Cruiser USS Antietam is Decommissioned

The crew departs the ship for the last time during the decommissioning ceremony of Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54).
Story By LaDonna Singleton, Commander, Naval Surface Forces Public Affairs, Sept. 27, 2024

HONOLULU (September 27, 2024) – Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54) was recognized for its more than 37 years of naval service during a decommissioning ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on September 27.

During the ceremony guest speaker Rear Adm. Christopher Moe (USN, Ret.) spoke about Antietam's history and accomplishments, wishing this final crew fair winds and following seas as they bid farewell to their ship.

Moe served as Antietam's commanding officer from 1997 to 1999. "I was there June 6, 1987, when USS Antietam was commissioned in Baltimore, Maryland. The ceremony was a magnificent start to 37 years of service that will end today after thousands of young men and women crossed her quarterdeck, anxious to serve this great nation," he stated. "This is a remarkable ship and of equal importance is a crew who can only do what they do because they have the love and support of the families at home."

CG 54's last Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Victor J. Garza reflected on the service of his crew and those who came before him. "The soul of Antietam is in her Sailors. We bring the heartless steel and iron to life. Today, we lay her to rest. We keep the soul, and until the Navy commissions a fourth USS Antietam, I will be the captain of her soul. We will always be Antietam."

During his speech, Garza recognized the 23 former Antietam commanding officers who attended the ceremony. He also congratulated the two newly pinned chief petty officers, Chief Fire Controlman Daniel Delgado and Chief Fire Controlman Robin Phillips. Delgado and Phillips were promoted in the ship's final Chiefs pinning ceremony earlier the same day. Garza also conducted the final ship's promotion earlier in the day for now Lt. Cmdr. Steve Millet, a former crew member, on the bow. Antietam maintained a crew of 40 officers and 300 enlisted Sailors throughout its service.

CG 54 was named for the site of the 1862 Battle of Antietam, Maryland, between Confederate forces under Gen. Robert E. Lee and Union forces under Maj. Gen. George McClellan, during the American Civil War.

Taking place on September 17, 1862, the Battle of Antietam remains the bloodiest day in American history, with a tally of

22,727 dead, wounded, or missing on both sides. Although the Union Army suffered heavier casualties than the Confederates, the battle was a major turning point in the Union’s favor.

The first USS Antietam was a screw sloop of war and construction began in 1864 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Due to the end of the Civil War, the ship was not completed as initially planned. Instead, it remained partially built until 1869, when it was decided to finish it as an equipment storeship. This Antietam served as a storeship and marine barracks at League Island, Pennsylvania, from 1876 to 1888.

The second USS Antietam was an Essex-class aircraft carrier commissioned towards the end of World War II. Launched on August 20, 1944, and commissioned on January 28, 1945, this vessel missed the war but played significant roles in the Korean War, and in Cold War operations. Notably, it was the first aircraft carrier to be fitted with an angled flight deck, enhancing its operational capabilities.

The decommissioning of Antietam supports department-wide business process reform initiatives to free up time, resources, and manpower in support of increased lethality.

The mission of CNSP is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.

RTX Receives U.S. Navy Contract for ESSM Block 2 Missiles

Multi-mission weapon system will provide increased flexibility and capability for U.S. and allied navies

From RTX

TUCSON, Ariz. (September 30, 2024) – Raytheon, an RTX (NYSE: RTX) business, has received a $525 million contract from the U.S. Navy to produce ESSM Block 2 missiles and spares for the U.S. and allied nations.

ESSM Block 2 is a short to medium-range, ship-launched, dual-mode, guided missile that has increased maneuverability and improved performance over its Block 1 predecessor.

“The role of self-ship and local area defense has become increasingly important, and ESSM Block 2 delivers critical capability in this mission,” said Barbara Borgonovi, president

of Naval Power at Raytheon. “By partnering with the U.S. Navy and allied navies, we’re ensuring this versatile system is ready to support our fleets around the world.”

The newest ESSM variant reduces dependence on shipboard illumination and is integrated on a wide variety of combat systems and launchers, delivering improved performance in stressing marine environments, and has significant digital processing margin to keep pace with evolving threats through software improvements.

Leveraging learning from other active seeker systems – such as AMRAAM and Standard Missile 6 – RTX is using common hardware and factory processes across multiple missile platforms to enable cost savings and increased production capacity. Additionally, the consortium continues to invest in test infrastructure and material to keep capacity ahead of demand and accelerate deliveries.

