

Coast Guard Cutter Finback Shifts Homeport to Portland, Maine



The Coast Guard Cutter Finback (WPB 87314) officially arrives at its new homeport in Portland, Maine, August 11, 2021. Mooring alongside the Coast Guard Cutter Sitkinak (WPB 1329), the Finback is a coastal patrol boat with a crew of 11 men and women whose area of operations ranges from Sandy Hook, New Jersey to the Maine/Canadian Border. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Lt. j.g. Patrick Lachey*

PORTLAND, Maine – The Coast Guard Cutter Finback (WPB 87314) officially arrived at its new homeport in Portland, Maine, Aug. 11, the Coast Guard 1st District said in a release.

Mooring alongside the Coast Guard Cutter Sitkinak (WPB 1329), the Finback is a coastal patrol boat with a crew of 11 men and women whose area of operations ranges from Sandy Hook, New Jersey to the Maine/Canadian Border.

“We are excited to see the Coast Guard Cutter Finback relocate to Portland,” said Capt. Amy Florentino, commander, Sector Northern New England. “As a service with a big mission and limited resources, we are constantly seeking ways to be more efficient and effective. Portland is central location for the cutter to suppler both law enforcement and search and rescue operations. The change of homeport will also allow our team to provide better mission support for cutter maintenance and personnel needs. While the cutter’s homeport is changing, its mission and service to the public aren’t. As one of the only two patrol boats in our fleet, Finback and the crew will continue to operate throughout Sector New England’s area of responsibility.”

The crew will significantly increase the Coast Guard’s

operational presence and maximize logistical support in Portland, and will continue to aid in maritime law enforcement, ports and waterways, coastal security, marine environmental protection and commercial vessel safety mission-sets.

Bollinger Shipyards Inc. of Lockport, Louisiana, built USCGC Finback in December 1999. This vessel employs the latest in technology. A fully integrated electronics suite coordinates radar, satellite navigation, gyrocompass, autopilot and computer-generated charts to form a compact, but user-friendly command-and-control system for all ship's missions. A unique stern launch/recovery system is vastly superior in safety, speed, and manning requirements. Even during inclement weather, the small boat can be launched and recovered with a minimal crew on deck. It also allows for safe deployment in a much larger sea state than previous systems. The engine room incorporates electronic control and monitoring system with video readouts that can be monitored from the engine room or the bridge. For the first time, the crew onboard can be a combination of male and female resulting from the multiple staterooms throughout the cutter.

The Finback is one of the most advanced coastal patrol boats in the world and will help the Coast Guard remain the world's premier maritime organization for many years to come.

Coast Guard Cutter Valiant Returns Home after 53-Day

Patrol



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Valiant (WMEC 621) returned to Naval Station Mayport, July 20, after completing a 53-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea. The Coast Guard Cutter Valiant crew patrolled over 7,800 nautical miles in the Caribbean Sea, conducting a variety of operations in support of Coast Guard District 7. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Valiant (WMEC 621) returned to Naval Station Mayport, July 20, after completing a 53-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Aug. 11 release.

Coast Guard Cutter Valiant crew patrolled over 7,800 nautical miles in the Caribbean Sea, conducting a variety of operations in support of Coast Guard District 7.

The Valiant crew then executed five interdiction cases involving 70 migrants and supported the safe interdiction and repatriation of over 100 migrants. The Valiant crew rescued four Cuban migrants at night in heavy seas who were clinging to the side of a stopped merchant vessel that had spotted their sinking raft in a shipping lane northwest of Cay Sal Bank.

The Valiant crew partnered with the USS Wichita (LCS-13) and Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903), to safely transfer three suspected narcotics traffickers and 1,900 kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$72.7 million for prosecution in the United States. The Valiant crew then conducted storm avoidance from Hurricane Elsa while maintaining offshore search and rescue and disaster response presence north of Hispaniola.

While refueling and resupplying in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Valiant's crew showed their adaptability by conducting an emergency sortie with just a few hours' notice to support

international interests off the coast of Haiti following the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse. While conducting response operations off Haiti, Valiant also partnered with the Coast Guard Cutter Confidence (WMEC 619) to safely transfer an additional 370 kilograms of cocaine with a street value of over \$10.1 million for disposition in the United States.

