

Kongsberg Maritime to Supply Propulsion Systems for Coast Guard's OPC



A rendering of the Offshore Patrol Cutter. *Kongsberg Maritime* Kongsberg Maritime has been selected by Austal USA to supply its Promas propulsion system to the latest ship in the United States Coast Guard's new Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) Heritage Class program.

This initial contract is to supply Kongsberg Maritime equipment for the fifth ship, Coast Guard Cutter Pickering, which is the first to be built by Austal USA at their yard in Mobile, Alabama.

The Coast Guard's new OPC program represents a significant investment in maritime capability and is expected to run up to 25 ships. The new vessels will replace the Coast Guard's

medium endurance cutters and meet the need for long-term offshore capability to maintain current and future mission effectiveness.

Promas combines rudder and controllable pitch propeller into one propulsion system which optimizes the hydrodynamic properties of the ship and delivers increased efficiency and thrust while using less energy. For the OPC, as well as twin Promas, Kongsberg Maritime is contracted to supply steering gear, rudders, fin stabilizers and tunnel thrusters.

Björn ten Eicken, Kongsberg Maritime, Vice President – Naval, said: “Kongsberg Maritime has a proud history of supplying mission critical technology to United States Coast Guard programs.

“We have supplied our propulsion systems for naval and governmental forces for more than 80 years, and we’re delighted to have developed an efficient and effective system specifically suited to the challenging and varied operations of these new ships. Our Promas systems typically deliver efficiency savings of around 6%, so vessels are able to extend their range, something which can be crucial on longer missions.

“We’re looking forward to working with the Coast Guard and Austal USA on delivering these highly capable ships.”

The OPC vessels will be able to provide long range patrol capability. At 360 feet long, they will have a displacement of 3,700 long tons, maximum speed of 22.2 knots, and a range of 9,050 nautical miles at 14 knots.

HII Delivers Amphibious Transport Dock Richard M. McCool Jr. to U.S. Navy



HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division delivered amphibious transport dock Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) to the U.S. Navy on April 11. Pictured from left to right are SUPSHIP Gulf Coast's LPD Program Manager Representative Cmdr. James R. Wilkins IV, Ingalls Shipbuilding's LPD Program Manager Davianne Stokes, and Prospective Commanding Officer for Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) Capt. Jeffrey D. Baker. *HII PASCAGOULA*, Mississippi – HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division announced the delivery of amphibious transport dock Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) to the U.S. Navy.

Richard M. McCool Jr. is the 13th San Antonio-class ship delivered by Ingalls and is the final Flight I transition ship before Ingalls moves into production of the LPD Flight II line.

“The LPD 29 delivery demonstrates how our shipbuilders are

enabling our combined Navy and Marine Corps team,” said Kari Wilkinson, president of Ingalls Shipbuilding. “It is the most recent example of what U.S. industry and government partnerships can accomplish by putting another player on the field. We will now bring the full weight of this collaborative team to bear on steady-state Flight II execution going forward.”

Ingalls has two Flight II LPDs under construction including Harrisburg (LPD 30) and Pittsburgh (LPD 31). In March 2023, Ingalls was awarded a modification to the contract for the procurement of the detail design and construction of Philadelphia (LPD 32), the 16th ship in the San Antonio class and the third LPD Flight II.

The San Antonio class is foundational to the U.S. Marine Corp’s Force Design construct and can support a variety of crisis response, special operations and expeditionary warfare missions. LPDs can operate independently or as part of amphibious readiness groups, expeditionary strike groups, or joint task forces. These capabilities allow the U.S. Navy to protect America’s security abroad and promote regional stability and preserve future peace.

Navy Strives to Realize its Vision for Greater Use of Unmanned Systems



A full-size prototype of Manta Ray, a new class of uncrewed underwater vehicle, is assembled in Northrop Grumman's Annapolis facility. *Northrop Grumman*

Unmanned systems are increasingly part of maritime defense, but integrating remote air, surface and undersea capabilities into fields of operation requires new thinking and a whole lot of trust, military leaders and experts said at Sea-Air-Space 2024.

