

Navy Tapped to Lead UFO Task Force



A screen capture of video of a UFO, or Unidentified Aerial Phenomena, captured by U.S. Navy pilots. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has been selected to lead the Defense Department’s new Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force (UAPTF), the Pentagon said in an Aug. 14 release.

“On Aug. 4, 2020, Deputy Secretary of Defense David L. Norquist approved the establishment of an Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force,” the release said. “The Department of the Navy, under the cognizance of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, will lead the UAPTF.”

DoD “established the UAPTF to improve its understanding of, and gain insight into, the nature and origins of UAPs,” the release said. “The mission of the task force is to detect, analyze and catalog UAPs that could potentially pose a threat to U.S. national security.

“As DoD has stated previously, the safety of our personnel and the security of our operations are of paramount concern,” the release said. “The Department of Defense and the military departments take any incursions by unauthorized aircraft into our training ranges or designated airspace very seriously and examine each report. This includes examinations of incursions that are initially reported as UAP when the observer cannot immediately identify what he or she is observing.”

Earlier this year DoD released infrared imagery of a UAP taken by Navy F/A-18 strike fighters over the western United States.

Boeing Inducts 20th U.S. Navy F/A-18 Into Service Life Modification



An F/A-18F lands on the flight deck of the USS Ronald Reagan while conducting operations in the South China Sea. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Codie L. Soule
ST. LOUIS – Boeing has inducted its 20th F/A-18 Super Hornet into service life modification (SLM), supporting U.S. Navy readiness needs for mission-capable aircraft, the company said in an Aug. 17 release. Two SLM jets already have been returned to the Navy.

Initially, SLM will extend the life of Super Hornets from 6,000 to 7,500 flight hours. Future modification plans in 2022 will enable the jets to fly 10,000 hours and incorporate Block III capabilities.

“The Super Hornet is the workhorse fighter for the U.S. Navy,” said Steve Wade, vice president of F/A-18 and EA-18G programs. “SLM is critical because it gives the Super Hornet a new life and next-generation Block III capabilities. The combination of Block III Super Hornets coming out of SLM and new builds off the production line will enable the Navy to maintain the force structure necessary to meet its mission needs.”

The Block III conversion will include enhanced network capability, conformal fuel tanks, an advanced cockpit system, signature improvements and an enhanced communication system. The updates are expected to keep the F/A-18 in active service for decades to come.

Boeing is on contract for the modernization of 24 aircraft. An additional contract award covering inductions through 2022 is expected later this year. SLM consists of two production lines in St. Louis and San Antonio, Texas.

BAE to Build Prototype for New, Innovative Wargaming Center for Marine Corps

MCLEAN, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps has awarded BAE Systems a contract worth about \$19 million to develop a prototype design for a new state-of-the-art wargaming center to be built at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, the company said in an Aug. 13 release.

BAE will integrate advanced technologies into the prototype, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, game theory, multidomain modeling and simulation, and predictive data analytics, which will provide greater metrics and training on many wargaming processes.

“We will build on our experience supporting the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory Wargaming Division and partner with a diverse team of digital technology experts to produce an advanced prototype to help train an efficient, precise, and consistent force capable of fighting future wars in multiple domains,” said Peder Jungck, vice president and general manager of BAE Systems’ Intelligence Solutions business. “This prototype will integrate big data and advanced analytics in a secure cloud environment for future wargaming design and assessments.”

Since 2010, BAE Systems has supported the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory Wargaming Division with wargame planning, preparation, execution, and assessment. Deep understanding of the Marine Corps' mission has positioned BAE Systems well for supporting further wargaming processes and identifying ways for the Marines to benefit from new technologies to enhance capabilities.

BAE Systems is one of three primes selected for the 18-month cloud modeling and simulation phase. As a lead systems integrator, BAE Systems formed a team of industry experts with breakthrough technology offerings and predictive analytics-based wargaming solutions that automate planning, execution, and post-game analytics.

Coast Guard Announces Offshore Patrol Cutter Homeport

WASHINGTON – Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island, will be home to future offshore patrol cutters, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters announced Aug. 12.

“I am excited to announce the homeporting of two offshore patrol cutters at Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island,” Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Karl L. Schultz said. “NAVSTA Newport provides strategic operational reach and significant logistics support to our service, helping secure our national interests in the Atlantic. I am grateful to the community and its leadership for their continued support of the U.S. Coast Guard and our families assigned to the region.”