“I could not be more proud of the women and men of the Valiant,” said Cmdr. Jeff Payne, Valiant’s commanding officer. “From protecting our nation’s borders, executing counter-narcotics operations, search and rescue and finally responding to an international crisis, Valiant crew overcame every challenge and continuously flexed to meet the next mission. From the most junior Coast Guard Academy cadets experiencing their first time at sea to “Old Salts” finishing their last days underway, every single person stepped up and leaned in to achieve operational success and safeguard our nation. We pride ourselves on being a true multi-mission asset and the entire Valiant crew showcased that over the last 53 days.”

The Valiant is a multi-mission 210-foot medium-endurance cutter. Missions include search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection, homeland security and national defense operations.

Coast Guard Completes Study of Underrepresented Minorities



Lt. Darrina Willis, chief of Incident Management Division for

the U.S. Coast Guard, who appeared in a "Portraits of Diversity" photo series in 2019. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class David Micallef*

WASHINGTON – The Coast Guard completed the "Holistic Study and Analysis for Recruiting and Retention of Underrepresented Minorities" (URM) as part of its commitment to create and retain a more inclusive workforce, the service's headquarters said in an Aug. 11 release.

The service initiated the study with researchers at RAND's Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center (HSOAC) to produce a report that was released on Wednesday titled "Improving the Representation of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Among United States Coast Guard Active-Duty Members."

The report analyzed the policies, programs, and practices that create potential barriers in attracting and retaining Underrepresented Minorities into Coast Guard ranks. The report also included recommendations to help the Coast Guard achieve its goal of creating a more inclusive workforce.

"The Coast Guard continues to seek out opportunities to foster a more inclusive, respectful Coast Guard that produces a mission-ready workforce that reflects the public we serve," said Adm. Linda Fagan, vice commandant of the Coast Guard. "This study builds on the findings in the 2019 RAND Women's Retention Report and Holistic Analysis, establishes benchmarks, and gathers feedback from the workforce to help ensure all members can reach their full potential."

The findings and recommendations of the URM study focus in five key areas: diversity outreach and recruiting; career development; advancement and promotion; retention; and workforce climate.

The Coast Guard's internal personnel readiness task force is taking immediate action on the recommendations of the URM study. Additionally, the Coast Guard is implementing the

recommendations of both the URM and Women's Retention Studies and will continue to execute the 2019-2023 Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan, which outlines 36-actions to measure outcomes, hold leadership accountable, and equip unit commanders with a standard set of resources to improve diversity and inclusion throughout the service.

Additional information on Coast Guard diversity and inclusion efforts can be found [here](#).

Coast Guard Orders 4 More Fast Response Cutters from Bollinger Shipyards



Bollinger Shipyards will build four additional Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutters for the U.S. Coast Guard. *BOLLINGER SHIPYARDS*

LOCKPORT, La. – The U.S. Coast Guard has exercised a contract option to award Bollinger Shipyards LLC four additional Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutters (FRCs), the company announced in an Aug. 10 release. This announcement brings the total number of FRCs awarded to Bollinger up to 64 vessels since the program's inception. To date, the U.S. Coast Guard has commissioned 43 FRCs into operational service.

"We're incredibly proud of the work we do at Bollinger, and we're especially proud of our long history supporting the U.S. Coast Guard that stretches nearly four decades," said Bollinger Shipyards President and CEO Ben Bordelon. "Our unique experience building for the Coast Guard is unparalleled and has shown time and time again that we can successfully

deliver the highest quality vessels on a reliable, aggressive production schedule and cost, even in the most challenging circumstances, including the global pandemic and record hurricane season experienced over the past year. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Coast Guard.”

All four FRCs will be built at Bollinger’s Lockport, Louisiana, facility and are scheduled for delivery to the Coast Guard between fall 2024 and summer 2025.

The FRC program has had a total economic impact of \$1.7 billion since inception in material spending and directly supports more than 650 jobs in Southeast Louisiana. The program has indirectly created 1,690 new jobs from operations and capital investment and has an annual economic impact on GDP of \$202 million, according to the most recent data from the U.S. Maritime Administration on the economic importance of the U.S. shipbuilding and repair industry. Bollinger sources over 271,000 different items for the FRC consisting of 282 million components and parts from 965 suppliers in 37 states.

While Useful Tools, Unmanned Systems Don’t Equal Presence in Arctic, Coast Guard Adviser Says



The Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) breaks ice in the Chukchi Sea, Saturday, Dec. 26, 2020. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 1st Class Cynthia Oldham*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Unmanned systems may be a solution for

handling dirty, dull or dangerous tasks in the Arctic, but they're no substitute for a U.S. flagged ship when it comes establishing presence in the Far North, a Coast Guard Arctic expert says.