"In force fleet, we really try to move from experiments to operationalizing," said Rear Admiral James Aiken, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and commander, U.S. 4th Fleet. "And then we also want to go from the tactical – from those simple functions that we talk about – to the operational."

Aiken spoke at a panel of senior and retired military leaders from the Navy, Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard and private industry.

Moderating the panel was Bryan Clark, senior fellow and

director at the Hudson Institute, a naval operations expert and co-author of the study, “Unalone and Unafraid: A Plan for Integrating Uncrewed and Other Emerging Technologies into US Military Forces.”

Clark and co-author Dan Patt argued in the paper the Navy could use “AI-enabled uncrewed vehicles” to gain and sustain operational advantage against a great-power rival like China. “The ability of uncrewed systems to provide resilience and adaptability depends on scale,” Clark and Patt wrote in the paper, published last year.

The Navy described its vision for integrating unmanned aerial systems, ships and undersea vehicles into the fleet and fleet marine force in the “Advantage at Sea” strategy and the follow-on “Unmanned Campaign Framework,” released in 2001. But, as a 2022 U.S. Naval Institute article argued, Congress is unlikely to fund these vehicles unless the Navy develops a more complete conception of their use across conflicts.

That work is ongoing, panel speakers indicated.

Rear Admiral Kevin Smith, Program Executive Officer of Unmanned and Small Combatants with Naval Sea Systems Command, said his office is supporting Navy efforts by designing, developing, building and modernizing unmanned systems. These include unmanned maritime systems and mine and expeditionary warfare systems. Areas of study and experimentation focus on mechanical and electrical systems, autonomy, interoperability and more.

“Obviously a lot of data is being gathered,” Smith said, which can be used to improve the systems and define their requirements for acquisition. And this applies to large unmanned system as well as medium and small systems.

“Taking the Sailor out of harm’s way isn’t very important – it’s paramount,” Smith said.

Aiken said getting these tools more quickly into a battlefield environment requires less testing and more operations. He said this has involved “putting unmanned vessels into the hands of operators” and “testing our assumptions” on how the Navy deploys, positions and otherwise uses them.

Aiken said the goal is to combine manned and unmanned systems, and to stack unmanned systems, “which I call the Reese’s effect, where we’re putting peanut butter and chocolate together,” he said. He cited the use of unmanned surface vessels with communications balloons as part of a mesh network.

Retired Rear Admiral John Tammen, deputy of the Undersea Enterprise Campaign for the Northrop Grumman Mission Systems Sector, said he sees three broad areas of opportunities to further the Navy’s efforts in this area:

- First, there are more players on the field from private industry. Tammen said a brief walk through the Sea-Air-Space exhibit hall showed the array of firms either operating their own vehicle or supporting their components. “That was very exciting to see and I think we need to support that,” he said.
- Two, the evolution of using unmanned systems in capacities beyond surveillance to man-unmanned operations. “The example I like to use is the P-8 tied to the Triton,” he said. “Being able to get something that’s greater than the sum of the parts – one plus one equals three.”
- Three, the increasing ability to get significant payload far forward, from undersea, Tammen said, as has been demonstrated in the DARPA-Northrop Grumman Manta Ray UUV program and others.

In fact, unmanned systems that are contractor-owned and operated appeal to the U.S. Coast Guard, which has a smaller budget and less acquisition, said Thom Remmers, Systems Strategic Team Lead and Naval Engineer and Acquisition Program

Manager.

Aiken said at the end of the day, a lot of success involves building service members' trust in unmanned systems – not for use in a lab but in the real world.

Navy to Deploy SDB-II Smart Weapon Aboard F/A-18



The Navy is set to field the Small Diameter Bomb Increment II on the F/A-18E/F after declaring Early Operational Capability in October. *U.S. Navy*

[By Precision Strike Weapons Program Office](#)

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy is set to field the Small Diameter Bomb Increment II on the F/A-18E/F after declaring

Early Operational Capability in October.

The F/A-18E/F is the Navy's first platform to carry the SDB-II, giving the aircraft the capability to hit moving targets in harsh weather and address targets in dynamic scenarios.

"The Navy and Air Force team, along with the test community and fleet stakeholders, worked relentlessly to expedite the fielding of this weapon," said Tyler Alt, Navy SDB-II program manager. "This weapon will give our warfighters a much-needed capability and provide the basis for future network enabled weapons."

