

# Navy Awards New Contract to Austal for Expeditionary Fast Transport Ships 13 and 14



Mobile, Alabama – The U.S. Navy awarded Austal USA a \$261.8 million contract for the 13th and 14th Expeditionary Fast Transport ships (EPFs) on March 25, Austal said in a release.

The new contract not only expands Austal's current 12-ship EPF program but sets the company and the Navy up for a potential transition to more medically based variants of the high-speed transport.

The now slightly over \$2 billion 14-ship total value of the EPF program underscores the ability of Austal to build highly capable ships at an affordable cost in its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, according to Austal. As Austal prepares to execute these latest contracts, the company's advanced ship design division is looking at revolutionary designs for future warfighting capability and support from the EPF.

"This contract reflects the confidence the U.S. Navy has in Austal's talented workforce to build these highly capable, cost-effective ships," Austal USA President Craig Perciavalle said. "It's exciting to see how the EPF ships are supporting the MSC fleet in so many different capacities. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the fleet with the addition of EPF 13 and 14 and beyond."

The EPF's large, open-mission deck and large habitability spaces allow it to conduct a wide range of missions – from engagement and humanitarian assistance to disaster relief and from maritime security support operations to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

With a draft of only 13 feet and a unique propulsion system, the EPF's ability to access austere and degraded ports with minimal external assistance provides an overabundance of options to fleet and combatant commanders, Austal USA said. With their draft, propulsion system, large mission bay and speed above 40 knots, these ships have the potential to support future requirements in special operations, command and control and medical support.

Austal's EPF program has delivered 10 ships, and two more under construction at its headquarters and ship manufacturing facility in Mobile.

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## **SECNAV Names Future Destroyer in Honor of U.S. Navy Medal of Honor Awardee**



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WASHINGTON (March 18, 2019) An artist rendering of the future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS William Charette (DDG 131). (U.S. Navy photo illustration/Released)

WASHINGTON – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer has named a future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, DDG 130, in honor of a Medal of Honor recipient, Hospital Corpsman Master Chief William Charette, the secretary's public affairs office said in a March 18 release.

Charette, a native of Ludington, Michigan, joined the Navy in 1951 and served in the Korean War in the Fleet Marine Force as a hospital corpsman attached to Company F, Third Platoon, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

“The actions of Hospital Corpsman William Charette will neither be forgotten or diminished,” Spencer said. “Charette put himself at extreme risk during intense combat to render aid to Marines in need. His efforts saved lives, and I am honored that his legacy will live on in the future USS William Charette [DDG 130].”

Charette was presented the Medal of Honor for his actions on March 27, 1953, when Chinese soldiers in North Korea attacked and overran two of three hill outposts that Marines held. During a counterattack, an enemy grenade landed near Charette, who was helping a wounded Marine. Charette placed himself on top of the Marine to shield him from the explosion. The blast rendered Charette unconscious, but when he awoke he continued to aid Marines, including using torn parts of his uniform to dress battle wounds, his own battle vest to shield a wounded Marine, and exposing himself to incoming rounds to carry wounded Marines to safety.

All five enlisted Sailors who received the Medal of Honor for actions during the Korean War were Navy hospital corpsmen attached to the Marine Corps. Charette was the only living recipient. Charette passed on March 18, 2012, due to complications from heart surgery.

Arleigh-Burke class destroyers conduct a variety of operations from peacetime presence and crisis response to sea control and power projection. The future USS William Charette will be a Flight III destroyer, capable of fighting air, surface and subsurface battles simultaneously, and will contain a combination of offensive and defensive weapon systems designed to support maritime warfare, including integrated air and missile defense and vertical launch capabilities.

The ship will be constructed at Bath Iron Works, a division of General Dynamics in Bath, Maine. The ship will be 509 feet long, have a beam length of 59 feet and be capable of operating at speeds in excess of 30 knots.

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# Fire Aboard USS Devastator; No Injuries



NSA BAHRAIN – A fire broke out aboard the mine countermeasures ship USS Devastator (MCM 6) while the ship was pierside at Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain on March 14, U.S. 5th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

There were no injuries in the fire, which broke out about 8 p.m. local time. The extent of the damage is being assessed, and the cause of the fire is under investigation, according to the release from the 5th Fleet.

Sailors aboard Devastator, USS Sentry (MCM 3), USS Gladiator (MCM 11), USS Dextrous (MCM 13) and USS Whirlwind (PC 11), as well as the NSA Bahrain Fire Department, responded to the fire. The ship declared the fire out at about 9 p.m. local time, and crew continued to cool hot spots to prevent a reflash.

