the theme: the future is now, are we advancing operational capabilities that pace the threat?

NAVWAR Commander Rear Adm. Seiko Okano, representing the command for the first time at WEST, highlighted her organization's commitment to supporting the Fleet with next-generation capability. On a panel with other military and industry experts, they discussed how the Department of Defense (DOD) is accelerating software development in support of the Replicator initiative, a DOD-wide effort to fast-track the acquisition of thousands of all-domain attritable autonomous systems.

She highlighted the need for a shift in both culture and the development ecosystem, emphasizing that transformative change is essential for driving progress. "This isn't a technology problem; this is a culture problem. The faster we figure out how to shift this together, I think we win," she said. "The Navy has always prided itself on having brilliant technologists at our research labs, but we should also embrace the really fantastic solutions from industry that we can leverage to help us innovate at speed."

On another panel with systems commanders from the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard on acquisitions, Okano continued to

speak about the unique role NAVWAR has in delivering innovative capability to the Fleet. “NAVWAR is at the center of a significant shift in warfare—where traditional domains are blurring, and the fight is increasingly multi-domain and multi-spectral. Our role is to deliver a decisive information advantage, requiring speed, agility and adaptability,” she said. “The challenge is breaking down silos, fostering collaboration and instilling a culture that embraces rapid change to meet the demands of modern conflict.”

During an informational brief about NAVWAR and its needs, John Pope, executive director of NAVWAR, reiterated the importance of rapid and easy adoption of new technologies. “In our world of information warfare, we need to be the ones who are the quickest to respond to what the Fleet needs,” he said. “To achieve that, we’re asking our workforce and our industry and academic partners to embrace our core values of audacious innovation and radical ownership to get after what we need to fix any outdated equipment until we can find modern solutions.”

At the Navy’s Information Warfare pavilion, experts from across the NAVWAR enterprise had a significant presence, interfacing with industry at engagement zones and presenting cutting-edge technology. From Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC) Pacific; Program Executive Office (PEO) Digital and Enterprise Services (Digital); PEO Manpower, Logistics and Business Solutions (MLB); and PEO Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I), NAVWAR’s wide-ranging program offices were represented on the exhibit floor.

The tech demonstrations from NIWC Pacific showcased the latest and greatest from their labs, ranging from cloud development to cryogenic probes to a robot dog designed to assist in ship maintenance. One of the demos featured a Rapid Recreation into Modeling and Simulations (R2MS) tool, spearheaded by the

Integrated Fires Team. This platform uses real-world data to create live virtual simulations at rapid speed, an invaluable tool for training and mission planning. “We’re exploring how AI and ML can take R2MS’ capabilities even further,” said Nadil Lopez, project manager for the Integrated Fires team. “There is a lot of untapped potential with this tool in creating complex and realistic environments for the Fleet.”

All of NAVWAR’s PEOs also had significant industry engagement throughout the course of WEST. Through PEO C4I’s annual Engagement Event and the joint PEO Digital/MLB Industry Open house, around 250 individual companies met government representatives and leaders for insightful and collaborative conversations across all three PEOs. NIWC Pacific program managers and technical leads also met with industry through the engagement zones to discuss their needs in an informal one-on-one discussion.

“As underscored by several of the leadership keynotes this year, the rapid pace of both technological and global change demand stronger partnerships across government, industry and academia,” said Michael McMillan, executive director of NIWC Pacific. “WEST 2025 provides NIWC Pacific the opportunity to showcase our latest innovations while forging connections that accelerate the transition of critical technologies from research and prototyping to operational capability. By strengthening collaborations today, we ensure our Navy remains ahead of tomorrow’s threats.”

Efforts from PEO Digital were also acknowledged at the Department of Navy (DON) Information Technology Excellence Awards, held Monday, Jan. 27 prior to WEST. In honor of leading Flank Speed Zero Trust, the DOD’s first zero trust compliance pilot, Darren Turner received the Person of the Year award for his exceptional leadership and dual roles for both DON Chief Information Officer (CIO) and PEO Digital’s technical director office. Zero trust is a network security

philosophy that states no one inside or outside the network should be trusted unless their identification has been thoroughly checked. The Navy's Flank Speed service currently delivers enhanced collaboration, productivity and robust zero trust security to more than half a million users worldwide, completed three years before the DON CIO's 2027 deadline.

Rodrick Adams, the Marine Corps Logistics Integrated Information Systems (LI2S-MC) security manager at PEO MLB, was also recognized with a Fiscal Year 2024 Copernicus Award from AFCEA International and USNI. This award honors individual contributions to C4I, information systems, cyber operations and information warfare. Adams' efforts in leading the planning, development and implementation of the Naval Identity Services effort for Global Combat Support System-Marine Corps led to greatly enhanced financial transaction security for its users.