The team will complete two additional operational test events before achieving Initial Operational Capability in 2024.

SDB-II, or Ground Bomb Unit-53B (GBU-53B) "StormBreaker," is an air-launched, precision-strike standoff weapon that enables the warfighter to defeat moving and fixed targets. It can operate in adverse weather conditions through its tri-mode seeker that employs infrared and millimeter wave radar to see through fog, smoke and rain.

The weapon has the capability to receive updated target coordinates mid-flight via two-way datalink communications. Using these network options, SDB-II allows airborne or ground controllers the ability to send in-flight target updates.

SDB-II is a Joint-Interest, Air Force-led program and is fielded on the Air Force's F-15E aircraft. SDB-II will also be compatible and fielded on F-16C/D and F-35 aircraft.

The Navy component of the SDB-II program is executed by the Precision Strike Weapons Program Office, which provides Naval Aviation with dominant lethal, integrated precision strike solutions for any conflict anytime, anywhere.

USCGC Harriet Lane Returns After Inaugural Operation Blue Pacific Patrol in Oceania



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) crew renders honors to the Battleship Missouri Memorial as the Harriet Lane and crew return to home port in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, April 9. HONOLULU – U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane (WMEC 903) and crew returned to home port in Hawaii April 9 after a 79-day patrol in support of Coast Guard District Fourteen's Operation Blue Pacific in Oceania.

Harriet Lane and crew departed Pearl Harbor in January and traveled more than 15,000 nautical miles spanning from the

Hawaiian Islands to the east coast of Australia. Patrolling in support of Operation Blue Pacific, the cutter and crew worked alongside Pacific Island nations to forge and advance relationships with like-minded allies and partners who share a common vision for maritime governance.

Harriet Lane's efforts included enhancing maritime domain awareness, combatting illegal fishing activities across Oceania, and participating in exercises to bolster partner capacity and interoperability. Leveraging bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements with Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea, Harriet Lane conducted 27 boardings alongside Pacific Island partners in their respective exclusive economic zones (EEZs).

Through bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements, the Coast Guard is able to provide a platform for partner nations to enforce domestic and international laws within territorial seas and the far reaches of their EEZs. The embarked shipriders identify boarding targets within their EEZ, take law enforcement action in accordance with their authority, and are supported by U.S. Coast Guard personnel throughout the course of the boarding activity. These operations are focused on increasing partner nations' capabilities and maritime domain awareness while safeguarding sovereign rights, supporting sound maritime governance, and combatting illicit activities on the water. Additionally, Harriet Lane law enforcement personnel conducted four fishery boardings on the high seas in concert with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

During Harriet Lane's patrol, the crew made port calls in American Samoa, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the Marshall Islands. While offshore Nauru, Harriet Lane hosted key leadership engagements and underway subject matter exchanges with local enforcement agencies. Harriet Lane's crew participated in numerous engagements with local communities throughout the region, including subject

matter expert exchanges, such as search and rescue planning and small boat operations, school visits, and several tours of Harriet Lane with U.S. Ambassadors, foreign dignitaries, heads of police and fisheries agencies, and hosted the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant, Adm. Linda Fagan, as she led a maritime roundtable aboard the cutter in Vanuatu.

“This was a patrol of firsts for Harriet Lane and the U.S. Coast Guard” said Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero, commanding officer of Harriet Lane. “The Coast Guard has a long and storied history in the Pacific, and Harriet Lane’s introduction to the region delivers on a pledge to our allies and partners that the United States has an enduring commitment in the Blue Pacific. Harriet Lane’s crew delivered on each and every ask made throughout this patrol, and I could not be more proud of our crew’s dedication, professionalism, and service to our great nation. This was just the first of many patrols in support of Operation Blue Pacific for Harriet Lane and I look forward to seeing our impact continue to grow.”

Harriet Lane, commissioned in 1984, is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter homeported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, to support Coast Guard missions in the Pacific region. The service’s medium endurance cutter fleet supports a variety of Coast Guard missions including search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment.

