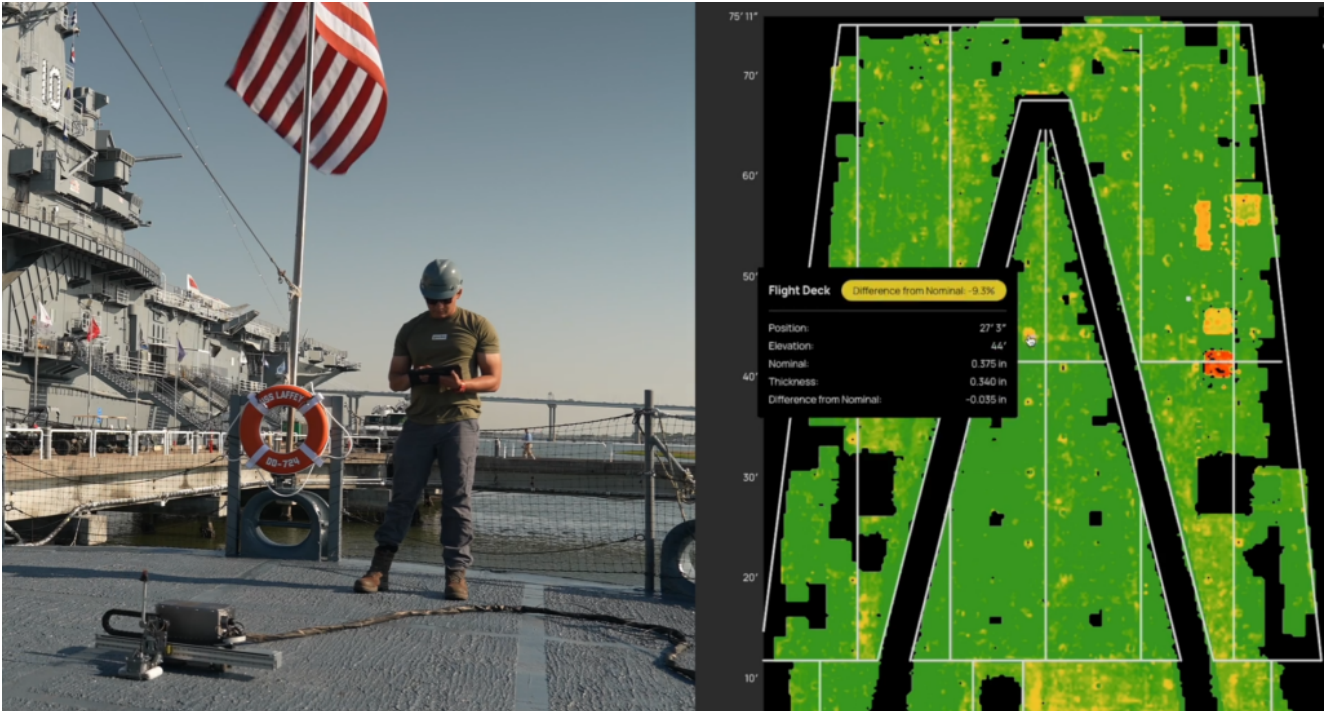


Gecko Robotics' Komodo Robot Aids Ship Flight Deck Maintenance



By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – Robots and other unmanned systems are advocated to relieve humans for the “dull, dirty, and dangerous” jobs and missions the Navy is called upon to complete. One example is the increasing use of robotics for assessment and maintenance of ship surfaces such as the flight decks, weather decks, and well decks as applicable of amphibious warfare ships and guided-missile destroyers. Artificial intelligence is being added to speed up the processes.

Flight decks are coated with non-skid, a rough coating that reduces the slickness of the decks, enhancing the safety of operations sea for personnel, aircraft, and ground support equipment. The coating needs to be replaced periodically as it is worn down by operations. Assessing that need is

being accomplished by Gecko's Komodo robots.

The U.S. Navy and the General Services Administration have awarded Gecko Robotics of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a contract with a ceiling of \$71 million "to deploy artificial intelligence and robotics to assess and maintain the health of military assets," the company said in a release. "Gecko will start work with 18 ships [per year] in the U.S. Pacific Fleet with the initial award worth up to \$54million over a five-year period.

