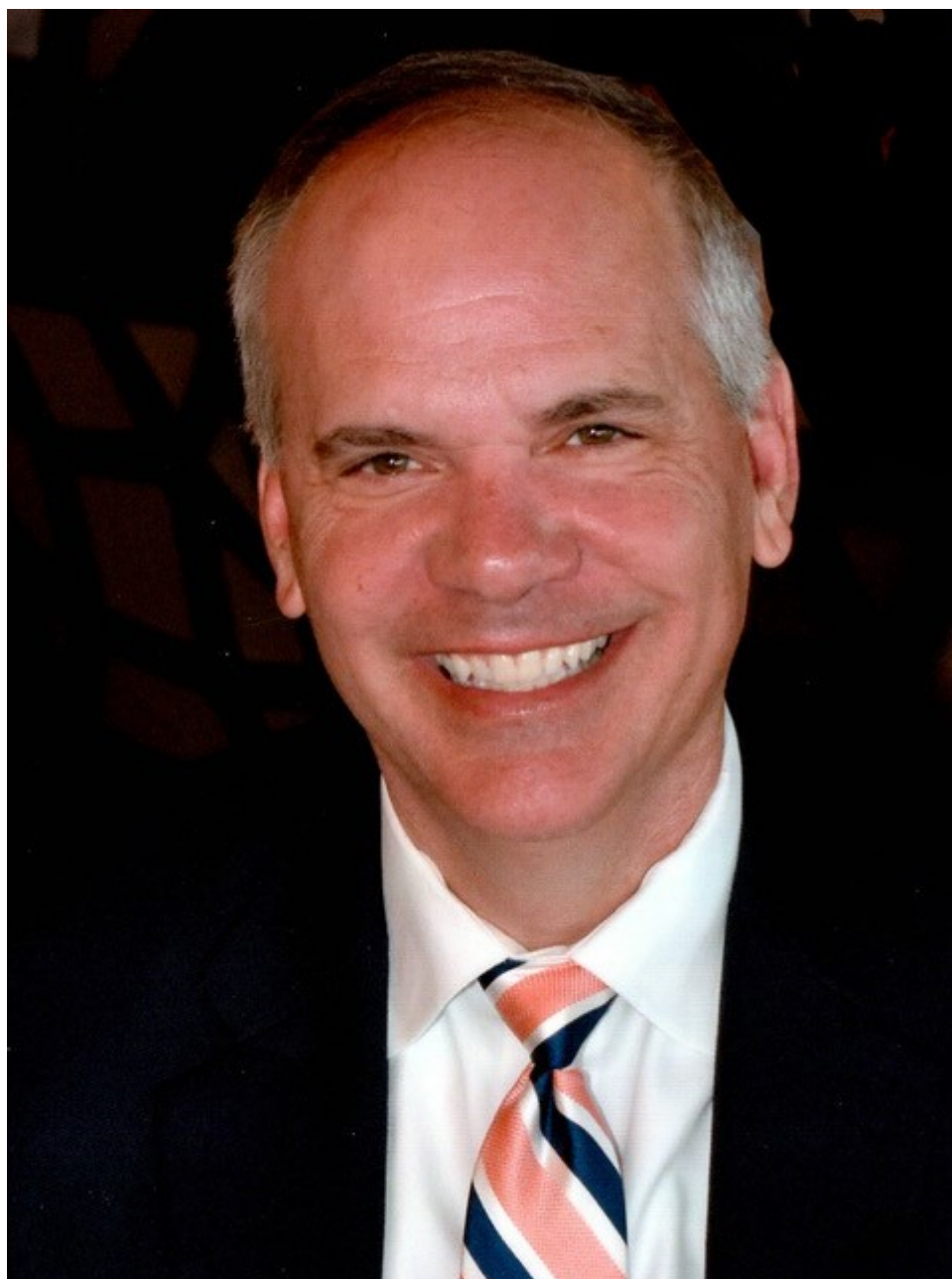


Shipbuilders Council of America Names Frank Collins Senior Defense Advisor



Frank Collins was named senior defense advisor for the Shipbuilders Council of America, the association announced in a Dec. 2 release. *SHIPBUILDERS COUNCIL OF AMERICA*

WASHINGTON — The Shipbuilders Council of America (SCA), the national association representing the U.S. shipbuilding, maintenance and repair industry, selected Frank Collins as senior defense advisor, overseeing the organization's national

ship repair and security, as well as the industry workforce development and education initiatives, SCA said in a Dec. 2 release.