USCG Cutter Bertholf Returns Home Following 98-Day Indo-

Pacific Deployment



A crew member assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) greets his family at the cutter's return to home port on Coast Guard Base Alameda, California following a 98-day patrol in the Indo-Pacific region, April 8. *U.S. Coast Guard | Petty Officer 3rd Class Hunter Schnabel*

ALAMEDA, California – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) and crew returned home April 8 following a 21,000-mile, 98-day Indo-Pacific deployment in support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet.

Throughout the deployment, Bertholf led international engagements in the Republic of Singapore, Malaysia and India, strengthening interoperability and maritime governance through joint at-sea exercises, professional engagements, and subject matter expert exchanges.

Bertholf departed Alameda on Jan. 2 as the Coast Guard's first of multiple national security cutter deployments to the Indo-Pacific this year.

“The opportunities to work with our allies and partners throughout the Indo-Pacific increased our regional interoperability and greatly strengthened the bonds which we share as a seagoing service,” said Captain Billy Mees, Bertholf’s commanding officer. “We greatly appreciated engaging in professional interactions, enhancing maritime capabilities, and reinforcing maritime governance in the area through promoting global connections, fostering unity, and advancing efforts to maintain an open and free Indo-Pacific region.”

While operating in the vicinity of Singapore, the crew of the Bertholf participated in multiple professional engagements and training exercises with members of the Republic of Singapore Navy, Singapore Police Coast Guard, and Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA). Bertholf hosted U.S. Ambassador Jonathan E. Kaplan aboard for a tour and a chance for Bertholf’s crew to showcase the cutter’s operational capabilities.

Upon departure, Bertholf’s crew conducted at-sea exercises and subject matter expert exchanges with the Republic of Singapore Navy and MMEA, including a group sail through the Strait of Malacca.

Upon Bertholf’s service-first, historic arrival in Port Klang, Malaysia, the crew conducted several subject matter expert exchanges with the MMEA, Republic of Singapore Navy, Singapore Police Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard, Korea Coast Guard, and Australian Border Force. The joint training included maritime law enforcement skills, small boat launch and recoveries, emergency rescue and carry procedures, and shipboard damage control tactics to bolster interoperability across the maritime domain of Southeast Asia. Bertholf hosted U.S. Ambassador Edgard D. Kagan and Malaysian dignitaries onboard for a U.S. Embassy reception on the cutter’s flight deck.

Bertholf’s final international port call was Port Blair,

India, marking the first time a U.S. Coast Guard cutter has visited the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a union territory of India situated between the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea.

During the four-day engagement, Bertholf's crew participated in sporting events and reciprocal tours, and Bertholf's officers attended a formal reception at the India Coast Guard's regional headquarters. Bertholf and India Coast Guard participated in the joint exercise 'Sea Defender,' with two days of at-sea exercises that included responses to shipboard drone and small boat attacks, shipboard damage control evolutions, pollution responses, counter drug interdiction and non-compliant vessel pursuit tactics, security boardings, flight operations, and an overnight group sail with the India Coast Guard across the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone to the Strait of Malacca.

Commissioned in 2008, Bertholf is one of four Coast Guard legend-class national security cutters homeported in Alameda. National security cutters are 418 feet long, 54 feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed of more than 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, endurance of up to 90 days, and can hold a crew of up to 170.

BAE Receives Additional Contracts for Amphibious Combat Vehicles



An Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) with the 3d Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division, enters the well deck of amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8) during waterborne training in the Pacific Ocean. *U.S. Navy | Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Kendra Helmbrecht*

BAE Systems has been awarded an additional \$25 million firm-fixed-price modification to a previously awarded \$181 million contract by the U.S. Marine Corps for more Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACVs) under the Marine Corps' fourth order for full-rate production (FRP).

Total cumulative face value of the contract is \$2.7 billion. In addition to vehicle production, the award covers the procurement of ACV Personnel (ACV-P) variants, fielding and sustainment costs, and support and test equipment.

Vehicles produced under this contract will fulfill the Marine Corps' fleet requirements for ACV-Ps, providing them full operational amphibious capability to execute operations around the world.