"The Chief of Naval Operations has set a target of 80% fleet readiness, which Gecko will have a crucial role in helping to meet," Gecko said. "Gecko's advanced AI and robotic technology identify repairs up to 50 times faster and more accurately than manual methods, reducing maintenance delays and boosting battle readiness. This work will be carried out across destroyers, amphibious warships, and littoral combat ships."

Gecko's Komodo robot is designed to assess the extent of corrosion of non-skid, said Troy Demmer, co-founder and president of Gecko, in an interview with Seapower. The crawling robot uses "electromagnetic acoustic conduction to create an ultrasonic waveform that can penetrate that non-skid down to the base metal and be able to assess any sort of corrosion."

The Komodo is able to operate during different sea states on the ship's flight deck, enabling an assessment of the deck at sea six to 12 months before the ship enters a maintenance availability, reducing the time spent on the task of refurbishing the deck. The robot rolls along like a paint roller, its sensor scanning the deck in its passes, taking measurements, and recording those data points on a map display of a laptop computer. The measurements allow the Navy to determine the areas of the deck that need attention for non-skid maintenance.

Gecko also uses its Toka wall-climbing robots to scaling U.S. Navy ship hulls in order to assess corrosion.

Demmer expects the U.S. Naval Surface Force Atlantic to request Gecko's services in the future in a separate contract.

"Where value hasn't improved, that's where opportunity lives. Cracking the cost equation is just as important as cracking the physics equation," said Justin Fanelli, Chief Technology Officer for the Department of the Navy, quoted by Geck in its release. "We're now seeing solutions that make innovation adoption easier and in doing so save time, money and risk. When these American companies, pure play defense and dual use companies like Gecko Robotics, choose to do hard things and move the needle on our outcome metrics, not by percentage points but by orders of magnitude, it results in faster, better portfolio management."

Gecko employs about 275 personnel, half of them based in Pittsburgh.

NPS Online Student Advances Fleet Analysis of Autonomous Systems



From Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Andrew Langholf,
May 6, 2026

MONTEREY, Calif. – Advanced analyses completed by a Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) distance learning student is helping inform the U.S. Navy’s future employment of autonomous systems, demonstrating how NPS Online students, and the school’s unique certificate programs, offer the same impact on fleet needs as their counterparts on campus in Monterey.

U.S. Navy Lt. Marissa Amodeo, assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Assessment Division, OPNAV N81, completed the systems analysis certificate program this past March. Through the coursework required for one of her classes in the program, titled Combat Systems Simulation, Amodeo developed a model and supporting analysis to inform autonomous systems concepts of operations, or CONOPS.

The work was well received by senior leadership, including OPNAV N81 director U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Douglas Sasse, with the

potential to help inform future Navy acquisitions of unmanned systems. More specifically, Amodeo's work focused on how the Navy can move from buying new technology, to fielding that technology as an advanced warfighting capability as effectively and efficiently as possible.

"My project tackled a key operational issue – making sure Navy investments in emerging technology, like small, unmanned surface vehicles, translate into usable warfighting capability," Amodeo said. "We are fielding robotic technologies quickly, but we still do not fully understand the deployment of bottlenecks. Identifying and quantifying those constraints is essential to mission success."

As an analyst, Amodeo's job is to support the OPNAV N81 mission to provide detailed, evidence-based analyses that inform decisions on resources, acquisitions, and readiness.

"At OPNAV N81, our mission is timely, data-driven analysis that informs resource decisions," she said. "My goal was to provide an analytical foundation that helps shape planning for these platforms and supports their integration into the fleet."

Stew Sharp, a senior member of the OPNAV N81 campaign analysis team, said Amodeo's work demonstrates how technical education strengthens U.S. Navy warfighting.

"Lt. Amodeo's work is a powerful testament to how technical education can be a direct force multiplier for our mission," Sharp said. "By applying advanced systems analysis, she transformed a complex operational challenge into a clear, data-driven model, revealing the critical bottlenecks we must address to successfully integrate unmanned systems."