In continuing its commitment to helping the Navy reach new heights in cybersecurity and information warfare capabilities, NAVWAR leverages next-generation tools like AI/ML and industry partnerships to further drive innovation. As the battlefield becomes more complex, their role in the future fight demands a culture shift driven by collaboration, adaptability and agility.

About NAVWAR:

NAVWAR identifies, develops, delivers and sustains information warfighting capabilities and services that enable naval, joint, coalition and other national missions operating in warfighting domains from seabed to space and through cyberspace. NAVWAR consists of more than 11,000 civilian, active duty and reserve professionals located around the world.

Northrop Grumman Advances Airborne Navigation Capabilities for the US Navy

Northrop Grumman is implementing the U.S. Navy's first M-code airborne navigation solution, the M-code capable LN-251 Inertial Navigation System/Global Positioning System (INS/GPS). (Photo Credit: Northrop Grumman)

From Northrop Grumman, Feb. 4, 2025

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif. – Feb. 4, 2025 – Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE: NOC) is advancing the U.S. Navy's airborne navigation capabilities with implementation of the LN-251M, the next-generation upgrade of the LN-251 Inertial Navigation

System/Global Positioning System (INS/GPS). The LN-251M features M-code – an encrypted, military-specific signal with stronger jam resistance to shield against adversarial threats.

- This is the first M-code navigation system for naval aircraft.

- M-code technology provides enhanced robustness to counter GPS signal degradation, enabling pilots greater ability to effectively operate in air spaces where GPS has been shut down or spoofed.

- LN-251s equipped with Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Modules GPS may easily upgrade to M-code configuration.

Expert:

Ryan Arrington, vice president, navigation and cockpit systems, Northrop Grumman: "The LN-251M is Northrop Grumman's newest innovation in elevating airborne navigation to the next level. This important enhancement is a critical milestone for delivering advanced positioning, navigation and timing capabilities because it enables pilots to safely operate with a jam-resilient navigation system for naval aircraft."

Program Details:

LN-251s are designed to seamlessly integrate with current aircraft navigation systems and perform cohesively with future software and GPS modernization upgrades. Northrop Grumman began producing the LN-251 INS/GPS in 2003.To date, the company has delivered nearly 5,000 LN-251s and similar LN-270 INS/GPS units.

USS Lake Erie Returns Home to San Diego

The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Erie (CG 70) returned to its homeport of Naval Base San Diego, Jan. 30, after completing a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Brandon Roberson)

From Lt. j.g. Selena Esteban, Jan. 31, 2025

The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Erie (CG 70) returned to its homeport of Naval Base San Diego, Jan. 30, after completing a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations.

Lake Erie departed San Diego July 1, 2024, to conduct independent operations in the Indo-Pacific region.

While deployed to U.S.7th Fleet, Lake Erie conducted operations across multiple warfare areas, deterring aggression, promoting regional stability and security, and protecting free flow of commerce. Lake Erie participated in various multi-national exercises, operating with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Philippine Navy, and the Royal Australian Air Force. Throughout deployment, Lake Erie reinforced the U.S. commitment to allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, demonstrating the growing strength of regional and international cooperation.

Lake Erie was led by Commanding Officer Capt. Drew A. Borovies, Executive Officer Cmdr. Raymond T. Ball before turning over duties to Cmdr. Clinton R. Cabe last December, and Command Master Chief Raina Hockenberry.

“Lake Erie was the can-do cruiser in 7th Fleet. This deployment showed how capable Lake Erie and our Sailors are by responding whenever we were needed. No matter what challenges were thrown Lake Erie’s way, the crew rose to the occasion and achieved success every single time,” said Capt. Drew A. Borovies, commanding officer, Lake Erie. “I am incredibly proud of all the hard work from the team. We came to show how powerful the United Sates Navy is and that is exactly what we did.”

In the last seven months, Lake Erie sailed over 40,000 nautical miles with embarked Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 35 Detachment 1 flying a total of 774 hours, together defending and supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific.

“I am glad that I was able to join this inspiring team,” said Cmdr. Clinton R. Cabe, executive officer, Lake Erie. “Lake Erie truly built up their reputation in the last seven months, completing a wide variety of exercises and always maintaining a high state of readiness. None of this could have been done

without the resilience of our Sailors. I am very excited to continue working with this wonderful crew and be a part of future accomplishments.”

As an integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic and relevant training necessary to execute the U.S. Navy’s timeless role across the full spectrum of military operations—from combat missions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security for the Indo-Pacific region.