“This contract award allows us to continue to deliver this critical capability to the Marine Corps to enable warfighters to complete ship-to-shore missions and other expeditionary requirements,” said Garrett Lacaillade, vice president of amphibious vehicles for BAE Systems. “We continue to work hand-in-hand with our strategic partner Iveco Defense Vehicles and the Marine Corps to ensure that ACVs are ready for current and future deployments.”

ACV-P is the first in a family of four variants to be manufactured and delivered to the Marine Corps. Additional variants include the ACV Command and Control (ACV-C) variant which is currently in production; the ACV 30mm Cannon (ACV-30) variant which production ready test vehicles were delivered for testing earlier this year; and an ACV Recovery (ACV-R) variant which recently completed the design and development phase.

The ACV 8×8 platform provides true open-ocean amphibious capability, land mobility, payload, and growth potential to accommodate future variant growth and technology integration to meet the Marine Corps’ ever-evolving operational needs.

ACV production and support is taking place at BAE Systems locations in Stafford, Virginia; San Jose, California; Sterling Heights, Michigan; Aiken, South Carolina; and, York, Pennsylvania. Deliveries are anticipated to begin in late 2025.

NPS, Defense Innovation Unit

Sign MOU to Enhance Learning, Experimentation, Prototyping for Maritime Advantage



Retired Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, president of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), and Doug Beck, director of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), are joined by senior Navy officials and NPS students after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two institutions during the Sea-Air-Space conference in National Harbor, Md. The MOU will build upon past successes and existing academic and research relationships between DIU and NPS. *U.S. Navy | Lt. Cmdr. Ed Early*

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) are joining forces in a cooperative endeavor to accelerate adoption of commercial dual-use technology solutions, while enhancing the advanced education of defense leaders necessary to employ them.

DIU Director Doug Beck and retired U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, President of NPS, announced a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 9 at the Sea-Air-Space Conference in National Harbor, Md. The MOU will build upon past successes and existing relationships between DIU and NPS to expand complementary efforts and future opportunities targeting education, research, and innovation through student fellowships at DIU, personnel exchanges, collaborative experimentation, and projects with the Naval Innovation Center (NIC) at NPS.

Said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, who announced the establishment of the NIC at NPS in December 2022: "I look forward to witnessing the vision for the Naval Innovation Center coming to life at NPS. The NIC will provide an educational opportunity and venue unavailable anywhere else in the world, where industry and academic partners will work side-by-side with our NPS students to research and discover advanced warfighting solutions."

Department of Defense (DOD) capabilities are built on American ingenuity and innovation. The recently published National Defense Science and Technology Strategy acknowledged the deep linkage of defense education and research to discovery and innovation, stating that "education is another cornerstone for building enduring advantage" and that DOD "cannot create 21st century capabilities using 20th century equipment, education, and employment policies."

Increasingly, innovation is led by industry, and academic institutions are forging long-term relations with technology companies to stay on the cutting edge. This agreement will help to increase those relationships and deliver needed capabilities to the fleet and joint force.

"DIU partners with many Silicon Valley organizations, from tech icons to start-ups as well as universities, and NPS is a natural fit given its defense focus," said Beck. "Through this

partnership we will connect companies with NPS talent and technology leaders, providing a catalyst for their learning and applied research to deliver innovative solutions for the joint force.”

For the Department of the Navy, the Naval Education Strategy guides and articulates the Secretary’s vision “for naval education to develop the world’s most capable, adaptive, and innovative naval force in support of the President’s national security priorities and the National Defense Strategy (NDS).” With a technical, outcome-based focus, NPS graduate education meets naval-unique and national defense needs.

According to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the new partnership with DIU will enhance the capabilities of NPS aligned with her top priorities.

“NPS develops warfighters who are able to translate today’s uncertainties into tomorrow’s strategies, and continuously create warfighting advantages,” said Franchetti. “As the Navy’s flagship technical graduate school, this DIU partnership will strengthen NPS’ foundation to develop student excellence in their primary warfighting duties and further empower them to lead and solve real-world operational problems with leading-edge companies.”