"Her initiative provides the analytical foundation to guide future investment, ensuring our advanced technology delivers a decisive edge in real-world naval operations," Sharp continued.

NPS distance learning programs give military professionals access to advanced graduate education in the NPS Department of Operations Research that they can apply directly to operational challenges at their commands. In the systems analysis certificate program, students develop analytical skills that support complex operational questions, including force design, decision support, and emerging warfighting concepts.

“The NPS program gave me the toolkit to do this,” Amodeo said. “The combat systems and simulation course helped me build a discrete event queuing model, and the broader curriculum strengthened my systems thinking so I could turn a complex process into actionable insight.”

As the Department of the Navy works to understand how autonomous systems can be integrated into future operations, the connection between education and application becomes increasingly important. For officers serving in operational and assessment roles, graduate-level analysis helps commands evaluate concepts earlier, make more informed decisions faster, and directly align emerging capabilities with fleet needs.

“The biggest takeaway is that deploying autonomous systems at scale is a systems problem, not a linear one,” Amodeo said. “Processes that work for one or two units can break at scale when bottlenecks appear.”

“My analysis showed that when demand hits many assets at once, small constraints can delay deployment, even under optimistic assumptions,” she added. “Logistics and maintenance capacity can determine readiness, so the Navy has to invest in the process, not just the platform.”

Dr. Dashi Singham, research associate professor in NPS’ Department of Operations Research, taught the course leading to Amodeo’s analysis. She said distance learning students are

uniquely positioned to bring current operational problems into the classroom and use simulation tools to understand and inform decisions before they are made.

“Many distance learning students work in operational environments where real systems can be modeled using discrete event simulation,” Singham said. “That allows them to test potential policy changes in a simulated environment and provide immediate, data-driven recommendations across a variety of fleet settings.”

Amodeo said her full-time job as an OPNAV N81 analyst is a heavy lift, but the addition of an NPS class to her already busy schedule is anything but a distraction. In fact, the skills learned through the four-course certificate sequence immediately strengthened the work she was doing, Amodeo says, and ultimately advanced to the quality of the analyses she delivered to the fleet.

“These programs are not a distraction from the job. They are a force multiplier,” Amodeo said. “They help you ask better questions, challenge assumptions with data, and deliver more impactful results for the fleet and warfighter.”

NPS, located in Monterey, California, provides warfighting-focused graduate education, including classified studies and interdisciplinary research, to advance the operational effectiveness, technological leadership, and warfighting advantage of the naval service. Established in 1909, NPS offers master's, doctoral, and distance learning certificate programs to Department of War military and civilian students, along with international partners, to develop warfighters and leaders who can think critically, solve complex operational problems, and deliver mission-ready solutions through advanced education and research.

BlackSea Technologies Awarded \$256 Million Navy Contract



Designed to replace and significantly improve upon the legacy Offshore Petroleum Distribution System, SPDS will supply bulk fuel to land forces from the sea in expeditionary and contested environments. Photo from BlackSea Technologies

From BlackSea Technologies

BALTIMORE, Md., May 5th, 2026, BlackSea Technologies announced today that it was awarded a five-year, \$256 million contract to build and support the Seabased Petroleum Distribution System (SPDS) program. Under the contract, BlackSea will construct up to five SPDS units and support equipment from May 2026 through March 2031. Primary production will be centered in Baltimore with additional work supported by partners along the Gulf Coast.

Managed by Navy PMO 314, Logistics Over the Shore, SPDS is a critical expeditionary fuel distribution capability designed to move bulk fuel from sea to shore in locations where traditional infrastructure does not exist. As demonstrated in Navy testing, the system supports the full mission profile of offshore deployment, fuel transfer, and distribution, giving joint and allied forces a more flexible and resilient means of sustaining operations ashore.

The Navy has described the system as a next generation solution that provides a more survivable bulk fuel storage solution and helps meet emerging operational requirements in contested and infrastructure limited environments.