U.S. Navy Awards Contract for Deployment of Future Mine Countermeasures Capabilities

The Mine Countermeasures Unmanned Surface Vehicle. (U.S. Navy photo)

By PEO USC Public Affairs, Feb. 3, 2025

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy has recently awarded a series of contracts, under Program Executive Office, Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC), to facilitate Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Mine Countermeasures (MCM) Mission Package (MP) deployments.

The MCM Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV) is an unmanned, diesel-powered surface craft that can be launched from an LCS, vessel of opportunity, or shore. Its modular flexibility allows integration with multiple payload delivery systems that perform MCM missions, including minesweeping, mine hunting, and mine neutralization. By awarding these contracts, the Navy is ensuring it has the most advanced unmanned systems to effectively conduct mine countermeasure missions in the littorals.

The Navy awarded the first contract to Bollinger Shipyards for an MCM USV Advanced Material Order (AMO), valued at $7.7 million, which is expected to be completed in September 2025. This contract will procure items needed to improve the MCM USV based on findings from operational testing.

The Navy also awarded a production contract for the Minehunt Payload Delivery System (MH PDS) to Raytheon Technologies. This contract is valued at $18.3 million to produce five units with deliveries by the end of FY26.

Additionally, the Navy awarded a production contract for the Minesweep Payload Delivery System (MS PDS) to Textron Systems. This contract is valued at $12.1 million to produce four units, for delivery early in FY27.

“With the first deliveries of the MCM MP underway and deployments closely following, it is critical to ensure we have the contracts in place to procure and deliver the quantity of mission packages to the Fleet required in today’s changing world,” said Capt. Matthew Lehmann, LCS Mission Modules program manager. “These contract awards ensure our Littoral Combat Ships will continue to receive the modernized MCM equipment needed to conduct their missions, allowing our Sailors to operate safely and stay outside of the minefield.”

Leveraging the flexibility of the MCM USV, the Minehunt and Minesweep Payload Delivery Systems integrate within the USV, enabling it to perform missions. The MS PDS provides acoustic and magnetic minesweeping capabilities to the MCM Mission Package, while the MH PDS uses the AN/AQS-20 sonar to perform mine hunting missions.

“These contracts are pivotal to ensure that the Navy’s LCS are equipped with the most advanced and reliable Mine Countermeasures capabilities,” said Rear Adm. Kevin Smith, PEO USC program executive officer. “As we continue to face

evolving threats in the littoral environment, these investments not only enhance our operational readiness but also demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding our Sailors and maintaining a competitive edge. By modernizing and expanding our MCM mission packages, we are providing our forces with the tools necessary to maintain access to key maritime regions and keep global shipping lanes safe."

A part of the PEO USC portfolio within NAVSEA, the Navy's LCS Mission Modules program office designs, develops, builds, and delivers the Navy's unmanned maritime systems; mine warfare systems; special warfare systems; expeditionary warfare systems; small boats/craft; and small surface combatants.

NAVSEA continues to prioritize stability in procurement profiles and design configurations, make targeted industrial base investments, and increase collaboration with both government and industry partners to optimize schedule, quality, and cost performance.

For more information on PEO USC, visit:

https://www.navsea.navy.mil/Media/News/.

HII Begins Fabrication of Amphibious Transport Dock Philadelphia

PASCAGOULA, Miss., Jan. 29, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division began fabrication of the U.S. Navy's newest *San Antonio*-class amphibious transport dock *Philadelphia* (LPD 32) Monday. The start of fabrication signifies that the first 100 tons of steel have been cut for the ship.

"From the earliest planning stages to the first cut of steel, every step of construction so far has been focused on building a capable ship for our Navy and Marine Corps partners," said Stephen Janowski, Ingalls Shipbuilding amphibious ship program manager. "Our team is committed to continuous improvement and seeing *Philadelphia* built with the quality craftsmanship needed to support our nation well into the future."

Ingalls is the sole provider of LPD 17 *San Antonio*-class ships and has delivered LPDs 17 through 29 to date. Currently, Ingalls has three Flight II LPDs under construction including *Harrisburg* (LPD 30), *Pittsburgh* (LPD 31) and *Philadelphia* (LPD 32). Additionally, in September 2024, the Navy awarded Ingalls a contract for the construction of three *San Antonio* Class Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD) ships (LPD 33, LPD 34, and LPD 35).

LPD Flight II is the next generation amphibious ship to replace the *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41) and *Harpers Ferry* (LSD 49) classes of dock landing ships. Amphibious transport docks are a major part of the Navy's 21st century expeditionary force, deployed with a U.S. Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force for amphibious and expeditionary crisis response operations that range from deterrence and joint-force enablement to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: http://hii.com/news/hii-begins-fabrication-of-amphibious-transport-dock-philadelphia-lpd-32/.