"Unmanned systems are a great tool but they don't deliver presence," according to the Coast Guard Senior Arctic Advisor Shannon Jenkins. "Presence is a U.S. flagged [manned] sovereign vessel," Jenkins told an Aug. 3 exhibit booth briefing at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space expo at National Harbor, Maryland. "You can't surge into the Arctic. You have to be up there."

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz has said repeatedly that "presence equals influence in the Arctic" to counter a resurgent Russia, and China – which styles itself a "near Arctic nation" – from ignoring the rules-based international order and modern maritime governance as they have done in other regions like the Black and South China seas.

Maritime domain awareness in the Arctic requires more than periodic exercises. It is important to understand how the environment is changing, Jenkins said, "So that we're better prepared for when industry changes their operations up there, so we can be prepared to be up there and regulate, enforce and protect those operations as well as the U.S. citizens up there."

The U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the waters off Alaska and the Aleutians is greater than all other American EEZs along the Pacific, Atlantic, Gulf coasts and U.S. territorial waters in the Central Pacific and the Caribbean. "That's a lot of water," Jenkins said, "so we have to go where the activity is." That includes going where the fishing fleets, the cruise ships and the oil and gas explorers operate as climate change melts polar sea ice, opening up new sea lanes across the top of the world in summer as well as access to mineral resources and fish stocks long-hidden beneath the

ice.

The Russian fishing fleet has begun experimental fishing in the Chukchi Sea, north of the Bering Strait “and that means the Coast Guard is going to be up there to monitor,” Jenkins said. Among worldwide fishery production, Alaska ranks seventh, and the six larger producers are all nation states, he said. [Illegal, unlawful and unlicensed fishing is replacing piracy](#) as the top global maritime security threat facing the nation, according to the Coast Guard.

“We’re going to need ice breakers, more ships, more planes, more helicopters, more people,” Jenkins said, adding those systems and platforms have to be able to operate in the austere conditions of the Arctic. “There’s a lot of icing and extreme winds. With unmanned aerial systems, we’ve had issues deploying in that region. Wind factors are just too great,” said Jenkins. “It’s also an access issue. That’s where the ice breakers are so essential. They’re our floating infrastructure.”

The Coast Guard currently has only two operating ice breakers, both of them old. Congress has provided funding for the first two Polar Security Cutters (PSCs), which will be heavy icebreakers. A contract was awarded to VT Halter in 2019 for the first PSC. Delivery is expected in 2026, Jenkins said.

Cutter Mohawk Completes 52-day Eastern Pacific Counter-

Drug Patrol



During the patrol, the Mohawk made significant advances in combating transnational criminal organizations and stopped more than 12,000 pounds of illicit drugs, valued at over \$218 million. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

KEY WEST, Fla. – The Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk's crew returned to homeport Sunday, following a 52-day counter-drug deployment throughout the Eastern Pacific Ocean in support of U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force South and the Eleventh Coast Guard District, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Aug. 9 release.

During the patrol, the Mohawk made significant advances in combating transnational criminal organizations and stopped more than 12,000 pounds of illicit drugs, valued at over \$218 million.

The cutter's crew, with a deployed Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron crew and MH-65 Dolphin helicopter, interdicted seven vessels, apprehended more than 20 suspected drug smugglers and seized 11,416 pounds of cocaine and 736 pounds of marijuana. While deployed, the Mohawk's crew boarded five suspected drug smuggling vessels in less than two days. Later in the deployment, the Mohawk's crew successfully interdicted two separate vessels smuggling cocaine and marijuana in less than a day.

"I am extremely proud of this crew and all they have accomplished," said Cmdr. Andrew Pate, commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk. "Despite encountering some significant equipment and logistics challenges, the Mohawk crew rose to the occasion time and again, demonstrating superior tactical proficiency and dedication to this joint mission. Keeping a 30-year-old cutter fully mission capable for two months in a harsh environment wouldn't be possible without partnerships on the water and unwavering support from

back home. Mohawk's success in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is reflective of an increased commitment by U.S. and international partners to detect, disrupt, and deter criminal activity destabilizing the region."