“This award positions BlackSea Technologies to deliver a capability that directly supports expeditionary readiness and operational endurance in contested environments” said Charles Engstrom, BlackSea’s SPDS Program Manager. “SPDS answers a real logistics challenge for the joint force, getting fuel where it is needed, when fixed infrastructure is unavailable or at risk. We are proud to support Navy PMO 314 on a program that strengthens the nation’s ability to project and sustain power from the sea.”

BlackSea’s work under the contract will draw on the company’s maritime engineering, production, and integration expertise, while leveraging a trusted industrial base in Baltimore and partners along the Gulf Coast. Together, that team will help deliver a system that enhances flexibility, resilience, and readiness for future operations.

U.S. Forces Disable Vessel in Gulf of Oman Attempting to Violate Blockade

From U.S. Central Command, May 6, 2026

TAMPA, Fla. – U.S. forces operating in the Gulf of Oman enforced blockade measures by disabling an Iranian-flagged unladen oil tanker attempting to sail toward an Iranian port at 9 a.m. ET, May 6.

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces observed M/T Hasna as it transited international waters enroute to an Iranian port on the Gulf of Oman. American forces issued multiple warnings and informed the Iranian-flagged vessel it was in violation of the U.S. blockade.

After Hasna's crew failed to comply with repeated warnings, U.S. forces disabled the tanker's rudder by firing several rounds from the 20mm cannon gun of a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet launched from USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). Hasna is no longer transiting to Iran.

The U.S. blockade against ships attempting to enter or depart Iranian ports remains in full effect. CENTCOM forces continue to act deliberately and professionally to ensure compliance.

Coast Guard Creates Special

Missions Command to Counter Maritime Threats at Home, Abroad

From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, May 6, 2026

WASHINGTON – The Coast Guard is standing up the Special Missions Command to oversee its deployable specialized forces. The command will enhance the operational effectiveness of the Coast Guard in responding to a wide range of national emergencies and events as the demand for deployable specialized forces capabilities increase.

The Coast Guard selected the existing Coast Guard C5I Service Center facility in Kearneysville, West Virginia, as the future site of the Coast Guard's Special Missions Command (SMC). The SMC will be commissioned on or around October 1, 2026, fully integrating the Service's Deployable Special Forces under a single operational commander to provide oversight and advocacy, improve readiness, mission effectiveness, and interoperability to meet Service, Department, and joint military requirements.

“The creation of the Special Missions Command is a vital evolution for our service,” said Adm. Kevin Lunday, Commandant of the Coast Guard. “We are forging our most elite operators into a single, razor-sharp instrument of national power. The Special Missions Command is not an administrative change; it is an investment ensuring these elite teams are the best trained, equipped, and organized force possible, ready to protect the Homeland and support the Joint Force.”

The Special Missions will include the following units:

- Maritime Security Response Teams serve as the Coast

Guard's first responders to maritime terrorism and other high-risk threats. They are equipped to conduct the nation's most critical maritime security and defense operations at home or abroad, with both partner law enforcement agencies and joint services.

- Tactical Law Enforcement Teams provide law enforcement expertise across the full spectrum of maritime response situations with specific focus on counter-trafficking and criminal networks attempting to exploit maritime transit zones.
- Maritime Safety and Security Teams are rapidly deployable boat teams that provide port, waterway, and coastal security capability to safeguard the public, protect the marine transportation system, and respond to maritime crime, sabotage, and terrorist activity.
- Port Security Units provide shoreside and waterborne security including point defense of strategic shipping, designated critical infrastructure, and high value assets in joint and combined expeditionary warfare environments.
- Regional Dive Lockers provide dedicated undersea capabilities for a variety of missions. These missions include ensuring the security of ports and waterways, maintaining aids to navigation, and conducting ship maintenance and repair, often in extreme environments like the remote polar regions.

National Strike Force provides highly trained technical experts and specialized equipment to Coast Guard and other

federal agencies to prepare for and respond to the most complex crises and natural disasters, including oil, hazardous substances, and chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear incidents. The force, comprised of three strike teams, an incident management assist team, and the public information assist team supports federal on-scene coordinators and incident commanders, and is poised for immediate response across the nation and globally.