Frank Collins is an accomplished strategic business consultant with over 36 years of public and private sector experience in the ship repair industry. Collins served as chief executive officer of United States Marine Preservation, was a principal government relations representative for Ship Repair at BAE Systems Ship Repair, and was senior vice president at the United States Marine Repair, where he sat on the Executive Operating Committee. Collins also served as a vice president of the Carlyle Management Group (CMG), and previously spent 13 years working on Capitol Hill as a chief of staff for a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and as district director for a Member who served on and later chaired the House Armed Services Committee.

“Now more than ever, it is critical that our armed forces have the vessels they need to complete their missions safely and effectively, and SCA will play a critical role in ensuring our U.S. yards are delivering for the country. I am excited to join the dynamic SCA team, and work closely with shipyards across the U.S. on these important issues,” said Mr. Collins.

“Continued geopolitical issues have demonstrated the need for the U.S. to build and maintain a strong maritime fleet in times of conflict and in times of peace. Frank’s nearly four decades of experience working in Naval operations and national security policy will be critical in advocating on behalf of our industry,” said SCA President Matthew Paxton. “We are honored for Frank to come aboard the SCA team and provide his unique insight on national ship repair and workforce development.”

Capt. Joe O’Conor (ret.), the current senior defense advisor for SCA, is retiring from his position after serving at SCA

since 2017.

“We are tremendously excited to welcome Frank to our association and his decades of expertise – from both the private and public sector – that will serve our more than 82 shipyards and 87 partner organizations,” said SCA Chairman and President of Bollinger Shipyards, Ben Bordelon. “As we welcome Frank, our entire SCA board of directors and members from coast to coast will also miss the knowledge, advice and friendship of Joe O’Conor. On behalf of the entire Association, we thank Joe for his years of dedicated service to the nation and to our industry, and we offer our deepest well wishes as he sets sail on his next voyage into retirement.

Mr. Paxton continued the well wishes for retirement to Captain O’Conor, saying, “Joe has been a tremendous leader, colleague and friend throughout his dedicated service in the Navy and as a public and civil servant. We will miss his leadership in our association, but we hope Joe enjoys fair winds and following seas in his retirement.”

Throughout his distinguished career, Captain O’Conor served a wide range of duty assignments in the Navy including commanding the USS O’Bannon (DD-987) and pre-commissioning Executive Officer of USS Monterey (CG 61), among numerous high-level operations of other ships and staff. He also served several tours in Washington, DC as Chief of Naval Operations Staff in the Pentagon as well as a Congressional Liaison Officer for the Navy on Capitol Hill.

Vigor Begins Maintenance Work on Destroyer USS John Paul Jones



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) arrives to its new homeport at Naval Station Everett, Washington, Aug. 23, 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Aranza Valdez*
SEATTLE, Wash. – Vigor, a Titan company, has been awarded a \$131 million U.S. Navy contract to complete a docking selected restricted availability (DSRA) on USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) at Harbor Island in Seattle, the company said in a Dec. 1 release. The ship arrived at Harbor Island on Nov. 4, becoming the fourth U.S. Navy vessel currently undergoing maintenance at the Seattle shipyard.

“We are excited to welcome USS John Paul Jones to Harbor Island, where our skilled workers will offer excellent service

in support of the U.S. Navy,” said Adam Beck, executive vice president of Ship Repair at Vigor. “Vigor is proud to have built a reputation of completing challenging availabilities safely and with excellent quality. We are grateful the Navy continues to choose our shipyards for this critical work.”

The DSRA will consist of underwater hull preservation, propulsion overhaul, structural work, valve overhaul, sonar work, deck preservation and significant modifications and alterations. The project will employ more than 600 skilled workers during its year-long stay at Harbor Island.