OPCs are the Coast Guard's top acquisition priority and will provide the majority of the Coast Guard's offshore presence, bridging the capabilities of the 418-foot national security cutters and the 154-foot fast-response cutters.

OPCs will conduct missions such as law enforcement, drug and migrant interdiction, search and rescue, homeland security, and defense operations. Each OPC will be capable of deploying independently or as part of a task group and be capable of serving as a mobile command and control (C2) platform for surge operations such as hurricane, mass migration, or other contingency response operations.

The Coast Guard earlier told *Seapower* that the first homeport of the OPC would be San Pedro, California.

Coast Guard Interdicts, Repatriates 18 Migrants to Dominican Republic

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard repatriated 18 migrants to the Dominican Republic between Aug. 8 and Aug. 11, following the interdiction of an illegal migrant voyage off the coast of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Aug. 11 release.

The interdiction is the result of ongoing multiagency efforts in support of Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group CBIG.

“Those who take part in an illegal migrant voyage to cross the

Mona Passage risk losing their lives, and it's truly saddening and unfortunate when we find minors taking part in these voyages," said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response. "To the parents, friends and loved ones of anyone looking to take part in an illegal voyage, implore that they not take to the sea, the dangers are just too great. These unseaworthy and often grossly overloaded makeshift vessels could easily capsize or sink without notice giving the migrants a very slim to almost no chance of survival."

While on a routine patrol of the Mona Passage early on Aug. 7, the crew of a Customs and Border Protection marine enforcement aircraft detected an illegal migrant voyage, just off the coast of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Richard Dixon and a Puerto Rico Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit responded to interdict the suspect vessel.

Shortly thereafter, the crew of the Puerto Rico Police stopped the 25-foot makeshift boat that was transporting 13 adult men, four women and a 17-year-old male minor. The crew of cutter Richard Dixon safely embarked the migrants from the makeshift vessel.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants received food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout the interdiction, Coast Guard crewmembers were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19. There were no migrants reported to have any COVID-19 related symptoms.

Cutter Richard Dixon and the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez carried out the repatriation. The 154-foot fast response cutters are homeported in San Juan.

Navy Awards BAE Systems Contract to Modernize Two DDGs



Sailors assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Carney pose for a command photo during the ship's port visit to Naval Station Souda Bay, Greece, in November 2018. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Ryan U. Kledzik

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – BAE Systems has received an \$83.5 million contract from the U.S. Navy to modernize the guided-missile destroyers USS Carney and USS Winston S. Churchill, the company said in an Aug. 11 release.

The modernization work will be performed sequentially by the company's shipyard in Jacksonville. The contracts include options that, if exercised, would bring the cumulative value to \$211.6 million.

The USS Carney will be first in the shipyard, arriving in September 2020. The 23-year-old ship just returned from a six-year operational period in Rota, Spain, and will undergo extensive repair and upgrade work that will take more than 400 days to complete. The shipyard will drydock the ship and perform maintenance of the underwater hull, renovation of crew habitability spaces and upgrades to shipboard systems. The modernization is scheduled to be completed in November 2021.

The Winston S. Churchill will undergo a 390-day maintenance period when the ship arrives in June 2021. The shipyard's work aboard the 18-year-old ship will include drydocking, replacement of steel structures onboard and support of the electronic systems upgrades. The modernization of the Winston S. Churchill is scheduled to be completed in July 2022.

“The modernization work aboard the Carney and Winston S. Churchill are significant for our Jacksonville maritime team and important for the service lives and mission capability of these combatants,” said Tim Spratto, general manager of BAE Systems Jacksonville Ship Repair. “The back-to-back sequencing of work is efficient and beneficial for our employees, our subcontractors and our Navy customer.”

BAE Systems’ Jacksonville shipyard has posted jobs and is expecting to hire workers in a number of trades, including welders, pipefitters, electricians, and painters, over the next two years to work on the two destroyers and for its ongoing repair and modernization work on other ships.

The award of these two ships will also provide work for our team of subcontractor partners and third-party vendors in the port.

Commissioned in 1996, the USS Carney is named after Adm. Robert Carney, who served as chief of naval operations during the Eisenhower administration. The USS Winston S. Churchill is named after the renowned British prime minister and was commissioned in 2001.

Coalition Task Force Sentinel Moves to New HQ in Bahrain

BAHRAIN – The International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Aug. 6 on board Naval Support Activity Bahrain to formally open the new operational headquarters for Coalition Task Force (CTF) Sentinel, the command said in a release.