“The geo-political landscape is evolving and the demand for Coast Guard Deployable Specialized Forces is at an all-time high,” said Capt. Robert Berry, Special Missions Command pre-commissioning team lead. “These forces are instrumental to the Coast Guard’s readiness and its role as a global leader in maritime contingency response. The Service has always turned to its specialized forces to respond to national threats and disasters, and establishing this command is the natural next step to enabling our forces to lead the way at the tip of the spear.”

Additional units, capabilities and functions may be incorporated into the Special Missions Command in the future. Currently, the administrative and operational control of specialized forces units is shared between the Coast Guard’s two Area commanders. The Coast Guard is evolving to become a stronger, more capable and responsive fighting force in responding to threats presented by emerging technologies, intensified border security activities, large-scale contingencies and national special security events.

NOAA Awards \$21.6M for Uncrewed Systems to Support New Charting, Mapping Vessels



From Keeley Belva, NOAA, May 6, 2026

NOAA has announced a \$21,600,909 million award for the purchase of uncrewed marine systems to be used on new charting and mapping vessels being built for the agency. This will support NOAA's mission to deliver tools and information to help mariners safely transport the \$2.3 trillion worth of cargo that comes in and out of the nation's ports and harbors. The contract was awarded to Chance Maritime Technologies from Lafayette, Louisiana for up to eight total systems over five years.

The new systems offer a spectrum of command and

control options. These include direct operator control, supervised control with semi-autonomous capabilities like collision avoidance and dynamic course tracking, and, for certain circumstances, fully autonomous operations. The collaborative design of the vessels and uncrewed marine systems ensure that NOAA is compliant with regulations and help to ensure safe operations.

“Uncrewed systems provide more efficiency in data collection, ensuring that our nation remains at the forefront of scientific innovation,” said Neil Jacobs, Ph.D., NOAA administrator. “The Administration’s focus on integrating emerging technologies into agency operations allows NOAA to serve the public more effectively and demonstrate our leadership in scientific collaboration on the world stage.”

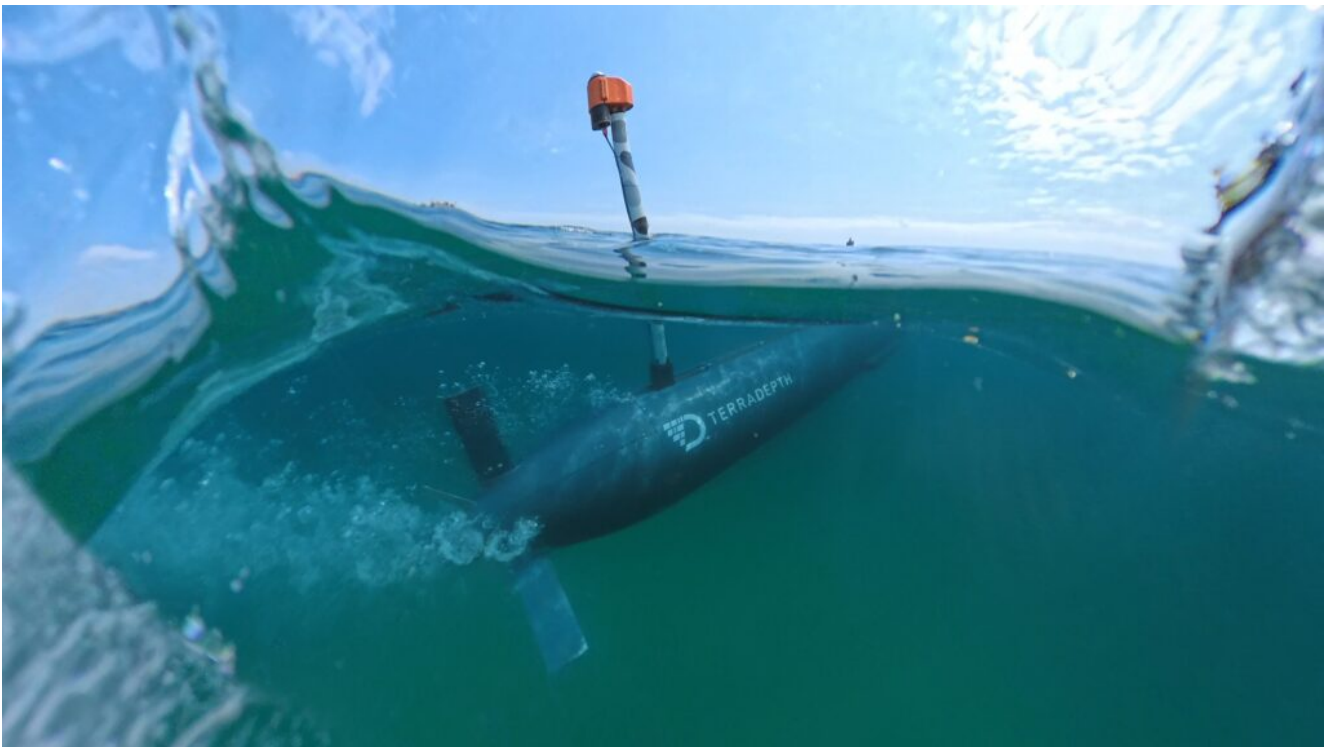
In 2025, NOAA hosted the keel-layings for two new charting and mapping vessels to expand the NOAA fleet. The uncrewed systems will be used on those vessels, [Surveyor](#) and [Navigator](#), to complement traditional seafloor mapping methods. The systems will also be equipped to support other data collection efforts such as fisheries acoustic surveys.