In addition to USS John Paul Jones, USS Chosin (CG 65), USS Omaha (LCS 12) and USS Cape St. George (CG 71) are currently undergoing maintenance at Harbor Island. This is the first time since Vigor began operating the Harbor Island shipyard in 2011 that four U.S. Navy ships have been onsite undergoing maintenance concurrently. Additionally, USS Tulsa (LCS 16) has recently arrived at Vigor’s Swan Island shipyard in Portland, Oregon, while work commenced earlier this year on USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

“Vigor’s deep relationship with the U.S. Navy supports hundreds of jobs across the Pacific Northwest, Alaska and Hawaii,” Beck said. “We are grateful for the continued opportunity to support our national defense, and our skilled workers look forward to showing our standard of excellence in our work. Not only do Vigor employees consistently perform tremendous work, they do so while making Vigor shipyards among the safest in the industry.”

Marine Corps Adds Cherry Point Squadron to F-35B Operators



A U.S. Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier assigned to Marine Attack Squadron 542 flies over Bodo, Norway during Fjord Fury, June 6, 2018. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Jailine L. Martinez*
ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corp is converting another AV-8B Harrier II attack squadron to F-35B Lightning II strike fighters, the first F-3B fleet squadron to be based on the East Coast.

Marine Attack Squadron 542 (VMA-542) – the Tigers – was re-designated Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 542 (VMFA-542) in ceremonies held at the squadron's base at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, as it retires its last Harriers in favor of the Lightning II. The squadron is scheduled to be operational with its F-35Bs by next summer.

VMA-542's last detachment of Harriers deployed to the Baltic Sea in 2022 on board USS Kearsarge and operated for a period from Estonia in during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

With the transition of VMFA-542, the only two AV-8B squadrons, VMA-223 and VMA-231, both based at Cherry Point, will remain flying in the Marine Corps. The last AV-8Bs are scheduled for retirement in fiscal 2027.

VMA-542 activated in March 1942 during World War as Marine Night Fighter Squadron 542 and flew its F6F-3N Hellcats in combat in the Pacific, including the Battle of Okinawa. In 1948, the squadron was re-designated Marine All-Weather Fighter Squadron 542 and was equipped with F7F-3N/4N Tigercat fighters, which the squadron flew in the Korean War. In 1951, the squadron returned to the United States for transition to the F3D-2 Skyknight jet night fighter. In 1958 the squadron switched to the F4D-1 Skyray fighter.

In 1963, the squadron was redesignated VMFA-542 as it upgraded to the F-4B Phantom II. From July 15 until January 1970, the Tigers flew combat missions over Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The squadron was de-activated on June 30, 1970, but re-activated on Jan. 12, 1972, as the second AV-8A Harrier squadron. In May 1986, the Tigers completed transition to the AV-8B Harrier II.

With the Harrier II, VMA-542 participated in combat operations such as Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Southwest Asia, Operation Noble Anvil in Kosovo, Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya, Operation Odyssey Lightning in Libya, Operation Inherent Resolve in Afghanistan, as well as deployments in support of multiple Marine Expeditionary Units, according to [1st Lt. Hudson Sadler](#) of the [2nd Marine Aircraft Wing](#).

HII Delivers Destroyer Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee to U.S. Navy



Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee *HII*

PASCAGOULA, Miss. – HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division delivered the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee (DDG 123) to the U.S. Navy Dec. 1, the company said in a release. Delivery of DDG 123 represents the official transfer of the ship from the shipbuilder to the Navy.

"Delivering an incredibly capable finished ship to the Navy is always an important event for our Ingalls team," said Kari Wilkinson, president of Ingalls Shipbuilding. "We are absolutely committed to the work that we do for our customers,

communities and country.”

Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee is the 34th Arleigh Burke-class destroyer Ingalls has delivered to the Navy and will be the final Flight IIA ship built at Ingalls as the Navy transitions to Flight III destroyers. Ingalls currently has in production the future Arleigh Burke-class Flight III destroyers Jack H. Lucas (DDG 125), Ted Stevens (DDG 128), Jeremiah Denton (DDG 129) and George M. Neal (DDG 131).