Devastator is one of 21 forward-deployed ships to the U.S. 5th Fleet, whose area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is made up of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab el Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

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# HII Completes Installation of Main Mast on USS George Washington



NEWPORT NEWS, Va. –Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Newport News Shipbuilding division has reached new heights in the refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73), the company announced in a March 15 release. The shipyard installed the final piece of the ship’s new main mast – the 34-foot upper mast section – that raises the ship’s distinctive profile 123 feet above the flight deck. The RCOH is now 50 percent complete.

“Landing the upper mast is one of the most visible construction milestones in the mid-life refueling overhaul and maintenance availability of an aircraft carrier,” said Chris Miner, Newport News’ vice president, in-service aircraft carrier programs. “We are making significant progress with George Washington and look forward to returning a fully recapitalized, mission-ready ship to the fleet for another 25 years of service.”

To commemorate the milestone, George Washington sailors on March 15 held a brief mast-stepping ceremony that recognizes an ancient maritime custom of placing a coin underneath the ship’s mast to bring good fortune. A time capsule containing photos, a piece of the old mast, several coins and other artifacts was attached to a metal plate, which later will be welded under the mast.

“Mast-stepping is a way to link the past with the future,” said Capt. Glenn Jamison, the ship’s commanding officer. “It is a way to honor the heritage of this ship and our namesake. George Washington once said that ‘without a decisive naval

force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious.’ Now, with this new mast signifying the progress we’re making during RCOH, USS George Washington is ready to carry on the mantle of representing the Navy as only Gen. George Washington could have imagined and wanted.”

The ship arrived at Newport News in August 2017 to begin the complex engineering and construction project and is in dry dock for hull and freeboard blasting and painting; repairs to its propellers, sea chests, shafts and rudders; and defueling and refueling of its power plant.

George Washington, the sixth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier to undergo this major life-cycle milestone, is on track for delivery in 2021.

Video [here](#)

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## Keel Laid on Future USS Bougainville



PASCAGOULA, Miss. – The keel-laying and authentication ceremony for the future USS Bougainville (LHA 8) was held March 14 at the Huntington Ingalls Industries (HII) Pascagoula shipyard, the Naval Sea Systems command said in a release.

The ship’s sponsor, Ellyn Dunford, authenticated the keel by having her initials welded into the keel plate.

Traditionally, keel laying marks the first step in ship construction. However, with today’s advanced modular shipbuilding, the keel-laying ceremony now recognizes the

joining together of a ship's components and is a major milestone in the ship's construction. Fabrication of Bougainville began in October.

"We are honored to have Ellyn Dunford with us today to commemorate this milestone," said Tom Rivers, Amphibious Warfare program manager, PEO Ships. "The production team has made steady progress and we look forward to bringing the next generation of amphibious capabilities to Navy and Marine Corps warfighters."

The future USS Bougainville is the third ship of the America (LHA 6) class of amphibious assault ships built to facilitate forward presence and power projection. LHA 8 is the first Flight I ship of the America class with a reincorporated well deck to increase operational flexibility while maximizing the aviation capability inherent on the Flight 0 ships, USS America and the future USS Tripoli.

Designed to support the Marine Corps tenets of Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver, America class ships are capable of rapid combat power buildup ashore the America class accommodates the Marine Corps' Air Combat Element, including F-35B Joint Strike Fighter and MV-22 Osprey, essential to maintaining power projection, air superiority and theater logistics.

HII's Pascagoula shipyard also is in production on Tripoli (LHA 7), the guided-missile destroyers Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), Lenah H. Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123), Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), and amphibious transport dock ships, Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28) and Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29). The shipyard also is

under contract for six Flight III Arleigh Burke class destroyers awarded as part of the fiscal 2018-2022 multiyear procurement.

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# Navy Secretary Names New Class of Towing, Salvage and Rescue Ship Navajo



WASHINGTON (Jan. 29, 2019) An artist rendering of the future USNS Navajo (T-ATS 6). (U.S. Navy photo illustration/Released)

WASHINGTON – Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said the new class of towing, salvage and rescue ship will be named Navajo in honor of the major contributions the Navajo people have made to the armed forces, the secretary’s public affairs office said in a March 12 release.

The new class of vessels will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current T-ATF 166 and T-ARS 50 class ships. The first ship of this class will be named USNS Navajo and designated T-ATS 6.