The Mohawk's crew kicked off the deployment with a biannual shipboard training cycle off the coast Jacksonville, Florida. During a compressed week-long evaluation period, Mohawk's crew demonstrated their knowledge and skills by completing 76 drills in the areas of damage control, navigation, seamanship, naval warfare, communications, medical response, engineering casualties and force protection. The crew's efforts resulted in an average drill score of 96 percent, demonstrating excellence in all warfare areas.

While underway, the Mohawk's crew completed aviation, damage control, engineering, seamanship and navigation training to maintain operational readiness and prepare for future multi-mission deployments.

The Mohawk's crew also located, and successfully freed, a green sea turtle trapped in fishing gear off the coast of Central America.

The Mohawk is the last built of the 270-foot Famous-class cutters, commissioned in March 1991 and homeported in Key West, Florida.

U.S. Coast Guard Commissions 44th Fast Response Cutter



Members of the Coast Guard Cutter Glen Harris "man the rails"

during the vessel's commissioning ceremony at Coast Guard Sector Field Office Fort Macon in Beaufort, North Carolina, Aug. 6, 2021. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class Paige Hause*

ATLANTIC BEACH, N.C. – The USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144) became the U.S. Coast Guard's newest fast response cutter during a commissioning ceremony Aug. 6 at Coast Guard Sector Field Office Fort Macon, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area said in a release.

The Glen Harris will be homeported in Manama, Bahrain, and serve at U.S. Patrol Forces Southwest Asia. Adm. Linda Fagan, the vice commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, presided over the ceremony.

"Coast Guard Cutter Glen Harris is one of six fast response cutters that will relieve the 110-foot patrol boats which have boldly stood the watch in the 5th Fleet AOR since 2003," said Fagan. "It is clear the Coast Guard is poised now more than ever to seamlessly integrate with the Navy and Marine Corps team to support the advantage at sea and the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy. We are poised to be a key part of that strategy."

The cutter's namesake is Chief Petty Officer Glen Livingston Harris, a native of North Carolina. He acted as a landing craft coxswain during the landing of Tulagi, which took place Aug. 7-9, 1942, during World War II. Along with three other U.S. Coast Guard coxswains, Harris landed the first U.S. Marines on Tulagi. Over the next three days of conflict, he made repeated trips under heavy enemy fire to deliver ammunition and other supplies to U.S. forces. In September of the same year, he landed against forces at Taivu Point, Guadalcanal Island, thereby materially contributing to the enemy's eventual defeat. Harris was awarded the Silver Star Medal for gallantry by Adm. Chester Nimitz.

"The Coast Guard will build 64 fast response cutters, name

each for an enlisted hero like Glen Harris, and each dedication uncovers a little-known story, and each story adds volumes to our understanding of our own Coast Guard history," said Fagan.

Stacy Howley, Harris's eldest granddaughter, was present and ship's sponsor, and Madison King, Harris's eldest great-granddaughter, served as the long-glass presenter. Several members of the Harris family were in attendance, including his sister Allie Gaskill.

"My grandfather was one of the most honorable men I have ever known. He was so proud to be an American and a member of the United States Coast Guard. He was our papi, and we absolutely adored him," Howley said. "He was an extremely humble man and rarely spoke about his time in World War II. But I believe if he were here with us today, he would most certainly say that his actions in the Tulagi Islands, as well as his crewmates that were by his side during the mission, were not heroic at all, but simply a reflection of the Coast Guard's long tradition of life-saving missions and of putting others before oneself."

The Harris crew is already credited with saving lives. While in pre-commissioning status, the crew was first on scene and essential in the response, rescuing a member of the 175-foot lift boat capsizing eight miles south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana, on April 13. The U.S. Coast Guard and multiple good Samaritan vessels responded to the capsized vessel and searched for multiple missing people in the water.

"Clearly, this crew is already inspired by Glenn Harris and the cutter's motto Gallantry Abroad," said Fagan.

The Glen Harris is the 44th fast response cutter in the U.S. Coast Guard's fleet and the third of six FRCs planned for service in Manama, Bahrain. Stationing FRCs in Bahrain supports U.S. Patrol Forces Southwest Asia, the Coast Guard's

largest unit outside of the U.S., and its mission to train, organize, equip, support, and deploy combat-ready U.S. Coast Guard forces in support of U.S. Navy 5th Fleet, U.S. Central Command, and national security objectives.