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are highly capable, multi-mission ships that can conduct a variety of operations, from peacetime presence and crisis management to sea control and power projection, all in support of the national defense strategy. Guided missile destroyers are capable of simultaneously fighting air, surface and subsurface battles. These ships contain a myriad of offensive and defensive weapons designed to support maritime defense needs well into the 21st century.

DDG 123 is named to honor Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee, a Navy nurse and first woman to receive the Navy Cross for her heroic actions during World War I. Higbee joined the Navy in October 1908 as part of the newly established Navy Nurse Corps, a group of women who would become known as “The Sacred Twenty,” and became the second superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps in January 1911. The ship’s motto truly reflects the heritage of this naval hero – *Bellatrix illa*, meaning “she is a warrior.”

Amphibious Assault Ship USS

Tripoli Returns Home from Maiden Deployment



Amphibious assault carrier USS Tripoli (LHA 7) transits San Diego Harbor as the ship returns to homeport, Nov. 29, 2022. Tripoli returned to Naval Base San Diego following its initial deployment to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleets in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. *U.S. NAVY / Mass communication Specialist 2nd Class Brett McMinoway*

SAN DIEGO – USS Tripoli's deployment to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations was particularly significant for its diplomatic and military engagements with regional partners and Allies, as well as successful integration with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) to support maritime security operations, theater security cooperation, crisis response and maintaining a forward Navy-Marine Corps presence, Expeditionary Strike Group Three said in a Nov. 30 release.

“I am proud of Tripoli for a successful first deployment,” said Rear Adm. James Kirk, commander, Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 3. “The ship and crew are on the leading edge, setting the example and testing the limits of the assault ship. LHAs are designed to support the future of the Marine Corps Air Combat Element, and Tripoli has done just that. I am excited to see what else they can bring to the fight.”

The U.S. Marine Corps embarked 16 F-35Bs aboard Tripoli, which flew missions in support of exercises Valiant Shield 22 and Noble Fusion. The Navy and Marine Corps team seamlessly integrated to complete training and certification exercises before joining the Armed Forces of the Philippines for bilateral exercise Kamandag 2022. Overall, the crew completed 2,052 hours of flight operations and traveled 40,303 nautical miles during exercise support. Tripoli operated alongside other partners and Allies throughout the Indo-Pacific during the deployment, including Japan and the Republic of Singapore. Port calls included stops in Tasmania, Australia, Japan, Singapore and the Philippines.

“The Sailors and Marines aboard Tripoli went above and beyond during this deployment to demonstrate the unique capabilities of this ship,” said Capt. John C. Kiefaber, Tripoli’s commanding officer. “Whether it was launching and recovering aircraft at night, acting as a base of operations for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit to conduct operations ashore or serving as an instrument of diplomacy to our ally and partner nations, the crew performed their duties professionally and demonstrated why they are the Navy’s greatest asset. I couldn’t be more proud.”

During the deployment, 140 Tripoli Sailors advanced to the next highest paygrade. The crew also excelled at earning individual qualifications; more than 167 Sailors earned their Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) qualification, 192 Sailors earned their Enlisted Air Warfare Specialist (EAWS)

qualification and 3 Sailors earned their Enlisted Information Warfare Specialist (EIWS) qualification, a new program for Tripoli. In the Wardroom, 12 officers earned their Surface Warfare Officer qualification, three officers earned their Surface Warfare Supply Corps Officer qualification, two officers earned their Naval Aviation Supply Officer qualification, four officers earned their Surface Warfare Medical Department Officer qualification and 16 officers earned their Officer of the Deck (Underway) qualification.

"A Sailor earning their primary warfare pin is a great way for them to better themselves and it's a milestone in their career, but also it's important Sailors have a deeper understanding of the role that they and their shipmates play in the ship's operations," said Command Master Chief Matthew Logsdon.

Tripoli, an America-class amphibious assault ship, commissioned in July 2020. The ship is homeported in San Diego and operates under ESG 3. Amphibious assault ships provide the ability to operate seamlessly and simultaneously on the sea, ashore and in the air allowing the integration of forces to be distributed more broadly, and increasing operational unpredictability anywhere around the globe by varying our domain, forces and timing.