Established in 1909 at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., NPS moved to Monterey, Calif. in 1951, attracting faculty talent with the rise of Silicon Valley. Faculty depth across multiple disciplines in defense-related fields such as cybersecurity, oceanography, physics, naval engineering and space systems remains a hallmark of NPS – and a core attribute for DIU’s partners seeking to collaborate on defense research projects, experimentation and rapid prototyping.

“Our students are warrior-scholars, and they come to NPS to learn and make a difference,” said Rondeau. “NPS provides a venue to challenge assumptions, try new ideas, and with our

industry partners, we serve as an innovation hub to rapidly adapt research concepts into prototype applications and capabilities. This new partnership with DIU will greatly enhance the impact our students can have on the fleet and force through expanded collaborations and greater access to emerging technologies.”

Today, NPS is home to the Naval Innovation Center, established by the Secretary of the Navy in December 2022 to enhance the school’s education, research and innovation impact. Del Toro is also championing a purposefully-designed building to house the NIC and fully leverage NPS attributes to support the innovation process at greater speed and scale.

The Defense Innovation Unit strengthens our national security by accelerating the adoption of leading commercial technology throughout the military and growing the national security innovation base. Learn more at: <https://www.diu.mil/>.

Budget, Recruitment Challenges Drive Coast Guard Creativity, Officials Say



Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Linda Fagan speaks at the fifth annual Coast Guard breakfast. *Brett Davis*

Challenges with budgets, recruitment and retention levels are giving the U.S. Coast Guard the opportunity to be creative in addressing them and to update its policies and procedures, service officials said at the fifth annual Coast Guard Breakfast at Sea-Air-Space 2024.

Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Linda Fagan said the service has about half the maintenance budget it needs to maintain its legacy ships and equipment and is competing with the other services for shipbuilding and other industrial base services.

On the personnel side, persistent shortfalls in recruiting and retention — the service is down about 10% for enlisted personnel, Fagan said — have forced the Coast Guard to innovate and rethink the types of workers it recruits and how it enables their career.

“That crisis has really given us the opportunity to think,” Fagan said. “It strikes me the system that we’re operating,

and much like the other services, the boot camps and schools, they're optimized for 18 year olds fresh out of high school with little to no life experience, yet that's not the recruiting pool that we're experiencing or drawing into the service," Fagan said.

The service is moving to a vastly different recruitment method, bringing in people aged as much as "42 years young" with much more life experience, enabling much greater flexibility for service members with families and making it easier for guard members to leave the service and re-enter.

That's what enabled Rear Admiral Jo-Ann Burdian, the assistant commandant for response policy, to even be on stage on Wednesday at Sea-Air-Space, she said. She left active service as a lieutenant commander because she had three kids under the age of two at home.

"And when they were ready for me to come back, I still felt that calling back. I still felt like I had work to do for our Coast Guard and the nation, and the ability to come back and still go to graduate school, still compete for special assignments and be sitting here today" is a testament to the Coast Guard, she said.

Rear Admiral Russell Dash, commander of the Personnel Service Center, noted "we don't always do press releases when we change policy, but we were the first one that went to 42 years old to be able to join the Coast Guard," preceding the Navy's similar move.

Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti said on Monday at Sea-Air-Space that a parent and child could enter Navy service at the same time, one at 42 and one at 18, but Dash said the Coast Guard has actually had that happen.

He said the service's previous philosophies needed to change to make such things happen.

“There’s the acknowledgement that our standard of every single member of the Coast Guard needs to be worldwide deployable at every moment of their career, and the moment that you’re not worldwide deployable, we start a shot clock and say, you’ve got to fix yourself and get to this point, or we’re going to separate you. That’s wonderful when we had lines out the door, a waiting list to join the Coast Guard. But in the competition for talent, we’ve got to accept that’s not a standard that is maintainable for us. So, that has given us the opportunity to drive innovation.”



Rear Admiral Amy Grable makes a point about maintenance issues. *Brett Davis*

Maintenance

The service’s changes aren’t limited to personnel. To deal with that maintenance shortfall, the Coast Guard has gotten creative there as well.

“We do have shortfalls across all of our portfolios, including aviation, surface and shore,” said Rear Admiral Amy Grable,

assistant commandant for Engineering and Logistics.