The Sentinel-class is a key component of the Service's offshore fleet capable of deploying independently to conduct missions, including port, waterways, coastal security, fishery patrols, search and rescue, and national defense. They are 154 feet in length, 25 feet in beam, and 353 long tons in displacement. They have a top speed of more than 28 knots, a range of 2,500 nautical miles, an endurance of up to five days, and can hold a crew of up to 24. These new cutters are replacing the aging Island-class 110-foot patrol boats in service since 1985.

The U.S. Coast Guard accepted the Glen Harris on April 22. They will transit to Bahrain later this year with their sister ship, the Emlen Tunnell (WPC 1145), delivered July 1 and due to be commissioned in Philadelphia before departure.

Ship commissioning is the act or ceremony of placing a ship in active service. Once a ship has been commissioned, its final step toward becoming an active unit of the agency it serves is to report to its homeport and officially load or accept any remaining equipment.

Coast Guard Cutter Alert Completes Successful

Fisheries Patrol



Crew members from the Coast Guard Cutter Alert launch the cutter's small boat July 10, 2021, to conduct vessel boardings during a 60-day fisheries patrol off the coasts of Washington and Oregon. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

ASTORIA, Ore. – The Coast Guard Cutter Alert and its crew returned to homeport in Astoria Aug. 7 after completing a 60-day law enforcement patrol, during which the crew enforced federal law and safety regulations aboard commercial fishing vessels operating within the United States Exclusive Economic Zone off the coasts of Washington and Oregon, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Aug. 9 release.

The two-month patrol focused heavily on albacore tuna fishing and saw law enforcement teams board 31 vessels – many of which have not been boarded in more than 10 years – and issue 22 violations to commercial fishing vessel operators.

“I couldn’t be more proud of Alert’s hard-working crew,” said Cmdr. Matthew Kolodica, commanding officer of the Alert. “It is an honor to be part of a crew that is so passionate and focused on helping Oregon and Washington coastal communities operate safely and sustain their fisheries industries.”

The nation’s maritime ecosystems are key to the United States’ economy and well-being. The Coast Guard plays a critical role in preserving and maintaining healthy populations of marine fish by preventing the decline of protected marine species populations, protecting and promoting the recovery of endangered marine habitats, and partnering with other agencies to enhance and sustain marine ecosystems.

In addition to safety and fisheries enforcement, the ship’s crew also aided in saving a commercial fisherman’s life. The sole person aboard his boat, sinking 160 miles off Grays Harbor, Washington, escaped into the vessel’s life raft before

the boat submerged. The cutter was dispatched from another location July 30 to assist. Once on site, the crew served as on-scene coordinator and directed the Coast Guard Cutter Blue Shark, an 87-foot Patrol Boat homeported in Everett, Washington, to launch its small boat and safely recover the man.

Kolodica credited the versatility and success of the deployment – which was under the tactical oversight of the 13th Coast Guard District – to strong partnerships with the district and Coast Guard Air Stations Port Angeles, Astoria and North Bend.

Cutter James Conducts Largest Offload of Illegal Narcotics in Coast Guard history



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter James offloaded nearly 60,000 pounds of cocaine and 1,430 pounds of marijuana Aug. 5, the largest offload in the service's history. *U.S. COAST GUARD* MIAMI – Coast Guard Cutter James' crew offloaded approximately 59,700 pounds of cocaine and 1,430 pounds of marijuana worth more than \$1.4 billion, Aug. 5, at Port Everglades, which is the largest offload in service history, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The Coast Guard's strong international relationships, with key partners like Canada and the Netherlands, along with specialized capabilities and unmatched authorities, allow for a unity of effort to disrupt transnational crime organizations, which threaten America and partner nations.

"Today's offload is a result of our combined efforts of our inter-agency partners and a dedicated international coalition," said Vice Adm. Steven Poulin, commander, Atlantic Area. "The Canadian government and Canadian Defence Forces brings an incredible capability in defeating transnational organized crime, and I'm grateful to HMCS Shawinigan to showcase Canada's commitment. Together we will disrupt, defeat and degrade transnational organized crime. We will strengthen our efforts and continue to build collaboration and capability."

"Canada and America are committed to expanding cooperation on defending North America against illicit trafficking and transnational crime and working together within our alliances," said Maj. Gen. Paul Ormsby, Canadian Defence Attache. "We know that no nation can do it alone, and we know that we are stronger together. The kind of cooperation that we see on the pier today is one of the thousands of impressive examples of cooperation every day."