ESG 3 comprises four amphibious squadrons, 15 amphibious warships and eight naval support elements including approximately 18,000 active-duty and reserve Sailors and Marines. As deputy commander for Amphibious and Littoral Warfare, U.S. 3rd Fleet; Commander, ESG 3 also oversees Mine Countermeasures Group 3 and the 14 littoral combat ships and tow subordinate divisions under Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1. ESG 3 is postured in support of U.S. 3rd Fleet as a globally responsive and scalable naval command element, capable of generating, deploying, and employing naval forces and formations for crisis and contingency response, forward

presence, and major combat operations focusing on amphibious operations, humanitarian and disaster relief and support to defense civil authorities, and expeditionary logistics.

BAE Systems Demonstrates Effectiveness of APKWS Against Agile, High-Speed Military Drones



70mm rockets guided by APKWS guidance kits went 5 for 5 against agile, high-speed Class-2 unmanned aerial systems in testing. *BAE SYSTEMS*

HUDSON, N.H. – BAE Systems completed additional ground-to-air test firings to prove the effectiveness of 70mm rockets guided by [APKWS guidance kits](#) against Class-2 unmanned aerial systems (UAS) that weigh roughly 25-50 pounds and can travel at speeds

exceeding 100 miles per hour, the company said in a Nov. 29 release.

During the demonstration in Southern Arizona, five APKWS-guided counter-UAS rockets were fired from a containerized weapon system and destroyed all targets, including fast-moving drones. The test results further demonstrate APKWS guidance kits' ability to enable low-cost, precision strikes against airborne threats.

"Militarized drones are becoming more prevalent in conflicts around the world, and we're giving our customers an efficient way to counter them without wasting expensive missiles," said Greg Procopio, director of Precision Guidance and Sensing Solutions at BAE Systems. "Our tests demonstrate that APKWS guidance kits have the flexibility to engage a variety of targets to meet the evolving mission needs of the warfighter."

The 70mm rockets can destroy Class-2 aerial drones by combining standard motors and warheads with APKWS guidance kits and proven proximity/point-detonation fuzes. The resulting precision munition is a low-cost, supersonic, lock-on-after-launch strike weapon with a large 10-pound warhead that can destroy large drones in a matter of seconds with or without direct contact.

Combat-proven APKWS-guided rockets are highly effective against a variety of soft and armored stationary and moving targets. They can be fired by many different platforms, including jets, helicopters, trucks, boats and weapon stations, and stowed APKWS guidance kits protect seeker optics from adjacent rocket fire, unlike nose-mounted seeker optics. APKWS guidance kits are the only U.S. government program of record for 70mm laser-guided rockets. The kits are available to all U.S. armed forces, as well as U.S. allies via Foreign Military Sales.

APKWS guidance kits are produced at BAE Systems manufacturing facilities in Hudson, New Hampshire and Austin, Texas.

SeeByte to Extend U.S. Navy Autonomous Systems and Machine Learning Capability



Sailors assigned to the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Charleston (LCS 18) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 5 transport a simulated Mark 18 Mod 2 Kingfish unmanned underwater vehicle during a mine countermeasures exercise. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ryan M. Breeden*

EDINBURGH – SeeByte Ltd, a developer of smart software solutions for uncrewed maritime systems, has been awarded an indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract to

support the U.S. Navy's Mk18 Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle Family of Systems program, the company announced in a Nov. 29 release.

The awarded IDIQ has a total potential value of \$87 million and a duration of up to 10 years. Under this contract, SeeByte will provide engineering, technical support, training and simulation services including upgrades to SeeByte's Mission-Level Autonomy system, Neptune, development of Automatic Target Recognition modules and a bespoke training and simulation toolkit (Unmanned Systems Simulator).

The U.S. Navy uses the Mk18 Mod 1 Swordfish and Mk1 Mod 2 Kingfish UUVs for mine countermeasures.