“The Navajo people have fought and served our armed forces with honor and valor in nearly every major conflict since the birth of our nation, so it is fitting and right to name a new class of ship in their honor,” Spencer said. “The Navajo class of towing, salvage and rescue ships will serve our nation and continue the legacy of the Navajo people, and all Native Americans.”

The contract includes options for potentially seven additional vessels, and each additional ship will be named in honor of prominent Native Americans or Native American tribes.

Gulf Island Shipyards was awarded a \$63.5 million contract for the detail design and construction of the new towing, salvage

and rescue ship, which will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current T-ATF 166 and T-ARS 50 class ships in service with the U.S. Military Sealift Command.

The T-ATS will serve as open ocean towing vessels and will additionally support salvage operations and submarine rescue missions. The first ship in the class will be built at the company's shipyard in Houma, La., and is expected to be completed in March 2021.

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## **Coast Guard Interdicts 26 Cuban Migrants 48 Miles Southeast of Long Key**



LONG KEY, Fla. – The U.S. Coast Guard interdicted 26 migrants 48 miles southeast of Long Key attempting to illegally enter the United States, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a March 12 release.

Coast Guard Sector Key West watch-standers received a notification from a good Samaritan boat reporting a 30-foot disabled wooden sail vessel with 26 passengers aboard waving their arms.

A U.S. Navy ship that was conducting maritime operations in the area assisted the vessel in distress. The crew of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS James E. Williams (DDG 95) arrived on scene and safely transferred the 26 Cuban migrants to the Coast Guard Cutter Charles Sexton crew (WPC-1108).

“Illegal migrant ventures on unsafe and ill-equipped vessels are not only against the law but incredibly dangerous,” said Capt. Jason Ryan, chief of enforcement for the Coast Guard’s 7th District in Miami. “It is fortunate that the vessel did not capsize or end in tragedy, as we have seen all too recently in the Florida straits, and we are grateful for the assistance by the good Samaritan and the U.S. Navy in this case.”

One of the migrants was transferred to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol for further investigation and possible prosecution. The remaining 25 migrants were repatriated to Cuba on March 12 by the Coast Guard Cutter Kathleen Moore (WPC-1109).

The Charles Sexton and Kathleen Moore are 154-foot fast response cutters homeported in Key West, Fla.

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## **Coast Guard Icebreaker Returns Home Following 105-Day Antarctic Trip**



SEATTLE – The 150-member crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star returned March 11 to their homeport of Seattle following a 105-day deployment to Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

Deep Freeze is an annual joint military service mission in support of the National Science Foundation, the lead agency for the United States Antarctic Program. Since 1955, the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Coast Guard have assisted in providing air and maritime support throughout the Antarctic

continent.

This year marks the 63rd iteration of the annual operation. The Polar Star crew left Seattle on Nov. 27 for their sixth deployment in as many years and traveled 11,200 nautical miles to Antarctica.

Upon arrival in McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, the Polar Star broke through 16.5 nautical miles of ice, 6 to 10 feet thick, to open a channel to the pier at McMurdo Station. Once the channel was open, the crew refueled Polar Star at McMurdo Station, the United States' main logistics hub in Antarctica. After a three-day port visit to McMurdo, the ship provided a six-hour familiarization cruise to 156 McMurdo station personnel.

On Jan. 30, Polar Star escorted the containership Ocean Giant through the channel, enabling a 10-day offload of 499 containers with 10 million pounds of goods that will resupply McMurdo Station, Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station and other U.S. field camps for the coming year. The Ocean Giant is an ice strengthened vessel contracted by the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command for Operation Deep Freeze.

As in years past, getting the 43-year-old Polar Star to Antarctica was accomplished despite a series of engineering casualties aboard the ship. Commissioned in 1976, the cutter is operating beyond its expected 30-year service life. It is scheduled for a service life extension project starting in 2021.

During the transit to Antarctica, one of the ship's electrical systems began to smoke, causing damage to wiring in an electrical switchboard, and one of the ship's two evaporators used to make drinkable water failed. The electrical switchboard was repaired by the crew, and the ship's evaporator was repaired after parts were received during a port call in Wellington, New Zealand.

The impact from ice operations ruptured the cutter's centerline shaft seal, allowing water to flood into the ship. Icebreaking operations ceased so embarked Coast Guard and Navy divers could enter the water to apply a patch outside the hull so Polar Star's engineers could repair the seal from inside the ship. The engineers donned dry suits and diver's gloves to enter the 30-degree water of the still slowly flooding bilge to make the vital repairs. They used special tools fabricated onboard to fix the leaking shaft seal and resume icebreaking operations.

The Polar Star also experienced shipwide power outages while breaking ice in McMurdo Sound. Crew members spent nine hours shutting down the ship's power plant and rebooting the electrical system to recover from the outages.

On Feb. 10, the crew spent nearly two hours extinguishing a fire in the ship's incinerator room while the ship was about 650 nautical miles north of McMurdo Sound. The fire damaged the incinerator and some electrical wiring in the room was damaged by firefighting water. There were no injuries or damage to equipment outside the space. Repairs to the incinerator are already scheduled for Polar Star's upcoming in-port maintenance period.

Presently, the U.S. Coast Guard maintains two icebreakers – the Coast Guard Cutter Healy, which is a medium icebreaker, and the Polar Star, the United States' only heavy icebreaker. If a catastrophic event, such as getting stuck in the ice, were to happen to the Healy in the Arctic or to the Polar Star near Antarctica, the U.S. Coast Guard is left without a self-rescue capability.

By contrast, Russia operates more than 50 icebreakers – several of which are nuclear powered.

Reserved for Operation Deep Freeze each year, the Polar Star spends the Southern Hemisphere summer breaking ice near

Antarctica, and when the mission is complete, the ship returns annually to dry dock to complete critical maintenance and repairs in preparation for the next Operation Deep Freeze mission. Once out of dry dock, the ship returns to Antarctica, and the cycle repeats.

The Coast Guard has been the sole provider of the nation's polar icebreaking capability since 1965 and is seeking to increase its icebreaking fleet with six new polar icebreakers to ensure continued national presence and access to the Polar Regions.

In the fiscal year 2019 budget, Congress appropriated \$655 million to begin construction of a new polar security cutter this year, with another \$20 million appropriated for long-lead-time materials to build a second cutter.

In response to the demands of the region, the service is set to release an updated version of its Arctic Strategy, which Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz is scheduled to discuss March 21 during his annual State of the Coast Guard address.

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## **Coast Guard, Local Agencies Rescue 46 from Ice Floe in Western Lake Erie**



CLEVELAND, Ohio – The U.S. Coast Guard and local agencies rescued 46 ice fishermen from an ice floe that broke free near Catawaba Island in Lake Erie on March 9, the Coast Guard 9th District said in a release of the same date.

An additional estimated 100 people were able to self-rescue from the ice floe either by swimming or walking on ice bridges that were still connected to the floe.

At 8:13 a.m., Coast Guard Station Marblehead received notification from an Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) representative that there were approximately 100 people stranded on an ice floe and that there were an additional 30 to 40 people in the water. Coast Guard District 9 Command Center launched two 20-foot Special Purpose Craft-airboats from Station Marblehead, two MH-65 Dolphin helicopters from Air Station Detroit, and two MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters from Air Station Traverse City to respond for a mass rescue.

Catawaba Island Fire, Put-in-Bay Fire and Southshore Towing also responded with airboats, while ODNR, North Central Emergency Medical Services and Danbury EMS assisted in the search-and-rescue efforts.

Coast Guard Station Marblehead arrived on scene at approximately 8:50 a.m. and there were no persons in the water. Those who had fallen in or intentionally entered the water to try to swim to land were all back on the ice or land.

Approximately 100 people were able to walk to shore via portions of ice that were still unbroken; however, as the temperature continued to rise, the ice broke into multiple separate ice floes. The remaining fishermen were rescued by the airboat crews and helicopter crews.

By approximately 11:15 a.m., all persons who had been stranded on the ice were rescued.

As temperatures begin to rise, the Coast Guard strongly urges people not to go out onto ice. Ice may look safe, but it is difficult to determine the thickness visually and the increase in warm weather will continue to melt and weaken the ice.

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# **Mercury Systems Receives \$2.8M Order for Modular Rackmount Servers for Naval Weapon System Application**

ANDOVER, Mass. – Mercury Systems Inc. has received a \$2.8 million order from a leading defense prime contractor for modular rackmount servers to be used in a naval weapon system, the company said in a March 7 release. The order was booked in the company's fiscal 2019 third quarter and is expected to be shipped over the next several quarters.

Currently deployed on over 40 naval programs, Mercury's EnterpriseSeries rackmount servers are designed for mission-critical applications.

"Performance, availability and versatility are extremely important to our customer," said Scott Orton, vice president and general manager of Mercury's Trusted Mission Solutions group. "Designed to meet both current and future deployment needs, our composable servers not only minimize cost but also offer long-term sustainability."