ESSM is managed by the NATO SEASPARROW Consortium composed of 12 nations: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Türkiye, and the United States. The consortium is NATO’s largest and most successful cooperative weapons project and represents over 50 years of international military-industrial cooperation.

NOAA Awards Contract for Next-Generation Hurricane Hunter Aircraft

Artist’s rendering of a NOAA C-130J Hercules hurricane hunter. Credit: NOAA

By Jonathan Shannon, NOAA, September 27, 2024

Today, NOAA announced that it has awarded a contract to Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, based in Georgia, for two specialized C-130J Hercules aircraft to become the next generation of NOAA hurricane hunter aircraft. The four-engine aircraft is a proven platform for hurricane reconnaissance. The planes will be modified to serve as flying laboratories in support of NOAA’s hurricane and environmental research.

“NOAA is continuing to make critical investments to help protect lives and property,” said NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad, Ph.D. “These new aircraft will be filled with state-of-the-art technology developed by NOAA and our partners, greatly enhancing our ability to gather critical data on hurricanes, atmospheric rivers and our changing climate.”

Funded in part by the 2023 Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, the fully-instrumented aircraft are expected to join NOAA’s fleet in 2030. They will replace the long-serving WP-3D Orions, which have operated since the mid-1970s.

The contract covers acquisition of two C-130J Hercules aircraft and the NOAA-specific design efforts, with options for additional aircraft. With demand for specialized weather data continuing to grow from the research and emergency response communities, modernizing NOAA's aircraft fleet is critical to delivering on these future operational and science demands.

When aircraft data are available, hurricane track and intensity forecasts are improved by more than 15-20% in track accuracy and 10-15% in intensity forecasts. Longer lead-time for tropical cyclone forecasts are imperative as coastal populations and infrastructure continue to grow and evacuation decision times increase.

"Adding these highly capable C-130J aircraft to our fleet ensures NOAA can continue to provide the public, decision-makers and researchers with accurate, timely and life-saving information about extreme weather events," said Rear Adm. Chad Cary, director of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps and NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations. "NOAA is using our more than 50 years of experience gathering data on hurricanes and other atmospheric phenomena to enhance the capabilities of these specialized new aircraft."

The new C-130Js are cargo-type aircraft, which will allow NOAA to accommodate larger science payloads. They will be equipped with a variety of updated instrumentation developed from experience with NOAA's current WP-3D Orion aircraft and from across the U.S. government.
Both new aircraft will be customized with the same Multi-Mode Radar as the P-3s, as well as new automated dropsonde launchers, high speed internet connectivity, vertically scanning doppler radar and instrument ports for a variety of research instruments for surface winds, waves and oceanographic sensing. The C-130Js will also be able to launch and control uncrewed aircraft systems that expand the reach of the aircraft into new and under-measured areas of the storm

environment.

These new aircraft will continue the legacy of the P-3s by supporting hurricane forecasting and research, tornado research, atmospheric rivers research and forecasting, satellite calibration and validation, fire weather and atmospheric chemistry and pollution tracking. The aircraft will also carry expanded mission capabilities that include long endurance coastal mapping, gravity measurements and transport capabilities to support worldwide deployments.

The C-130Js will be based at the NOAA Aircraft Operations Center in Lakeland, Florida, along with NOAA's other specialized environmental data-gathering aircraft. The fleet is operated, managed and maintained by a combination of NOAA Corps officers and civilian personnel.

Sonobuoy Testing on Heavy Lift Helicopters Expands Capabilities

Hand-launched deployments of sonobuoys from a CH-53E Super Stallion showcases the aircraft’s flexibility and various payloads the heavy lift helicopter can take on. (U.S. Navy)
From Naval Air Systems Command, Sep 27, 2024

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – Recent successful testing of hand-launched deployments of sonobuoys from a CH-53E Super Stallion have expanded the capabilities of the aircraft, providing increased flexibility for the U.S. Navy to support Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) in the joint environment. Similar testing will soon do the same for the CH-53K King Stallion.

The successful deployments of sonobuoys from a heavy lift helicopter showcases the aircraft’s flexibility and the changing payloads the aircraft will take on as the CH-53K replaces the CH-53E in the fleet.

“The H-53 is purpose-built to carry heavy loads, but that’s not the limit of our operational relevance,” said Col. Kate Fleeger, Program Manager, Heavy Lift Helicopters Program Office (PMA-261). “This test is just one example of the untapped capabilities of the H-53. Future payloads and the evolution of the H-53 in the battlespace are limited only by

our imagination.”