7th Fleet Cruiser Conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation in South China Sea



Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville conducts routine underway operations in the South China Sea, Nov. 29, 2022. *U.S. NAVY*

SPRATLY ISLANDS, South China Sea – On Nov. 29, 2022, USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands, consistent with international law, U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

At the conclusion of the operation, USS Chancellorsville exited the excessive claim area and continued operations in the South China Sea. The freedom of navigation operation (“FONOP”) upheld the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging restrictions on innocent passage imposed by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Vietnam and Taiwan.

Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade, and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for

South China Sea littoral nations.

USS Chancellorsville conducted this FONOP in accordance with international law and then continued on to conduct normal operations in waters where high seas freedoms apply. The operation reflects continued commitment to uphold freedom of navigation and lawful uses of the sea as a principle. The United States is defending every nation's right to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows, as USS Chancellorsville did here.

The PLA Southern Theater Command's statement about the operation is the latest in a long string of PRC actions to misrepresent lawful U.S. maritime operations and assert its excessive and illegitimate maritime claims at the expense of its Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea. The PRC's behaviors stands in contrast to the United States' adherence to international law and our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. All nations, large and small, should be secure in their sovereignty, free from coercion, and able to pursue economic growth consistent with accepted international rules and norms.

The PRC's statement about this mission is false.

The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant. Customary international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention provides for certain rights and freedoms and other lawful uses of the sea to all nations. The international community has an enduring role in preserving the freedom of the seas, which is critical to global security, stability and prosperity.

The United States upholds freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle. As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to

defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all. No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms.

The PRC, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines each claim sovereignty over some or all of the Spratly Islands. The PRC, Vietnam and Taiwan purport to require either permission or advance notification before a foreign military vessel engages in “innocent passage” through the territorial sea. Under customary international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention, the ships of all states – including their warships – enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea. International law does not allow for the unilateral imposition of any authorization or advance-notification requirement for innocent passage, so the United States challenged these requirements. By engaging in innocent passage without giving prior notification to or asking permission from any of the claimants, the United States challenged the unlawful restrictions imposed by the PRC, Taiwan and Vietnam. The United States demonstrated that innocent passage is not subject to such restrictions.

U.S. forces operate in the South China Sea on a daily basis, as they have for more than a century. They routinely operate in close coordination with like-minded allies and partners who share our commitment to uphold a free and open international order that promotes security and prosperity. All of our operations are conducted safely, professionally and in accordance with international law. These operations demonstrate that the United States will fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows – regardless of the location of excessive maritime claims and regardless of current events.

Bollinger Shipyards Announces Leadership Changes



Aerial image of Bollinger's shipyard at Lockport, Louisiana. *BOLLINGER SHIPYARDS*

LOCKPORT, La. – Bollinger Shipyards LLC made a number of leadership announcements following the recent acquisition of Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding (BMS) and Bollinger Mississippi Repair (BMR), the company announced in a Nov. 29 release. The announcements reflect leadership changes at BMS and BMR, as well as Bollinger Lockport New Construction and Bollinger Marine Fabricators in order to best align titles and functions across all 14 Bollinger facilities.

"I've always said Bollinger's greatest strength is its people and I believe that wholeheartedly," said Ben Bordelon, president and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. "As we grow and expand, it's important that the leadership team grow and reflect the organization – both where it is today and where we're heading in the future. Today's announcements strengthen our team, provide opportunities for efficiency and enhance

growth within organization. I'm confident that we have the people, skills, capability and dedication to meet the needs of our customers, no matter how big or complex, and provide them with the highest levels of quality, support and service in our industry."

Chris Remont has been named executive vice president and general manager of Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding (BMS). In this role, Chris will oversee the facility's ongoing and future programs and is responsible for execution and delivery. Chris was previously EVP for New Construction Programs at Bollinger.

Bob Merchant has been named vice president of Operational Strategy & Integration. Bob will be responsible for the strategic overview of companywide functional business units. Specifically, he will review performance, synergies and operations plans to ensure support of Bollinger's optimal strategy and best enable future growth and success. Bob previously served as president and CEO of VT Halter Marine. Bob spent most of his career at Ingalls Shipbuilding leading programs critical to both the business and the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard.

