Blue Water Autonomy Appoints Senior Leaders from Defense and Tech to Advisory Board

Former Navy and Pentagon leaders join to support scale-up, autonomy roadmap, and strategic positioning.

Release From Blue Water Autonomy

BOSTON – Oct. 6, 2025 – Blue Water Autonomy, the Boston-based technology and shipbuilding company designing and producing highly adaptable unmanned ships for the U.S. Navy, today announced the formation of its Advisory Board. Blue Water Autonomy's founding Advisory Board members include:

- **RADM (ret.) Tom Anderson**, former Program Executive Officer, Ships (PEO Ships)
- **Stephen Rodriguez**, Chairman of Blue Forge Alliance & dual-use investor
- **Michael Stewart**, former Director, Navy Disruptive Capabilities Office and Unmanned Task Force
- **VADM (ret.) Roy Kitchener**, former Commander, Naval Surface Forces Pacific

Together, these leaders bring decades of experience in shipbuilding, naval operations, autonomy, and innovation policy, and have scaled defense technologies from government and the private sector.

“As we enter the next phase of growth, this advisory board brings the expertise and leadership we need to scale fast — and to do it right,” said Rylan Hamilton, CEO and co-founder of Blue Water Autonomy. “We’re thrilled to welcome such a distinguished group who’ve spent their careers solving the exact problems we’re tackling today: how to accelerate naval capability, integrate new technologies responsibly, and strengthen the industrial base. Each of these leaders brings a firsthand understanding of Navy acquisition priorities and operational needs.”

This announcement follows a string of recent company milestones, including a $50 million Series A investment led by Google Ventures, securing a shipyard partnership with Conrad Shipyards to begin vessel construction, a new Washington D.C. office, and recent executive hires.

Deep Naval Experience and Technical Vision

Rear Adm. Anderson most recently served as the Navy’s Program Executive Officer for Ships, where he oversaw the acquisition and delivery of surface combatants, amphibious ships, logistics support vessels, and more. His leadership at NAVSEA included multiple roles in design, maintenance, and modernization across 30+ ship programs.

Stephen Rodriguez is a leading voice in dual-use technology adoption and national security investment. He is currently Chairman of Blue Forge Alliance, a key Navy partner focused on maritime industrial base revitalization. He also chairs Booz Allen Hamilton’s Defense Technology Board and works with dual-use startups through One Defense, a strategic advisory he founded. An Operating Partner at DCVC focused on defense investing, he is a Board Advisor or Director to 15 companies including several in the maritime industrial base.

Michael Stewart brings a unique mix of operational, policy, and business experience to Blue Water. As Director of the

Navy’s Disruptive Capabilities Office, he led efforts to rapidly field emerging technologies to operational commanders. He previously served as Executive Director of the Unmanned Task Force and has held senior roles at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, The Boeing Company, and NATO.

With 39 years of dedicated service, ***Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener*** deployed and served around the world. He commanded destroyers, a cruiser, and an expeditionary strike group. His last assignment on active duty was as commander, Naval Surface Forces/Naval Surface Force U.S. Pacific Fleet – “the SWO Boss”.

“Blue Water Autonomy is revolutionizing naval operations by tackling the toughest hull, mechanical, and electrical (HM&E) autonomy challenges. These challenges have hindered delivering long endurance, long range, cutting-edge USVs that enhance the U.S. Navy’s mission readiness and operational reach,” said Michael Stewart, former Director of the Navy’s Disruptive Capabilities Office. “The company’s innovative approach and strategic partnerships position them as a game-changer in maritime technology.”

“We are at an inflection point where the future of naval dominance will not be measured solely by the tonnage of our manned fleet, but by our ability to field a resilient, distributed, and software-defined force,” said Rodriguez from Washington D.C. “Long-range unmanned surface vessels represent the vanguard of this new maritime paradigm. They are not merely assets; they are a critical test of our entire defense industrial ecosystem. If we fail to create the agile acquisition pathways and collaborative bridges between our traditional shipbuilders and the autonomous systems trailblazers, we risk building a hollow navy – possessing the hardware of the 21st century but lacking the software-driven adaptability and scalable industrial base required to win a future conflict.”

Advancing Autonomy with Urgency

Blue Water Autonomy was founded in 2024 by robotics engineers and Navy veterans to accelerate the deployment of autonomous surface ships for operational use — not just R&D demos. The company's platform is designed for modular multi-mission operations, rapid production at U.S.-based shipyards, and months-long autonomy at sea.

The new advisory board reflects Blue Water's commitment to combining startup speed with real-world accountability, Navy mission alignment, and credibility in front of government stakeholders.