The new and improved space will enhance the flow of information and allow for greater coordination in tracking merchant shipping as it transits through key waterways in the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Oman.

Commodore Rob Bellfield, CTF Sentinel commander, praised the contributions made by regional partners who are members of the IMSC.

“Our partners in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates share their exceptional political and geographic knowledge of the region,” Bellfield said. “They know this region intimately because this is their home, which they graciously share with us. The interoperability between Sentry ships from the region and Sentinel ships from Australia, the United Kingdom and United States, as well as regional Naval Operation Centers, highlights the close relationship we have allowing CTF Sentinel to maintain an operational strength we may not otherwise achieve.”

The ceremony was limited to ensure social distancing and to mitigate against the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Representatives from the host nation, Bahrain, were in attendance.

“We are pleased to be here today for the opening of the new headquarters of CTF Sentinel,” said Rear Adm. Mohammed Yousif Al-Asam, commander of Royal Bahrain Naval Forces. “It marks another vital facet of the IMSC, which has proved to be effective in ensuring the freedom of navigation, the safety of all the maritime shipping in the region and the strategic passageways.”

In acknowledging this milestone, Vice Adm. Jim Malloy, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet, Combined Maritime Forces, said, “IMSC’s success comes from standing and working together. This coalition fulfils a

much-needed role. Its watchwords of 'Vigilance, Surveillance, and Assurance' tell you exactly what CTF Sentinel is about and why the task force plays such a key role in the region. They are providing the much-needed collective eyes and ears to some of the world's most congested, contested waters."

Since the opening of the watch floor in November 2019, the Task Force Sentinel team has continued to expand in both capability and capacity.

Malloy praised the "enduring commitment of all nations that contribute to the free flow of merchant shipping through some of the world's busiest sea lanes."

The multinational, British-led CTF Sentinel deploys ships and aircraft throughout the region as part of the international surveillance and detection effort, ensuring freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce in international waters.

Ike Carrier Strike Group Returns From Deployment



The USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and its carrier strike group returned home to Norfolk Naval Station on Aug. 9 after seven months operating in 5th and 6th Fleets. U.S. NAVY

NORFOLK, Va. – The USS Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group returned home to Norfolk Naval Station on Aug. 9 after seven months operating in 5th and 6th Fleet, commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, said in a release.

Returning ships include the Nimitz-class carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser

USS San Jacinto. More than 1,800 Navy aviators from nine squadrons from Carrier Air Wing Three 3 returned Aug. 6-7 to their home bases in Naval Air Station Oceana, Norfolk Naval Station, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, and Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida.

Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS James E. Williams and USS Truxtun are scheduled to return to Norfolk on Aug. 10. USS Stout remains on deployment and will return to Norfolk at a future date.

Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group ships left Norfolk on Jan. 17 for the strike group's composite training unit exercise and follow-on deployment.

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, the Ike strike group continued operations to maintain maritime stability and security and ensure access, deter aggression, and defend U.S., allied and partner interests.

"Words cannot express the admiration I have for each and every Sailor onboard. These young men and women were thrust into a situation no one could have predicted and they responded as only Navy Sailors can – they adapted and overcame the adversity. I witnessed their excellence day in and day out as they accomplished repairs never before attempted at sea," said Capt. Kyle Higgins, Ike's commanding officer.

Sailors assigned to the Eisenhower and San Jacinto transited to the equator and participated in a crossing-the-line ceremony, becoming the Navy's first "Iron Shellbacks," with more than 100 days at sea, on May 14. Ike petitioned Naval History and Heritage Command to commemorate this feat in conjunction with crossing the equator as a new title: "Iron Shellback."

While in U.S. 5th Fleet, Vella Gulf, James E. Williams, Stout

and Truxtun participated in Operation Sentinel, providing freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in and out of the heavily transited Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Bab el Mandeb.

Carrier Air Wing 3 supported U.S. Central Command with 166 sorties and 1,135 flight hours in support Operation Freedom's Sentinel and 112 sorties and 492 flight hours in support of Strait of Hormuz transits and deliberate presence patrols. During deployment, CVW-3 completed 10,466 rotary and fixed wing sorties, 7,751 traps with more than 21,995 mishap-free flight hours.

General Dynamics Bath Iron Works, Union Reach Deal

RESTON, Va. – General Dynamics announced Aug. 8 that the negotiating teams from Bath Iron Works and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) Local S6 reached agreement on mutually acceptable terms to end the ongoing strike by shipyard workers in Bath, Maine.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service deputy director Rich Giacalone and IAM International President Robert Martinez helped to facilitate the tentative agreement.