While Tim Martinez will remain the executive vice president of Repair for Bollinger, he will now oversee Bollinger Mississippi Repair (BMR).

Geoffrey Green has been named executive vice president of Government and External Affairs, where he will oversee all state and federal government relations, community relations, communications and marketing activities. Geoffrey previously served as vice president for Government Affairs for Bollinger.

Mark Matta has been named director of Program Management for Bollinger Lockport New Construction and Bollinger Marine Fabricators. Mark will be responsible for program execution of

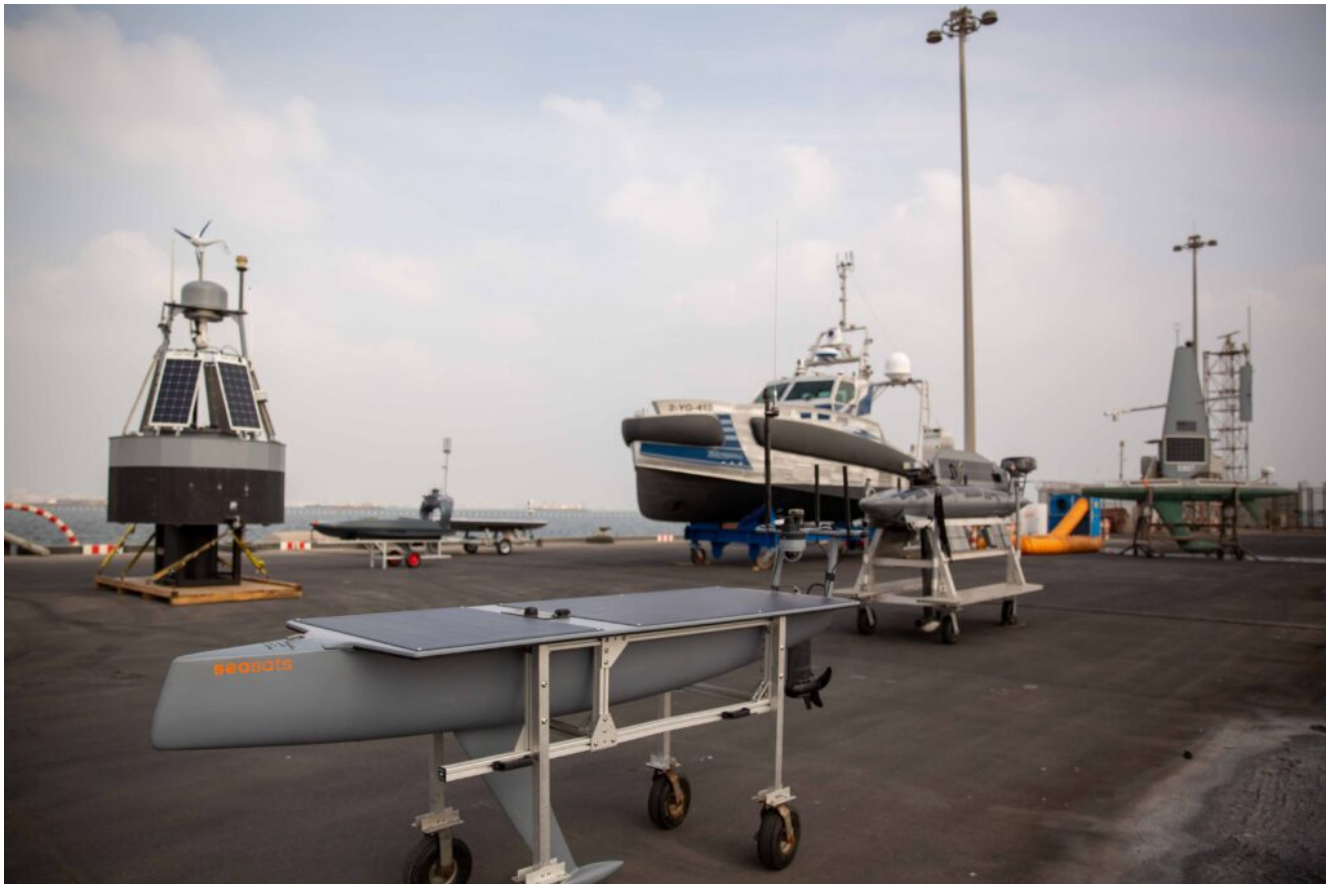
the U.S. Coast Guard Fast Response Cutter (FRC), U.S. Navy Mine Countermeasures Unmanned Surface Vessel (MCM USV) program, as well as multiple projects in support of the U.S. Navy Columbia-class Submarine program.

Jeffrey Gehrmann has been named the general manager of Bollinger Mississippi Repair.

Earlier this month, Bollinger announced the acquisition of Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding and Bollinger Mississippi Repair, formerly VT Halter Marine and STEHMO. The transaction enhances Bollinger's new construction and repair capabilities so that it can better serve its key defense and commercial customers.

Notably, all ongoing programs at VT Halter Marine and STEHMO were conveyed with the transaction, including the Polar Security Cutter program for the U.S. Coast Guard and the Auxiliary Personnel Lighter-Small (APL(S)) program for the U.S. Navy. Those programs will continue to be built at Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding.

U.S. Launches New Unmanned & AI Systems Integration Event



Various unmanned systems sit on display in Manama, Bahrain, Nov. 19, prior to exercise Digital Horizon 2022. The three-week unmanned and artificial intelligence integration event, beginning Nov. 23, will involve employing new platforms in the region for the first time. *U.S. ARMY / Sgt. Brandon Murphy*
MANAMA, Bahrain – U.S. 5th Fleet began a three-week unmanned and artificial intelligence integration event in Bahrain, Nov. 23, that will involve employing new platforms in the region for the first time, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) Public Affairs said in a Nov. 23 release.

The event, called Digital Horizon, will advance the command's efforts to integrate new unmanned technologies while establishing the world's first unmanned surface vessel fleet by end of next summer. U.S. 5th Fleet's efforts are focused on improving what U.S. and regional navies are able to see above, on and below the water.

"I am excited about the direction we are headed," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "By

harnessing these new unmanned technologies and combining them with artificial intelligence, we will enhance regional maritime security and strengthen deterrence. This benefits everybody.”

Cooper established a staff called Task Force 59 in September 2021 to speed new tech integration across U.S. 5th Fleet. Since its launch, the task force has deployed a suite of new unmanned systems from operational hubs in Bahrain and Aqaba, Jordan.

Digital Horizon will include 17 industry partners bringing 15 different types of systems, 10 of which will operate with U.S. 5th Fleet for the first time.

The unmanned aerial vehicles will include two vertical take-off and landing systems, Aeroovel’s Flexrotor and Shield AI’s V-BAT as well as Easy Aerial’s tethered UAV. The unmanned surface vessels will include the Elbit Systems Seagull, Exail DriX, L3Harris Arabian Fox MAST-13, Marine Advanced Robotics WAM-V, MARTAC T-38 Devil Ray, Ocean Aero TRITON, Open Ocean Robotics Data Xplorer, Saildrone Explorer, Seasats X3 and SeaTrac SP-48.

Industry partners Accenture Federal Services and Big Bear AI will also employ data integration and artificial intelligence systems during the event, and Silvus Technologies will provide line-of-sight radio communications while an unmanned surface vessel from Ocious participates from off the coast of Western Australia.

“The pace of innovation is amazing,” said Capt. Michael Brasseur, commander of Task Force 59. “We are challenging our industry partners in one of the most difficult operational environments, and they are responding with enhanced capability, fast. I am extremely proud of the entire team, including our many partners across government, academia, and industry for their commitment to Digital Horizon, as we

discover new capability together.”

Over the past year, Task Force 59 operated USVs in regional waters for more than 25,000 hours, which equates to 12 years of nine-to-five testing five days a week. The Saildrone Explorer USV in particular has operated at sea for as long as 220 consecutive days without refueling or maintenance.

NAVCENT is headquartered in Manama, Bahrain and includes maritime forces operating in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal and Bab al-Mandeb.