“NOAA is uniquely positioned to leverage cutting edge maritime technology to efficiently collect data in some of the ocean’s most challenging regions,” said Rear Adm. Chad M. Cary, NOAA Corps director and NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations assistant administrator. “Teaming these systems with Surveyor and Navigator achieves a major waypoint on the charted course to building the hybrid fleet of the future.”

[NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations](#) manages and operates NOAA’s fleet of 15 research and survey ships and 10 specialized environmental data-collecting aircraft. Operated and maintained by civilians and [NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps](#) officers, this fleet is one of the nation’s largest dedicated to federal research. The vessels—which range from large oceanographic research vessels to smaller charting

ships—support a wide range of marine activities, including fisheries surveys, nautical charting, and ocean and marine studies.

Terradepth Mines Seabed Intelligence for Maritime Customers



By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The seabeds of the world’s oceans are becoming less mysterious, thanks to companies like Terradepth, a company that provides its clients with geospatial surveys of the seabed to meet their economic, defense, or scientific needs.

Terradepth Inc., founded in 2018 and based

in Austin, Texas, with a facility in Panama Beach, Florida, provides customized robotic surveys of the seabed using autonomous unmanned underwater vehicles (AUVs) and provides data to its customers through its Absolute Ocean intelligence layer software platform for their awareness of their ocean systems and infrastructure.

“Absolute Ocean is a high-resolution map that pulls data from multiple information sources,” said Joe Wolfel, Terradepth founder and chief executive officer, in an interview with Seapower, noting that the data is collected and aggregated into one spot. “That ecosystem drives better and faster decision making [for customers] at scale.”

Wolfel explained that Terradepth takes some ocean data – from NOAA, for example – into the Absolute Ocean data platform that is publicly available to its customers.

“A lot of times customers want to keep their data private and secure, so they have access to all of the publicly available data and obviously their own data holdings in the geospatial platform, Absolute Ocean,” he said.

Wolfel told Seapower that his company builds and deploys its own AUVs and also uses AUVs built by other companies “to the extent that it makes sense.” The company deploys teams equipped with AUVs to areas to be surveyed. The teams can fly to ports worldwide and deploy on vessels of opportunity to execute their surveys. He said the “major cost driver of ocean data acquisition is the requirement for that surface vessel.”

Terradepth’s missions are varied: looking for mines, a leak in an oil pipeline, a break in a data transmission cable. Its data is used in sectors including defense and national security; maritime insurance, government; regulation; scientific research, offshore energy; and telecommunications, according to the company website.