During at-sea interdictions, a suspect vessel is initially detected and monitored by allied, military or law enforcement personnel coordinated by Joint Interagency Task Force-South based in Key West, Florida. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific is conducted under the authority of the Coast Guard 11th District, headquartered in Alameda, California. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The drugs were interdicted in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean off the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean Sea including contraband seized and recovered during 27 interdictions of suspected drug smuggling vessels by 10 American, Dutch and Canadian ships:

Coast Guard Cutter James

Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk

Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless

Coast Guard Cutter Thetis

Coast Guard Cutter Confidence

USS Wichita

USS Sioux City

USS Billings

HNLMS Holland

HMCS Shawinigan

The cutter James is a 418-foot national security cutter home ported in Charleston, South Carolina. The cutter Mohawk is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter home ported in Key West, Florida. The cutter Dauntless is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Pensacola, Florida. The cutter Thetis is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Key West, Florida. The cutter Confidence is a 210-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Port Canaveral, Florida. The USS Wichita is a 378-foot freedom-class littoral combat ship homeported in Naval Station Mayport, Florida. The USS Sioux City is a 378-foot Freedom-class littoral combat ship homeported in Naval Station Mayport, Florida. The USS Billings is a 378-foot Freedom-class littoral combat ship homeported in Naval Station Mayport, Florida. The Royal Netherlands Navy HNLMS Holland is a 356-foot Holland-class offshore patrol vessel homeported in Den Helder, Netherlands. The HMCS Shawinigan is a 181-foot Kingston-class coastal defense vessel homeported in Halifax, Canada.

AI Could Hammer Out Issues Plaguing Shipbuilding Supply Chain After COVID-19



Rear Adm. Douglas Schofield stated the Coast Guard's top priorities for shipbuilding sustainment include life-cycle engagement with industry. *NAVY LEAGUE / Lisa Nipp*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – A key to alleviating the chronic challenge of better maintainability and sustainability of increasingly complex naval ships is earlier and constant collaboration between the services acquisition officials and industry, starting with upfront dialogue on requirements for new systems, a panel of service and industry leaders said Wednesday.

Those problems have been acerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the shipbuilding work force and supply chain, the lack of clarity in the Navy's future shipbuilding plan, the cybersecurity threat and the reoccurring budget uncertainty, the panel members agreed. But help may be in sight with the push for artificial intelligence, which could improve predictability of component failures and demand for spare parts, the leaders told a Navy League Sea-Air-Space expo forum.

"Success for us is working with our industry partners," looking for feedback, starting with setting requirements for new programs and "getting it right up front," said Tom Rivers, executive director Amphibious, Auxiliary and Sealift programs at PEO Ships.

Among the top priorities for the Coast Guard is

interoperability and "life-cycle engagement with industry and our sister services," said Rear Adm. Douglas Schofield, Assistant Commandant for Acquisition.

Improving efficiency and savings depends "a lot on collaboration and feedback with the services," said Larry Ryder, vice president Business Development and External Affairs, Austal USA. "We have put forward ideas that can reduce cost, increase reliability. But we need to work with the services."

To avoid logjams in major maintenance, "we need industry to tell us where those tricky spots are. ... Tell us up front so we knew" how to schedule the work, Rivers said. If they get "feedback up front from industry" where they expect problems, "we'll change our requirements."

"New programs have a lot of requirements" and we need to "work with industry from the start to get right, Rivers said. "We really need to build ships faster."

Rivers said the Navy also is making internal change, including adopting a plan for data analysis of systems and creating a "war room" that will provide focus and contact with industry partners. And they are designing for maintainability and flexibility in new ships. "We've never done that before."

The Navy major new start is the DDGX, the next-generation major surface combatant, Rivers said. It will draw heavily on technologies and lessons learned from the Arleigh Burke DDG-51 program, he said. His office is engaged in developing the new light amphibious ship to meet the Marine Corps' need for a cheaper, more mobile platform for its distributed operations in contested littoral. And to alleviate a serious lack of dry dock capacity on the Pacific coast, Rivers said the Navy will put out a contract this year for a new dry dock.

The three officials agreed that there are concerns with the fragility of the shipbuilding and repair industrial base, with

major problems with the second- and third-tier suppliers, some of whom went out of business because of a slowdown in orders during the pandemic. Ryder said industry needs greater stability in demand from the services in order to build and retain a work force.

Schofield raised the new threat of cyberattacks, saying the Coast Guard is working with its service partners and industry on cybersecurity, "making sure industry can facilitate security," a concern echoed by the other two speakers.