“We are pleased to have reached agreement with our union partners and look forward to getting back to the job of building ships for the U.S. Navy,” said Phebe Novakovic, chairman and CEO. “We greatly appreciate the assistance of Director of Trade and Manufacturing Policy Peter Navarro and AFL-CIO Metal Trades Department President Jimmy Hart for their help in bringing the parties together.”

About 4,300 members of the Local S6 have been on strike since June 22. The agreement is subject to ratification vote by the union's members.

Littoral Combat Ship USS St. Louis Joins the Fleet



The newly commissioned Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis comes to life Aug. 8 during its commissioning ceremony at Naval Station Mayport, Florida. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alana Langdon
MAYPORT, Fla. – The U.S. Navy commissioned the Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis on Aug. 8, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 2 said in a release.

Due to public health safety concerns and restrictions of large public gatherings related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Navy commissioned St. Louis at a private event.

“Nearly 200 years after the first ship to bear the name was launched, today we commission the seventh USS St. Louis,” Navy Secretary Kenneth J. Braithwaite said. “Much like that sloop of war did in 1828, LCS-19 and her crew will protect the U.S. and our interests near and abroad.

Video from the commissioning ceremony is [here](#) on Facebook

“Whether conducting counter-narcotic operations in the Caribbean or working to enhance interoperability with partners and allies at sea, USS St. Louis will provide maneuverability, stability and lethality in today’s era of Great Power Competition.”

Adm. Craig Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command, said littoral combat ships, like the St. Louis, have played an important role supporting operations in his command's geographic area of focus.

"The littoral combat ship has proven to be an effective and adaptable platform capable of multiple missions in our area of responsibility," Faller said. "It has become an end-game enabler for U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement authorities who disrupt transnational criminal organizations and the smuggling of deadly narcotics. Adding the LCS to our enhanced counter-narcotics operation is helping save lives."



The USS St. Louis flies ceremonial flags at Naval Station Mayport. U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Alana Langdon

Rear Adm. Brad Cooper II, commander of Naval Surface Force Atlantic, welcomed the ship, which brings capabilities to counter diesel submarine, mines, and fast surface craft threats.

"St. Louis brings speed and agility to the fleet," Cooper said. "Congratulations to St. Louis' captain and crew for all of your hard work to reach this milestone. You join a proud surface force that controls the seas and provides the nation with naval combat power when and where needed."

Barbara Broadhurst Taylor, the ship's sponsor, offered congratulations to everyone who played a role in delivering USS St. Louis to service.

"To witness the skill and commitment of the officers and crew of USS St. Louis as they brought our magnificent ship to life has been one of the greatest honors of my life. All of us in the great city of St. Louis are proud to be part of our ship's historic legacy and extend our appreciation and lasting friendship to the crew and their families," Taylor said. "Your patriotism and dedication to preserving peace and freedom

inspires us. May God bless our ship and all who sail her.”

Charles Williams, assistant secretary of the Navy for energy, installations, and environment, expressed gratitude to the ship's sponsor for their commitment to the Navy. “I want to express the Navy’s deep appreciation to the Taylor family. Much of what they do is anonymous but believe me when I say they are the preeminent philanthropic family of the St. Louis community and a donor to Navy causes,” Williams said.

“To witness the skill and commitment of the officers and crew of USS St. Louis as they brought our magnificent ship to life has been one of the greatest honors of my life.”

Barbara Broadhurst Taylor, ship’s sponsor

St. Louis’ commanding officer, Cmdr. Kevin Hagan, reported the ship ready.

“I’m incredibly proud of the work the crew of St. Louis put in to get this ship ready to sail. I am absolutely honored to lead this crew through all of the trials required of a brand-new ship in the fleet,” Hagan said. “Their perseverance and dedication will set the foundation for our crew and for all future crews that will call USS St. Louis their home.”

St. Louis is the 22nd LCS to be delivered to the Navy, and the tenth of the Freedom-variant to join the fleet and is the seventh ship to bear the name. The first St. Louis, a sloop of war, was launched in 1828. It spent the majority of its service patrolling the coasts of the Americas to secure interests and trade. In addition, it served as the flagship for the West Indies Squadron working to suppress piracy in the Caribbean Sea, the Antilles and the Gulf of Mexico region.