Terradepth cooperates with other ocean technology companies such as Saildrone, Anduril, Kongsberg, and Oceaneering. Many of its customers and missions are not disclosable. Its customers have included NOAA. The U.S. Navy uses the company software for undersea applications.

Wolfel is a Naval Academy graduate, a former Navy SEAL officer who later worked for the McCrystal Group where he was exposed to a lot of emerging technologies, including Gate Technologies, that made “about half the world’s data storage,” he said. He recalled the 2005 collision of the attack submarine USS San Francisco with an uncharted seamount and how the incident highlighted the dearth of knowledge about the world’s seabeds.

“There was just a huge gap in our understanding of that environment,” he said. “That stuck with me ... and gave me the opportunity to do something special.”

“We’re trying to drastically reduce human cognitive load with respect to high-resolution seabed data,” Wolfel said. “The amount of human involvement that occurs throughout that ocean operating system between data acquisition, data processing; before we built Absolute Ocean, we were keeping data on hard disk drives and FedExing it around the world, or hand carrying them. We have to be able to reduce human in the loop, human on the loop with respect to that entire ecosystem,” referring to the ocean’s 310 billion square kilometers of seabed.

Coast Guard, Navy Interdict

Suspected Drug Vessel off Haiti



Haitian National Police members inspect interdicted drugs following a drug interdiction off Haiti, May 3, 2026. At the behest of the Haitian government, a U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment deployed on the USS Billings stopped a suspected drug vessel carrying approximately 3,200 pounds of marijuana. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

From U.S. Coast Guard Southeast District

MIAMI – A Coast Guard Cutter Venturous law enforcement boarding team and a USS Billings helicopter crew stopped a suspected drug smuggling vessel, Thursday, approximately 8 miles off Mole Saint-Nicolas, Haiti.

With the permission of the Haitian government, the boarding team's investigation resulted in approximately 3,200 pounds of marijuana being found, worth approximately \$3.8 million, and one person was detained. The contraband and suspected smuggler were transferred to Haitian authorities, Sunday.

"In close coordination with the Haitian government, the U.S. Coast Guard remains steadfast in our shared mission to safeguard the maritime approaches of the Caribbean," said Lt.

Cmdr. Cory Arsenault, the Coast Guard liaison officer for Haiti. "Together, we are strengthening joint operations to disrupt the illegal flow of narcotics, protect vulnerable communities, and uphold the security and stability of the region. Our partnership reflects a continued commitment to collaboration, vigilance, and the rule of law."

The following assets and crews were involved in the interdiction operations:

- [Coast Guard Cutter Venturous](#)

- [USS Billings](#)

- U.S. Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team South, LEDET 405

- Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 48, Detachment 3

- [Joint Interagency Task Force South](#)

- [Coast Guard Southeast District watchstanders](#)

80% of interdictions of U.S.-bound drugs occur at sea. This underscores the importance of maritime interdiction in combatting the flow of illegal narcotics and protecting American communities from this deadly threat. Detecting and interdicting illicit drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. Joint Interagency Task Force South, in Key West, conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once an interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins,

and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard for the interdiction and apprehension phases. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard Southeast District, headquartered in Miami.

Master Boat Builders Recently Began Module Fabrication for U.S. Navy T-ATS Program



A rendering of a forthcoming U.S. Navy Towing, Salvage, And Rescue Ship. Photo courtesy of Master Boat Builders.

Marks production milestone in Gulf Coast partnership with Austal USA to strengthen naval shipbuilding capacity

From Master Boat Builders Inc.

CODEN, Ala. – Master Boat Builders, Inc. (“Master Boat”) recently [announced](#) the commencement of module fabrication for the U.S. Navy’s Navajo-class Towing, Salvage,

and Rescue Ship (T-ATS) program under its partnership with Austal USA. The start of fabrication marks a significant milestone as Master Boat advances its role in the Navy's effort to strengthen and diversify the domestic shipbuilding industrial base.

"Starting fabrication on these modules is an exciting and proud moment for our team," said Garrett Rice, President of Master Boat Builders. "We said we were ready to take on complex Navy work, and now we're proving it. This is exactly the kind of program that showcases what Gulf Coast shipbuilders can do."