PMA-261, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Two One (HX-21) and Air Anti-Submarine Warfare Systems Program Office (PMA-264) at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, conducted the sonobuoy tests, which were overseen by Adam Chesser, H-53 Lead Test Engineer, and performed over the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Virginia.

“We evaluated the procedures and separation characteristics to ensure the sonobuoys would not strike the aircraft when launched,” said Chesser. “Clearing the heavy lift aircraft for sonobuoy deployment creates another level of redundancy for the Navy and provides more resources and flexibility to complete the mission.”

The successful tests were also accomplished with a significant savings in time and money, according to Joe Pham, Assistant Program Manager for Test and Evaluation at PMA-261.

“By exploring and using an alternative test range option to alleviate scheduling and funding constraints, we were able to execute the test on time and save cost to the program,” he said.

PMA-261 manages the cradle-to-grave procurement, development, support, fielding, and disposal of the entire family of H-53 heavy lift helicopters.

PMA-264 plays a critical role in developing, acquiring and sustaining airborne ASW systems and sensor requirements for the Fleet, the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft program office, the H-60 Helicopter program office, the Persistent Maritime and the Unmanned Aerial Systems program office, and the Navy and Marine Corps Multi-Mission Tactical Unmanned Air Systems program office.

SIOP microgrid study by NAVFAC EXWC to enhance energy resilience, mission assurance at naval shipyards

NAVFAC awarded a $3.7 million contract for an electrical microgrid study as part of the Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program to assess public shipyards in the event of a power grid or utility outage.

From William Couch, Sept. 27, 2024

WASHINGTON – Naval Facilities Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center (NAVFAC EXWC) awarded Jacobs Engineering CH2M Hill/Clark Nexsen Energy Partners Joint Venture a $3.7 million contract for an electrical microgrid study as part of the

Navy’s Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) Sept. 13.

The study, expected to be completed in October 2025, will assess all four public shipyards and develop proposed courses of action for ensuring up to 14 days of electrical power in the event of a power grid or utility outage. It will include assessing the technical, economic, and environmental feasibility of implementing a microgrid system to enhance energy efficiency, reliability, and resilience within shipyard facilities.

“This study is foundational to providing energy resilience at our naval shipyards,” said Capt. Luke Greene, SIOP program manager. “Off-grid survivability is critical to maintain the shipyards’ operations under adverse conditions and deliver ships and submarines back to the fleet on time.”

The study is part of SIOP’s holistic recapitalization effort that integrates all infrastructure and industrial plant equipment investments at the Navy’s four public shipyards to meet nuclear fleet maintenance requirements, as well as improve Navy maintenance capabilities by expanding shipyard capacity and optimizing shipyard configuration.

Leveraging the structure and rigor of the Department of Defense’s Major Defense Acquisition Program process – a first for an infrastructure program – SIOP established infrastructure performance criteria to evaluate potential solutions to facilities challenges at the shipyards. These criteria include the ability to operate independently of the electrical grid for up to 14 days.

To date, SIOP has completed 30 facilities projects totaling $867 million, with an additional 40 projects worth a total of $6 billion under contract. This includes four dry docks under construction. SIOP work continues to strengthen the naval

shipyards' resiliency in the face of sea level rise and other adverse conditions.

NAVFAC EXWC, the specialized engineering support and contracting activity for the study, provides research, development, testing and evaluation; in-service engineering; and life-cycle management for shore, oceans, and expeditionary domains to accelerate innovation enabling fleet lethality both at sea and ashore.

"This microgrid study will support infrastructure modernization of our naval shipyards by providing a course of action to increase resilience and provide uninterrupted critical power," said Andy Vasquez, NAVFAC EXWC program manager. "NAVFAC EXWC is proud to provide the required specialized engineering services to support SIOP."

For more information about the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program, visit https://www.navfac.navy.mil/PEO-Industrial-Infrastructure/PMO-555-SIOP/.

BlackSky Wins U.S. Navy Research Contract for Gen-3 Advanced Optical Intersatellite Links

SEAPOWER
The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

Project Overmatch initiative advances JADC2 mission and enables real-time imagery support to warfighters during time-sensitive military operations worldwide

From BlackSky, Sept. 26, 2024

HERNDON, Va. (September 26, 2024) – BlackSky Technology Inc. (NYSE: BKSY) won a competitive U.S. Navy research contract to explore applications for advanced optical intersatellite link terminals on board the company's Gen-3 imaging satellites, giving warfighters real-time access to imagery during time-sensitive military operations worldwide. The effort directly supports the Navy's Project Overmatch and the Department of Defense's Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) initiatives.

"BlackSky is making space a viable option for the tactical ISR mission. Extending our Gen-3 satellite capabilities with optical intersatellite link terminals will give Navy customers assured access to real-time earth imaging capabilities across the full range of warfighting scenarios both while underway and ashore," said Brian E. O'Toole, BlackSky CEO. "End users will receive BlackSky data and insights 10-times faster, with data volumes 5-times greater than current systems."

Optical intersatellite links are laser-based communications relays that enable faster and more reliable rates of data transmission compared to radio frequency communications. As part of this study, BlackSky will modify its systems to accommodate an optical intersatellite link terminal that will be uniquely compatible with both the Space Development Agency's (SDA) Transport Layer and commercial transport layers. BlackSky will also establish novel operating concepts that will inform the acquisition of commercial transport network nodes, how data is moved, and how to seamlessly maintain the core Earth-imaging mission.

Element U.S. Space & Defense Unveils New $3M Naval Shock-Testing Barge to Enhance U.S. Navy Readiness

SEAPOWER
The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

From Element U.S. Space & Defense, Sept. 26, 2024

State-of-the-Art Platform Bolsters National Defense by Ensuring Critical Naval Equipment Withstands the Harshest Conditions

BELCAMP, Md. –**Element U.S. Space & Defense**, a trusted government partner with over six decades of expertise in space and defense testing, celebrated the launch of its state-of-the-art Extended Floating Shock Platform (EFSP) barge on Wednesday, September 18 at its Rustburg, VA facility. This $3 million investment advances Element's ability to conduct high-impact shock testing to confirm the durability and reliability of essential equipment used by the U.S. Navy—ultimately protecting sailors at sea.

The new barge simulates real-world naval conditions, subjecting vital shipboard systems to extreme shocks from explosions and rough waters. These tests verify that equipment meets the Navy's stringent shock-resistance standards, enhancing the operational readiness of ships and the safety of personnel. Manufacturers can now validate their products in an authentic maritime environment to guarantee peak performance under the most demanding conditions. Equipment that successfully passes Element U.S. Space & Defense's EFSP barge testing earns Navy certification for meeting the highest standards for mission-critical use.

"We're taking crucial steps to safeguard our sailors by ensuring that shipboard systems perform reliably under the harshest conditions," said Jeffrey Simmons, General Manager of Element U.S. Space & Defense's Rustburg facility, during the launch event. "This investment significantly boosts our ability to validate and protect the equipment that the Navy depends on."

The celebration—which featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by an exclusive tour showcasing the barge's advanced

capabilities—also included remarks from Calvin Milam, Element U.S. Space & Defense's Engineering Manager, who highlighted the importance of innovation in military readiness. Matt Cline, a member of the Campbell County Board of Supervisors, also attended the event, recognizing the company's valuable contributions to national defense and the local economy.

Britton Kreitz, Senior Vice President of Operations at Element U.S. Space & Defense, highlighted the strategic significance of the new barge for both the U.S. Navy and the company's mission. "This investment is about more than expanding our capabilities—it's about directly addressing the evolving needs of the Navy and the Department of Defense. By pushing the limits of shock testing, we can confirm that the equipment our sailors rely on is ready for anything. This barge solidifies our role as a key partner in safeguarding national security."

With the introduction of this cutting-edge platform, the Rustburg facility now sets the industry standard for heavyweight shock testing, confirming that the Navy's vital parts and systems remain battle-ready. For more information about Element U.S. Space & Defense and its advanced testing capabilities, please visit www.elementdefense.com.

Marine Corps Successfully Demonstrates Link-16 in Third XQ-58A Valkyrie Test Flight

From Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – The Marine Corps' XQ-58A Valkyrie successfully completed its third test flight on Sept. 20, 2024, at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. This flight was conducted in partnership with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, and industry partners.

The test demonstrated newly added Link-16 capabilities for the uncrewed collaborative combat aircraft prototype, marking the first time the Department of Defense controlled an air vehicle using offboard expeditionary methods. Initial results indicate that the prototype met threshold requirements for autonomously exchanging relevant tactical information. These Link-16 capabilities significantly enhance the Marine Air-Ground Task Force's ability to conduct integrated and joint operations, contributing to the Marine Corps' mission to deter conflict and, when necessary, defeat enemies in complex and evolving scenarios.

This successful test was conducted in preparation for Emerald Flag 2024, a multiservice and multi-domain training exercise scheduled for October. The exercise will incorporate technology and focus on the efficiency of joint warfare. The XQ-58A has proven itself ready for this capstone event, allowing the Marine Corps to demonstrate cooperative kill chain closure between manned and unmanned strike platforms for the first time in a large-force exercise.

BAE Systems Awarded Modernization Contract for USS Halsey

GULF OF ADEN (July 12, 2021) The guided-missile destroyer USS

Halsey (DDG 97) operates in formation with aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) during a fueling-at-sea in the Gulf of Aden. (U.S. Navy photo by Machinist’s Mate Fireman Brandon Perera)

SAN DIEGO – Sept. 26, 2024 – BAE Systems has received a $177.8 million contract from the U.S. Navy for the maintenance and modernization of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey (DDG 97). The total value of the previously awarded undefinitized contract award could reach $225.5 million if all options are exercised.

Under the Depot Maintenance Period (DMP) contract, BAE Systems’ San Diego shipyard will dry-dock the 509.5-foot-long ship, perform underwater hull preservation work, enhance the ship’s Aegis combat system with the Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program (Block 3), upgrade the command-and-control systems, and refurbish the living spaces for the ship’s 260 crewmembers. The work is expected to begin later this month and will continue into 2026.

“This type of deep-level sustainment work is necessary and critical to maintain the combat effectiveness of the USS Halsey,” said Eric Icke, vice president and general manager of BAE Systems San Diego Ship Repair. “Our San Diego team is ready to conduct the assigned DMP work that will enable the Halsey to move into its next phase of fleet readiness.”

The San Diego shipyard recently completed similar work aboard the USS Mustin (DDG 89). The Halsey will be the shipyard’s fifth DMP project.

USS Halsey is the 47th ship in the Arleigh Burke class of guided missile destroyers and was commissioned in July 2005. It is the second Navy ship named in honor of Fleet Admiral William F. “Bull” Halsey, who gained fame in the Pacific theatre during World War II.

Northrop Grumman Awarded JCREW/DRAKE Full Rate Production Follow-on Contract

Master-at-Arms 1st Class Everest Austerman operates a Drone Restricted Access Using Known Electromagnetic Warfare (DRAKE) anti-drone system during a simulated straits transit aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78). (Photo Credit: U.S. Navy)

Intelligent electronic countermeasure systems designed to increase protection from ship-to-shore

SAN DIEGO – Sept. 26, 2024 – Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE: NOC) was awarded a follow-on production contract as

part of a larger contract, which is now valued at over $161 million, by the U.S. Navy for the next generation JCREW/DRAKE 2.0 systems.

- The award includes production and delivery of the JCREW/DRAKE 2.0 dismounted and mounted systems.

- As the recommended counter-improvised explosive device (IED) and counter-unmanned aircraft system (UAS) solution, JCREW/DRAKE 2.0 will feature increased signal processing and frequency range, instantaneous bandwidth and a more capable user interface.

Expert:

Gordie Russell, vice president, communications solutions, Northrop Grumman: “JCREW/DRAKE continues to prove itself as a critical component in protecting our warfighters while maintaining the strategic advantage needed to succeed across the modern battlefield. These systems are designed with an open and integrated architecture to support rapid upgrades and mission agility from ship-to-shore – capabilities that are critical for quick decision making.”

Additional Details:

JCREW/DRAKE 2.0 provides 360 degrees of protection to the warfighter afloat, ashore and on-the-move by using intelligent jamming to selectively defeat threats without interruption to friendly communications.

The system can operate independently or can integrate with other Command and Control (C2) systems such as Northrop Grumman’s FAAD C2 system, delivering a layered defense and technological advantage for the warfighter.

JCREW, the system’s counter-IED capability, is a TRL 9 system

with Full Rate Production and is a Program of Record with Naval Sea Systems Command. It achieved Full Operational Capability ahead of schedule in July 2023 and is currently employed by the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, Australia and New Zealand.

DRAKE, the system’s counter-UAS capability, was added to the Army’s Joint Counter-small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-sUAS) Office list of recommended C-sUAS Detection and Defeat Systems in May 2023 and recently became its own Navy Program of Record under Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants, Expeditionary Missions Program Office in April 2024.