“We’re deferring 50% of our maintenance on many of our major cutters. And what that means to our crews is, what we used to call cannibalizing parts from one cutter to put on another cutter. It’s now so routine that we have a name for it, we call it a controlled parts exchange,” she said.

HASC Members Prepare to Dive into Navy Budget



Members of the House Armed Services Committee seem prepared to overturn some Navy decisions as outlined in the fiscal 2025 budget request, including retiring some ships early and funding only one Virginia-class submarine.

“What has happened is, as the top line is increased, the game has become, ‘we’ll add a bunch of the stuff that we know Congress won’t add, and we’ll take out stuff that we know

Congress is going to put back in.’ And that will be a net gain. That game has to stop,” said Rep. Wittman (R-Virginia), chair of the House Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces.

As for the Virginia-class sub, Wittman said the Navy position that the program is behind anyway and the shipbuilders can’t keep up doesn’t make sense.

“It really is about demand signal and, and you can’t have it both ways. You can’t say, well, the reason we are reducing the submarine request is because we don’t think the industrial base can do it. That’s wrong,” he said. “The industrial base can do it if you send them the demand signal. We’re at about 1.6, I think, submarines today annually, we need to be at 2.3. The way we get there is to send the proper demand signal.”

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Connecticut), the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, said a defense industry report issued in December highlighted the need for procurement stability.

“Procurement stability was the watchword throughout that report,” he said. “And, we’re sacrificing that. I mean, literally, within weeks” of the report.

Naval aviation is also an issue, as the Navy has an air attack shortfall, noted moderator Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

“There are some, thanks to Congress, some Super Hornets being procured in this year’s appropriations,” he said. “But there doesn’t seem to be a clear path ahead for the carrier air wing.”

This drew an animated response from Wittman, who said there doesn’t seem to be a sense of urgency about the situation.

“The challenge now is to make sure we get enough F-35s in

production to be able to sustain these carrier wings,” and to make sure there’s not a “valley” as the Super Hornets retire, “where now all of a sudden you have aircraft carriers sitting at the dock because there’s no aircraft on board. That means we have to get those lines to intersect. That’s more of a challenge than what a lot of folks think because the tactical air component of that is about maintaining production.”

The aircraft also need technical refresh three, an upgraded software capability that contractor Lockheed Martin warned will be delayed.

“I mean, there needs to be an all hands on deck mentality to go, no, that’s not acceptable. We need these aircraft and now we’re going to have hundreds of aircraft sitting on the tarmac waiting to get a software upgrade, right?”

Wittman continued, “F-35 is it, right? That’s all we have, right? Let’s get our fanny in gear and get this thing going and get it on the decks of the aircraft carriers, get it in the hands of our pilots in the Air Force. Get our fanny in gear. I mean, this is it. I hate to get fired up about it, but I’m fired up about it because this is the future of tactile air for this nation. Get our fanny in gear,” he said, slapping the arms of his chair for emphasis.

Workforce Woes

The panel, which included Reps. Donald Norcross (D-New Jersey), Jen Kiggans (R-Virginia) and Ronny Jackson (R-Texas), also discussed the workforce issues plaguing the defense industry.

Kiggans, a former Navy helicopter pilot, said she sat on a HASC task force looking at recruitment and retention and what rose to the top were several issues: Compensation, housing and child care.

“That 5.2% pay raise that we just gave our servicemen and

women in the appropriations bills that were passed a couple weeks ago, that's a good starting place, but there's still more work to do," Kiggans said.

As for housing, she said college dorms are better than the places junior enlisted Sailors and Marines are asked to live. "We have to do better for our junior Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen and Marines to be able to expect them to want to do the job that we ask," she said.

On the pay issue, Wittman said, "this 5.2% increase this year was great, but remember, the lower you are on the salary scale, the percentage is not as quite as much in your paycheck. Take for example, if you come into our services, if you are a private in the Army, the Marine Corps, third-class Seamen, third-class Airman, your starting salary is \$23,000 a year. That's 11 dollars and 50 cents an hour asking you to do the most dangerous work of the nation, putting your life on the line. And guess what? You go to Chick-fil-A and serve chicken sandwiches and make more money in a much, much less challenging or dangerous environment. We have got to fix the junior enlisted salary differential."