Master Boat is fabricating two T-ATS hull modules at its Coden shipyard, located approximately 30 minutes from Austal USA's Mobile facility. Upon completion, the modules will be transported to Austal USA for final erection and outfitting.

The T-ATS program is designed to replace the aging fleet of ocean tugs and rescue and salvage ships with a modern, multi-mission platform capable of open-ocean towing, salvage and recovery operations, diving support, and humanitarian and disaster response. Master Boat's participation in the program also supports workforce development and strengthens regional shipbuilding capacity along the Gulf Coast, where the company currently employs more than 400 people at its Coden shipyard.

FRCE Reaches Milestone with Global TransPark Lease Agreement

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An artist rendering shows the planned completion of the Fleet Readiness Center East (FRCE) C-130 maintenance complex at the North Carolina Global TransPark in Kinston. The project hit a major milestone April 15 when the Navy officially signed a lease agreement for the property with the state of North Carolina, marking the first partnership of this type in the Department of War. *(Photo illustration)*

From Fleet Readiness Center East , May 4, 2026

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. – The new Fleet Readiness Center East (FRCE) aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul facility at the North Carolina Global TransPark in Kinston hit another milestone April 15 when the Navy officially signed a lease agreement for the property.

The agreement with the state of North Carolina provides FRCE with 65 acres at the Global TransPark, paving the way for the command's maintenance support of Navy and Marine Corps C/KC-130 Hercules/Super Hercules transport aircraft and Air Force HH-60W Jolly Green II search and rescue helicopters, scheduled to begin in September.

“This historic initiative will increase the nation’s depot capacity for both the C-130 and HH-60W aircraft, significantly enhancing fleet readiness, while simultaneously creating hundreds of highly skilled technical jobs, providing a major economic boost to eastern North Carolina,” said FRCE Commanding Officer Capt. Randy J. Berti.

“We’re also anticipating that our team – working in this new, state-of-the-art facility – will provide unprecedented efficiency due to the thoughtful flow and design,” Berti continued.

The partnership between the Navy and the state of North Carolina is the first of its kind within the Department of War and represents an innovative collaboration. The idea for the project originated more than six years ago to address both the need for a C-130 maintenance facility on the east coast, and the lack of adequate space for such a facility.

In 2023, state lawmakers approved \$350 million in funding for Global TransPark to conduct site improvements to accommodate the 750,000-square-foot FRCE facility. The Navy will operate the depot under a long-term lease executed by Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC). The arrangement resulted in an estimated \$700 million cost avoidance for the U.S. government and cut the construction timeline by more than 50%.

“The acquisition strategy we executed in partnership with the State of North Carolina is just one example of how NAVFAC is delivering warfighting infrastructure in new and innovative ways while saving millions of dollars and shaving years off the delivery schedule,” said NAVFAC Commander Rear Adm. Jeff Kilian. “We know that traditional military construction isn’t always the best solution. At FRCE, we addressed a critical C-130 infrastructure gap on the east coast by combining unique authorities made available by Congress for real estate leases and intergovernmental support

agreements.”

The Navy-North Carolina partnership is pioneering in its approach, Berti noted.

“This collaboration could serve as a repeatable, scalable model for future infrastructure projects across the Department of War, demonstrating how federal and state entities can partner to deliver critical capabilities faster and more cost-effectively,” he explained. “This groundbreaking solution could be a true game changer in the way the organic industrial base provides support to the warfighter.”

Along with enhanced aviation readiness for the nation’s warfighters, leaders anticipate the facility will bring growth to eastern North Carolina in the form of jobs and economic impact.

“The long-term agreement will bring economic prosperity to eastern North Carolina and support our nation’s military readiness,” North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein said in an official release. “North Carolina’s strong defense and aviation tradition and world-class workforce make this announcement a perfect partnership.”

FRCE is North Carolina’s largest maintenance, repair, overhaul and technical services provider, with more than 3,600 civilian, military and contract workers. Its annual revenue exceeds \$865 million. The depot provides service to the fleet while functioning as an integral part of the greater U.S. Navy; Naval Air Systems Command; and Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers.