

SECNAV: Frigate Delay Due to 'Atrocious' Shipyard Worker Retention



Artist rendering of the future frigate USS Constellation
By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The delay in the program to build the Constellation-class guided-missile frigate (FFG) has been caused by a labor shortage brought on by poor shipyard worker retention, the secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) told a Senate committee, noting that the Navy is trying to rectify the problem by funding retention bonuses for shipyard workers.

Fincantieri's Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin, has a contract to build up to 10 FFGs for the U.S. Navy. Delivery of the first FFG, Constellation, originally was scheduled for 2026, with operational availability in 2029.

With Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa M. Franchetti testifying May 16 before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the ranking member, Roger Wicker, R-Mississippi, delivered in his opening statement a criticism of the Navy's shipbuilding delays noted in the service's 45-day shipbuilding review.

"For example, the Constellation-class frigate will be three years late and will take nearly 10 years to deliver the lead ship," Wicker said. "This is largely because the Navy cannot keep requirements steady. Almost 70 percent of the requirements have changed since the Navy signed a contract, so the outcome we see today is no surprise. This is not an example of the industry underperforming. This is senior officials unable to manage a program. This is acquisition malpractice, and a terrible waste of time and resources."

Del Toro countered that in the case of the frigate program, the delay was the result of a "recruiting and retention problem in Wisconsin."

The SECNAV said that Fincantieri's "retention rate actually last year was atrocious. That is part of the reason why we have actually established up to a three-year delay in the delivery of the Constellation-class frigate. What we're actually trying to do is put positive efforts in place to help Fincantieri get to a better place."

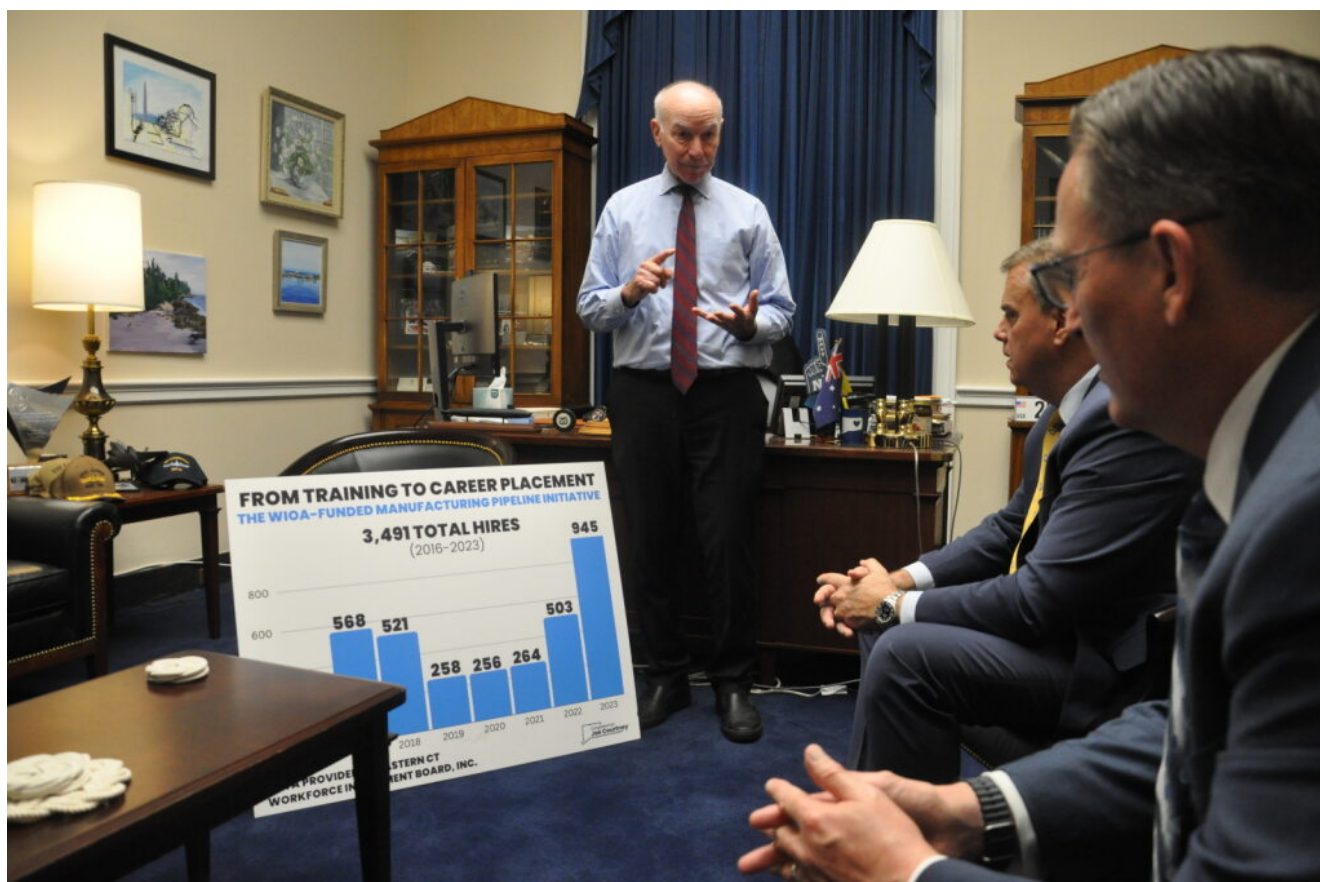
Del Toro said that the Navy was investing \$750 million in the surface industrial base over the Future Years Defense Plan, including funds for Fincantieri.

"In Fincantieri alone we've provided \$100 million in resources to the shipyard so they could provide \$5,000 bonuses to the shipyard workers for the first year if they stayed in place throughout construction of the ship itself," he said.

Franchetti as well said the Navy is committed to helping Fincantieri deliver on the frigate program.

“I just had the opportunity with the secretary [Del Toro] to go up to Marinette and talk with the folks there and [we’re] really committed to supporting them and addressing the workforce challenges that they have,” she said. “The frigate is an absolutely critical ship for our Navy.”

Navy League Congressional Fly-In Makes Successful In-Person Return to Capitol Hill



Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Connecticut) discusses sea service issues with Navy League National President Christopher Townsend and CEO Mike Stevens during the Congressional Fly-In. *James Peterson*

Navy League members from councils around the country visited

the offices of dozens of lawmakers on Capitol Hill on Wednesday as part of the first in-person Congressional Fly-In held since 2019.

They came to discuss the needs of the sea services with members of the House of Representatives and Senate, and to touch base with lawmakers and staff that represent their council regions during more than 100 meetings.

The messages included calling for funding two Virginia-class submarines in fiscal year 2025 and writing a "SHIPS Act," modeled on the CHIPS Act that helped restore microchip manufacturing and production capacity in the United States. The Navy League visitors also called for an annual shipbuilding and conversion budget of at least \$35 billion.



Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia) talks with Christopher Townsend.
James Peterson

The council members also discussed the need to fund the sea services' unfunded priorities, including barracks restoration and modernization for the Marine Corps, icebreakers and new

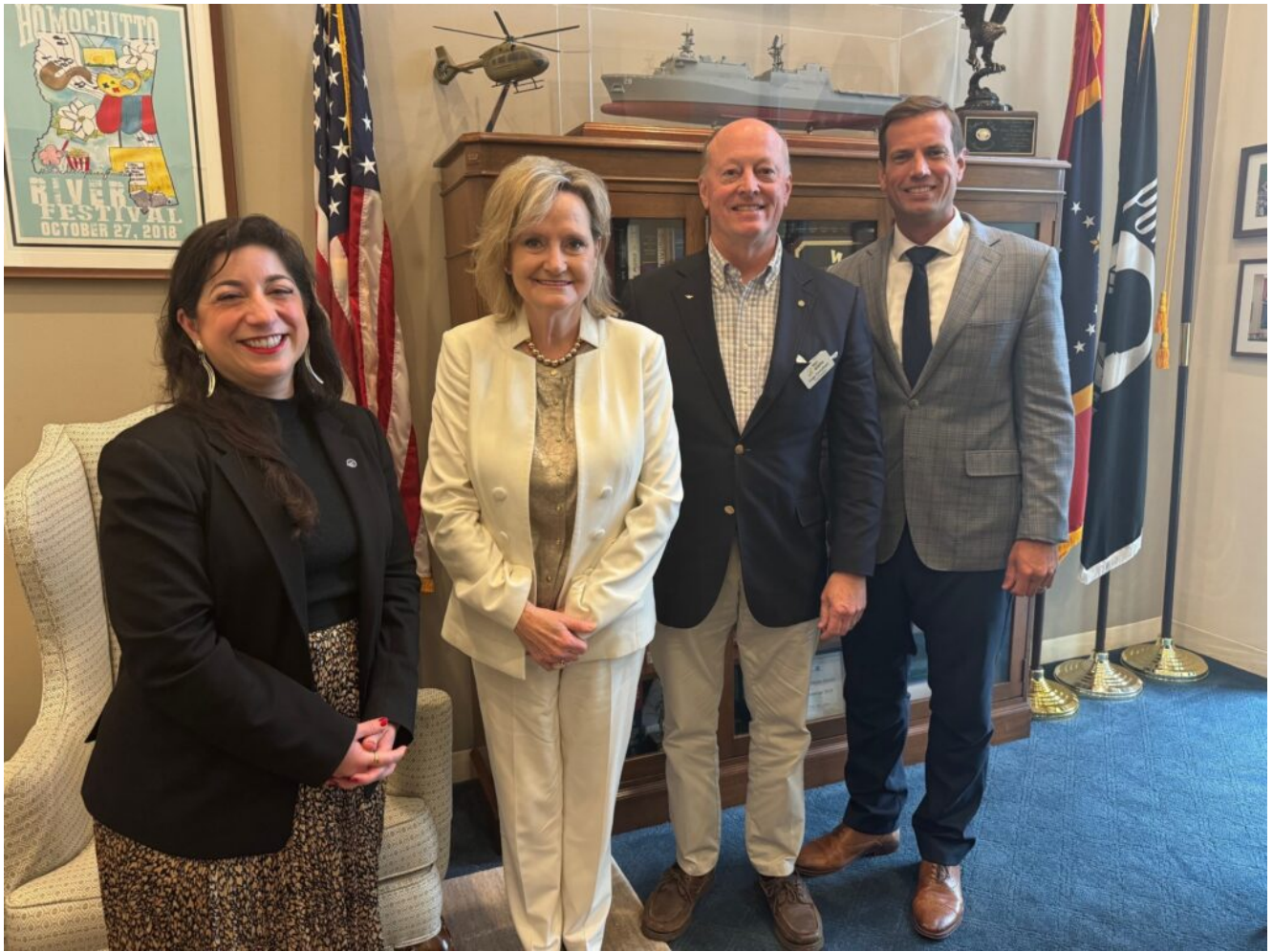
cutters for the Coast Guard and defending the Jones Act for the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine.

They also educated lawmakers and their staffs on the need to create future Sailors, Marines and Mariners by supporting the Sea Cadets, Young Marines and funding for the state Maritime Academies' student incentive programs.

On the eve of the fly-in, the Navy League notched a major victory for its advocacy work as the House Armed Services Committee voted to include funding for a second Virginia-class submarine in its upcoming National Defense Authorization Act markup.

"We had a great time," Sinclair Harris, retired rear admiral and national vice president of the Navy League, said at the end of the day. "We had six visits, one with a member of Congress, the rest were staffers, but all of them were very engaged, they all understood the importance of what the Navy League does and supports and educates and advocates for."

Sara Fuentes, who led a group of council members representing the Southern Region, said, "what makes the Navy League so unique and special is that anyone can get behind our issues because they benefit all Americans. It was a real pleasure to meet with Democrats, to meet with Republicans, all different kinds of offices, inland, coastal, and have them all understand and support our sea services and understand the need to really invest in them."



Members of the Southern Region meet with Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Mississippi), second from left. Sara Fuentes Scott Maguire, a board member of the Portland-Blueback Council, said his team made eight visits to House and Senate members, and “they were very receptive to what we had to say and seemed supportive, so I’m looking forward to their approvals on what we have suggested.”

Merilyn Wong and William Stephens of the Marin County Council said they visited their local representative and convinced him to become a co-sponsor of the Pay Our Coast Guard Parity Act, which ensures Coast Guardsmen are compensated for their work during government shutdowns.

“Every staff person was very receptive, interested in our presentation, wanted to learn a little bit more about it. We kept telling them about the Center for Maritime Strategy, to take advantage of that, something they didn’t really know, so that was helpful,” said Michele Langford, Pacific Central

Region president.

Navy League National President Christopher “Towny” Townsend said “it was a fantastic day. We got to execute one of our primary missions of advocating for our sea services here in person in the halls of Congress.

COVID-19 restrictions put a hold on events like the Congressional Fly-In, but Townsend said it was a good time to come back in person “and spread the Navy League gospel, talk about the needs of the sea services.”

USS Ronald Reagan Departs After 9 years as FDNF-Japan Carrier



TOKYO INLET (May 10, 2024) Sailors stand in formation to form Japanese hiragana characters spelling “dewa mata,” which translates to “see you again,” on the flight deck of the U.S. Navy’s only forward-deployed aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), in the Tokyo Inlet, May 10. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Charlotte Dudenhoeffer).

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Timothy Dimal, May 16, 2024

YOKOSUKA, Japan – The U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, Japanese Government officials and leaders from the U.S. Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) bid farewell to USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) before the ship departed Yokosuka, Japan, for the last time as the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed aircraft carrier, May 16.

Ronald Reagan’s departure from Japan marks the beginning of the ship’s final scheduled Indo-Pacific patrol.

“We have a debate in the United States about who constitutes the 1 percent. The true measure is not in how much wealth you acquire, but in how much you give in service to something

bigger than yourself,” said Emanuel. “So, to the sailors and aviators of the USS Ronald Reagan, who devote their lives to preserving and protecting the freedoms we all enjoy, it is you and your fellow service members who make up America’s true 1 percent. After nine years of deployment to Japan, the USS Ronald Reagan and her 6,000 crew deserve our heartfelt appreciation for their selflessness, their service, and their sacrifice in keeping the Indo-Pacific safe, secure, and stable.”

Departing with Ronald Reagan were the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls (CG 62) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Howard (DDG 83).

“On behalf of the strike group, I want to express my gratitude to the people of Japan and city of Yokosuka. You are our friends, family and our close and trusted allies,” said Rear Adm. Greg Newkirk, commander of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 5. “Our relationship with Japan and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force has never been stronger. Whether it’s aboard USS Ronald Reagan today or USS George Washington in the future, we will continue to strengthen those ties at all levels, on-shore and at-sea.”

As the ship pulled away from the pier and made its final transit through Sagami Bay, hundreds of CSG 5 Sailors manned the rails in their summer dress white uniforms.

Ronald Reagan is scheduled to turn over with USS George Washington (CVN 73), and then transit to Bremerton, Washington, later this year.

“For nearly nine years, thousands of Ronald Reagan Sailors have lived and worked here in Yokosuka, and have deployed throughout the region to uphold the international rule of law and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific along with our

allies and partners,” said Capt. Daryle Cardone, Ronald Reagan’s commanding officer. “And as forward-deployed naval forces, we had the privilege of living in Japan. Japan has been an incredible host and a second home for the crew. And for this, I am very grateful to the Japanese people, the City of Yokosuka, and the Japanese government for their support and for welcoming us as citizens.”

In 2011, while deployed near the Korean Peninsula, Ronald Reagan was heavily involved with the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission during Operation Tomodachi. Following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the ship and its crew was instrumental in refueling JMSDF ships, transporting soldiers and Marines, and providing food, water and supplies to affected communities. In addition, Ronald Reagan’s embarked airborne assets flew reconnaissance missions.

In 2015, Ronald Reagan arrived to Japan as part of an historic tri-carrier hull swap.

In 2021, the Nimitz-class carrier deployed to the Middle East in 2021 to assist in Operation Allies Refuge providing safety and security to more than 7,000 U.S. citizens and evacuees in Afghanistan.

“While the crew and I are sad to bid Japan farewell, the Ronald Reagan’s strong relationships with the JMSDF and rich history with the Japanese people assure me that we shall see each other again,” added Cardone.

CSG 5 is forward-deployed under U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

May 15 U.S. Central Command Update

From U.S. Central Command

May 15, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 9 p.m. (Sanaa time) on May 14, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed four uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) in an Iranian-backed Houthi controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these systems presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.

GA-ASI and USMC Complete MQ-9A WTI Training with SkyTower I Pod



SAN DIEGO – 16 May 2024 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) teamed up to conduct flight training on the operation of the MQ-9A Block 5 Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) for the Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona. The students participated in Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) Course 2-24, which is a comprehensive course designed for select pilots and enlisted aircrew that incorporates Marine Corps planning along with implementation of advanced air and ground tactics.

The seven-week course, which was completed on April 20, 2024, for the first time included the employment of GA-ASI's SkyTower I pod, which is a USMC-specific payload for MQ-9A that provides airborne communication extension capabilities in various waveforms. SkyTower I provides an Airborne Network Extension to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) that is a commercial-quality WiFi network, as well as a relay/repeater function connecting geographically disconnected teams.

"Congratulations to the newest graduates of WTI," said GA-ASI Vice President of DoD Strategic Development Patrick Shortsleeve. "GA-ASI is proud to support the training of the MAWTS-1 aircrews in the use and utility of the MQ-9A platform,

especially now with our SkyTower capabilities.”

The WTI course is renowned for its advanced graduate-level training, particularly in refining tactical skills and strategies for aviation operations. It is an integral part of developing and implementing cutting-edge aviation weapons and tactics, both in terrestrial and maritime settings.

In recent training scenarios, the Marines had the opportunity to hone their skills using a GA-ASI-supplied MQ-9A. The platform provides valuable hands-on experience in operating advanced UAS, enhancing their proficiency in utilizing MQ-9A effectively for various missions.

Graduates of the WTI program are poised to become go-to experts within their squadrons for the employment of MQ-9A Block 5, leveraging their comprehensive training and specialized knowledge. The program ensures that graduates are well-prepared to lead and execute missions utilizing this sophisticated platform with precision and efficiency.

This training is a critical part of the MAGTF Unmanned Expeditionary (MUX) Medium-Altitude, Long-Endurance (MALE) program meeting Full Operational Capability (FOC). GA-ASI is a committed partner in helping the USMC meet this critical program milestone.

GA-ASI has delivered 13 MQ-9A UAS to the USMC so far. The USMC awaits delivery of seven additional aircraft, which will fulfill their goal of three squadrons by 2025.

Airbus Offers Unmanned UH-72 Helicopter for Marine Corps Aerial Logistics



Photo Credit: Airbus

ARLINGTON, Va. – Naval Air Systems Command awarded Airbus U.S. Space & Defense a Phase I Other Transactional Authority Agreement, through Naval Aviation Systems Consortium, in support of the United States Marine Corps Aerial Logistics Connector.

The award is part of a Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) Rapid Prototyping Program which aims to provide the Marine Corps with prototypes to demonstrate the aircraft's capabilities to the warfighter through a series of operational experiments. The Airbus U.S. UH-72 Unmanned Logistics Connector, a variant of the proven Lakota platform, is intended to provide logistical support during expeditionary operations within contested environments.

“Our unmanned UH-72 logistics connector leverages nearly two

decades of U.S. military capability and offers Marines a versatile, affordable and enduring solution to address logistics missions around the globe,” said Rob Geckle, chairman and CEO of Airbus U.S. Space & Defense. “We look forward to supporting the Marine Corps with this latest modernization of the Lakota platform.”

Leidos and Elroy Air to Demonstrate Autonomous Aerial Resupply Drone for U.S. Marine Corps



RESTON, Va. (May 14, 2024) – [Leidos](#) (NYSE:LDOS), a FORTUNE 500 innovation company, and Elroy Air, an autonomous aircraft systems and software development company, have been approved to demonstrate an autonomous Medium Aerial Resupply Vehicle – Expeditionary Logistics (MARV-EL) prototype for the Navy and Marine Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems program office (PMA-263). The flight test activities are scheduled for July 2024. The development and testing are part of a contract awarded last year to develop and demonstrate an uncrewed aircraft system that can autonomously resupply forward-deployed ground forces for the U.S. Marine Corps.

“Leidos is pleased to team with Elroy Air to bring this critical capability to the warfighter,” said Tim Freeman, Leidos senior vice president and Airborne Systems business area manager. “Approval to proceed to test is a major milestone and is the result of months of hard work by the team. We look forward to demonstrating how the Leidos and Elroy Air MARV-EL solution will help deliver a logistics advantage to the Marines and other branches of the military.”

Leidos and Elroy Air are slated to demonstrate Elroy Air’s Chaparral system at the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground in Yuma, Arizona. The Chaparral is a “lift-plus-cruise” hybrid-electric vertical take-off and landing (hVTOL) cargo aircraft. The Chaparral system leverages the benefits of wing-borne flight driven by electric propulsion and turbo-generation for efficient autonomous operations and longer-range missions. It is designed with an advanced carbon composite airframe and modular automated payload capabilities to help reduce the personnel required versus legacy aircraft and enable zero-touch logistics.

“We’re excited to work with Leidos to provide these critical capabilities to U.S. and allied forces,” said Elroy Air CEO and co-founder Dave Merrill. “We’ve been designing Chaparral from the beginning to move cargo and resupply troops in the battlespace without putting crews in harm’s way. We look

forward to demonstrating these capabilities and working toward serving the U.S. Marine Corps' goals for expeditionary logistics."

MARV-EL is a PMA-263 effort designed to provide commanders with a responsive capability to sustain Marine Corps Forces conducting expeditionary advanced base and other distributed operations. MARV-EL, using autonomous operations, should be the "middle-weight" unmanned logistics asset, providing combat sustainment to Marines when ground or manned aviation assets are unavailable due to threat, terrain, weather, or competing priorities.

High School Seniors Sign for Careers at HII's Newport News Shipbuilding



NEWPORT NEWS, Va., May 10, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII’s (NYSE: HII) Newport News Shipbuilding division is welcoming more than three dozen graduating high school seniors to careers in shipbuilding. The shipyard held a signing day at The Newport News Shipbuilding Apprentice School Wednesday and participated in the New Horizons Regional Education Centers (NHREC) Good Life Solution Program’s Career Selection Day on Thursday.

A total of 38 students accepted employment offers from NNS: 15 who will begin full-time trade positions within the shipyard and 23 who will attend The Apprentice School. Funded by HII to train and develop the next generation of shipbuilders, The Apprentice School offers four- to eight-year, tuition-free apprenticeships in 19 trades and eight optional advanced programs, to include accredited undergraduate degrees in engineering.

Wednesday’s event, in partnership with the Department of Labor in celebration of National Youth Apprenticeship Week (YAW), recognized students who have completed one of several workforce development programs at The Apprentice School: the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, Youth Builders, Good Life Solutions, and Apprentice Accelerated (APX).

The Thursday event recognized additional students in The Good Life Solution Program, which is a collection of partnerships between NHREC and local employers looking to improve the way they recruit, hire, train and retain entry-level new hires out of high school. The program has a one-year retention rate of 80%.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-signing-day-newport-news-shipbuilding-2024/>.

“It is an exciting time to embark on a career in

shipbuilding,” said Xavier Beale, NNS vice president of human resources. “These students will not only build the highest-quality aircraft carriers and submarines for the U.S. Navy, they are also building a meaningful career. We are thrilled to have them join our ranks in a calling to serve our nation as only shipbuilders can.”

NNS plans to hire approximately 3,000 skilled trade positions this year to meet the shipbuilding needs of the U.S. Navy. The shipyard anticipates hiring nearly 19,000 trades people within the next decade.

To learn more about the Good Life Solution Program, visit nhrec.org/gls.

For more information about careers at Newport News Shipbuilding visit, hii.com/careers.

U.S., Japan, Korea Coast Guards Sign Trilateral Agreement to Increase Maritime Cooperation



Mr. Kishimori Hajime, deputy Consul General of Japan (left), Japan coast guard Vice Adm. Watanabe Yasunori, Japan coast guard vice commandant for operations, U.S. Coast Guard Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, and Hyunchul Kang, deputy Consul General of the Republic of Korea, pose with a signed trilateral agreement at Coast Guard Island, Alameda, Calif., May 9, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Master Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest)

U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, May 12, 2024

ALAMEDA, Calif – U.S. Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard and Korea Coast Guard representatives displayed continued commitment to enhance maritime expertise and promote regional cooperation by signing a trilateral letter of intent, Thursday.

This agreement aligns trilateral cooperation between Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States to include capacity-building efforts to Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Pacific Island countries. The letter of intent advances a joint statement between the three nations' leaders, which was held at Camp David in August 2023.

U.S. Coast Guard Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, met Japan Coast Guard Vice Adm. Watanabe Yasunori, Japan Coast Guard Vice Commandant for Operations, to finalize a trilateral letter of intent, which was previously signed by Korea Coast Guard Oh Sang Kwon, Deputy Commissioner of the Korea Coast Guard. Oh signed the letter of intent in April with the understanding that the agreement would be finalized upon Watanabe's May visit to U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area command.

Mr. Hyunchul Kang, Deputy Consul General of the Republic of Korea, attended the trilateral signing on behalf of the Korea coast guard, and Mr. Kishimori Hajime, Deputy Consul General of Japan, presented brief remarks as well.

"This trilateral agreement between U.S., Japan and Korea Coast Guards is the lynchpin that will drive our coast guards to work together to advance maritime safety, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific," said Tiongson. "It will enhance our multilateral operations with each other, as well as other trusted partners in the region."

The agreement specifically recognizes the important of efforts to conserve maritime resources, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and search and rescue response efforts.

May 13 Red Sea Update

From U.S. Central Command

May 13, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 3:41 p.m. (Sanaa time) on May 13, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully

destroyed one uncrewed aerial system (UAS) in an Iranian-backed Houthi controlled area of Yemen.

Later, between approximately 5:51 p.m. and 6:02 p.m. (Sanaa time), USS Mason (DDG 87) successfully engaged and destroyed one inbound anti-ship ballistic missile launched by Iranian-backed Houthis from Yemen over the Red Sea. Additionally, USCENTCOM forces destroyed one UAS launched by Iranian-backed Houthis from Yemen over the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damages reported by U.S., coalition, or merchant vessels.

It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels.