

# Lawmakers Stand Firm for 31 Amphibious Ship 'Floor'



Gen. Mahoney speaks to members of the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Coalition. *Brett Davis*

WASHINGTON □ The U.S. Marine Corps needs a minimum of 31 amphibious ships and Congress is prepared to force the issue if the Pentagon balks, lawmakers from the House and Senate told members of the Amphibious Warship Industrial Base Coalition on March 7.

“Until they [the Marine Corps] can walk on water, we better be building more ships,” said Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Virginia).

He and other lawmakers from both parties said amphibious ships are critical for projecting both hard and soft power around the world.

Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) said a floor of 31 amphibious

ships is written into defense authorization, but a previous Navy budget projection “never once” hit that 31 number. He said Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti has assured him the new one will.

“We’re going to make them build what the Marine Corps needs,” Sullivan said.

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Mississippi) said, “this is the most dangerous national security climate we’ve had in decades. Thirty-one amphibs. Three hundred and fifty-five ships. Do the right thing.”

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) said maintaining an adequate amphibious fleet is “an issue of national security for all of us.”

General Chris Mahoney, the assistant commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, also addressed the group and noted how easy it is for adversaries to interfere with international shipping, citing the attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

“I’m going to remain in lockstep with the CNO when she says, ‘I need more players on the field,’” Mahoney said. “We need to keep the [production] lines hot, multiple lines.”

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**Houthis Kill Innocent  
Civilians with Missile Attack**



USCENTCOM

March 6, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately 11:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) March 6, an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) was launched from Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen toward M/V True Confidence, a Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier, while transiting the Gulf of Aden. The missile struck the vessel, and the multinational crew reports three fatalities, at least four injuries, of which three are in critical condition, and significant damage to the ship.

The crew abandoned the ship and coalition warships responded and are assessing the situation.

This is the fifth ASBM fired by Houthis in the last two days. Two of these ASBMs impacted two shipping vessels – M/V MSC Sky II and M/V True Confidence – and one ASBM was shot down by USS Carney (DDG 64).

These reckless attacks by the Houthis have disrupted global trade and taken the lives of international seafarers.

## March 6 Red Sea Update

TAMPA, Fla. – At approximately [7:14](#) p.m. (Sanaa Time) March 6, United States Central Command conducted self-defense strikes against two unmanned aerial vehicles in a Houthi controlled area of Yemen that presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region.

These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

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# Marine Commandant Returns to Full Duty Status

March 5, 2024

HEADQUARTERS, MARINE CORPS – The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith, has returned to full duty status after recovering from an October 29 cardiac arrest.

He resumed his full duties and authorities as the Commandant effective March 5, 2024.

The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Christopher J. Mahoney, who has been performing the duties of Commandant since November 3, continues to serve in his role as Assistant Commandant.

General Smith and his family appreciate the full support of Congress, the leadership at the Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, the Joint Force, and all who extended them their well wishes during his recovery.

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# VCNO Visits Newport News; Discusses Maintenance, Quality of Service



07 March 2024

WASHINGTON – Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jim Kilby visited HII’s Newport News Shipbuilding, in Virginia, to discuss submarine and aircraft carrier maintenance and Quality of Service in the shipyard, March 5.

Kilby began his visit receiving updates from the shipyard’s leadership on the shipyard’s major programs, infrastructure investments and workforce developments.

NNS is the sole designer, builder and refueler of the Navy’s aircraft carriers and one of two builders of nuclear-powered

submarines.

“This is where the current and future of our Navy’s air and undersea dominance starts,” said Kilby. “It’s an immense undertaking to build these nuclear-powered platforms, and we must continue to work closely together and continually improve processes and deliver these carriers and submarines time and on budget.”

The shipyard is building the Navy’s newest Ford-class aircraft carriers. The future USS John F. Kennedy (CVN 79) began its topside testing of the electromagnetic aircraft launch system last month. EMALS, first integrated into USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), replaces the existing steam catapults currently in use on the Nimitz-class aircraft carriers.

Kilby also toured manufacturing facilities where NNS is building modules for the new Columbia-class submarines. The Columbia-class will replace the Ohio-class as the Navy’s contribution to the nuclear triad, which remains the most survivable leg of the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent force.

“The partnership we have with this shipyard and its suppliers is critically important to our Navy, our nation and our national defense,” said Kilby. “The future of our nation’s sea-based deterrent starts here.”

During the visit, Kilby focused on the Sailors’ Quality of Service during the maintenance periods on the shipyard, with stops at Sailor housing, dining and medical facilities, and spoke with leadership from USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), currently undergoing a refueling and complex overhaul.

Kilby also met with carrier and submarine leadership from other crews in the shipyard

“Every Sailor has volunteered to be in the Navy and we need to make sure we’re supporting their quality of life and work,” said Kilby. “This means access to quality food, housing,

medical care and a command they can trust to take care of them.”

The Navy has taken a critical eye on Sailors’ Quality of Service, especially while in a maintenance period. Commander, Navy Installations Command, Vice Adm. Scott Gray joined Kilby on the trip. Gray leads the Navy’s Quality of Service Cross Functional Team.

“I am incredibly thankful for the commitment NNS and the city of Newport News has made to improve our Sailors’ Quality of Service,” said Gray. “The Navy recognizes we need to do better and we can’t do this without the support from industry, our Navy communities and Congress.”

Specific focus on NNS includes off-site housing options for Sailors undergoing maintenance, improved access to medical care, expanded access to healthy food options and improving WiFi connectivity. This includes free, high speed WiFi aboard Stennis’ berthing barge.

The Navy launched a WiFi pilot program in January at 12 permanent party unaccompanied housing located onboard Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, and Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

The Wi-Fi pilot is part of a new and larger program called the Virtual Single Sailor Program, which directly supports the Quality of Service of Sailors.

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**Kraken**

**Robotics**

**Signs**

# Cooperative Research & Development Agreement with US Navy for next Generation Synthetic Aperture Sonar Beamforming



ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, 04 March 2024 /GLOBE NEWSWIRE/ – Kraken Robotics Inc. announces that its wholly owned subsidiary, Kraken Robotic Systems Inc., has signed a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) with Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Newport (NUWCDIVNPT). The objective of this CRADA is to conduct joint research into advanced signal processing techniques for the current and future generation of Synthetic Aperture Sonar (SAS) sensor technologies. This also includes exploration into enhanced image processing techniques such as data fusion, image registration, multi-spectral image enhancement and automated target recognition.

Kraken Robotics has engaged in several CRADA's with US

government agencies since 2012, including NUWC Division Newport, NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) as well as the Battery Certification and Integration Branch, Code 636 of NSWC Carderock. These CRADA's have provided invaluable testing and evaluation for Kraken's portfolio of underwater technology solutions, including Kraken's Synthetic Aperture sonar, KATFISH Actively Controlled Towed sonar, and Pressure Tolerant Subsea Batteries.

These CRADAs have showcased a strong track record of proven technology solutions and collaboration between Kraken's world-leading technical team and the US Navy's Centers of Excellence. They have allowed Kraken to test technology solutions with subject matter experts from the US Navy, providing invaluable feedback on performance and capabilities. Kraken can then point to the publicly-releasable results of our collaborative testing under the CRADA as objective evidence when bidding on opportunities domestically or internationally with other Five Eyes or NATO countries.

Greg Reid, Kraken President and CEO said "We are pleased to enter another CRADA with NUWC Division Newport. Since that first CRADA in 2012, Kraken has gone on to deliver our technology solutions to NATO allies across the globe, and the results from each CRADA have been a valuable ground truth for our customers worldwide."

David Shea, Kraken CTO said "Innovation is a core tenant of Kraken. Entering into this new Cooperative agreement with NUWC will ensure our science and technology is being evaluated by the best and brightest inside the US Navy, and this allows us to deepen our collaboration on the next generation of seabed intelligence solutions. With several of our sensors now in active use within the US Navy, we are excited to deepen our focus into data enhanced processing techniques that will benefit both new and existing sensors, leveraging the latest developments in machine learning."

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# Saildrone Launches First Production Surveyor off the Manufacturing Line at Austal USA



MOBILE, Ala., March 6, 2024 – Today, Saildrone announced it has launched the first aluminum Surveyor unmanned surface vehicle (USV) off the Austal USA production line in Mobile, Ala. Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Lisa Franchetti was on site Monday to inspect the vehicle, ahead of these new USVs being tested under contract to the US Navy.

Primarily designed for ocean mapping and maritime domain awareness, the Saildrone Surveyor USV is powered by wind,

solar, and a diesel generator for long-range, long-endurance missions in the open ocean.

The Surveyor carries the latest multibeam sonar equipment for seafloor mapping to depths of 11,000 meters (36,000 feet) and purpose-built defense and security payloads for accurate, dynamic, and confident decisions and responses to the full spectrum of maritime threats and challenges. Upcoming Navy missions will focus on the ability of the Surveyor to deliver both surface and undersea intelligence for a range of high-priority applications, including anti-submarine warfare (ASW).

To meet the increasing demand for Surveyor USVs, Saildrone partnered with Austal USA to leverage their advanced manufacturing production techniques and rapid assembly capabilities. Austal is currently producing one Surveyor every six weeks, with the ability to scale up production as demand requires.

“It is tremendous to see the first vehicle launched of many that will be produced here in Alabama,” said Saildrone founder and CEO Richard Jenkins. “We are honored to have Admiral Franchetti here in person to witness the start of the creation of a new fleet of USVs alongside traditional manned ships. Everyone at Saildrone is very proud to be supporting the US Navy and contributing to our defense and national security.”

At 20 meters long (65 feet) and weighing 15 tons, the Surveyor classifies as a medium USV, built to American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) Light Warship code. These first Surveyors are contracted to the US Navy for the initial testing and evaluation of Surveyor-class vehicles in multiple environments.

“Using unmanned assets helps put more players on the field by freeing up manned assets for more specific and important tasks,” said Franchetti. “It’s good to see high tech industry

partnering with the traditional shipbuilding industrial base to rapidly deliver cutting-edge products at scale.”

Franchetti was joined on the tour by Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC) Gen. Christopher J. Mahoney, Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.S), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Rep. Jerry Carl (R-Ala.).

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## **March 4 and 5 Red Sea Update**



## **USCENTCOM**

**March 5, 2024**

**TAMPA, Fla.** – On March 5, between the hours of 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. (Sanaa time), U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) forces shot down one anti-ship ballistic missile and three one-way attack unmanned aerial systems launched from Iranian-backed Houthi controlled areas of Yemen toward USS Carney (DDG 64) in the Red Sea. There are no injuries or damage to the ship.

Later between 8:45 p.m. and 9:40 p.m., CENTCOM forces destroyed three anti-ship missiles and three unmanned surface vessels(USV) in self-defense.

The missiles and USVs were located in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

CENTCOM forces identified the missiles, UAVs, and USVs and determined that they presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and to the U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

### **March 4, 2024**

**TAMPA, Fla.** – On March 4, at approximately 2:15a.m. (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired an anti-ship ballistic missile from Yemen into the southern Red Sea. The missile impacted the water with no reported damage or injuries to commercial or U.S. Navy ships.

Between the hours of 3:50p.m. and 4:15p.m. (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen into the Gulf of Aden at M/V MSC SKY II, a Liberian-flagged, Swiss-owned container vessel. One of the missiles impacted the vessel causing damage. Initial reports indicate there were no injuries; the ship did not request assistance and continued on its way.

At 8 p.m. (Sanaa time), CENTCOM forces conducted self-defense strikes against two anti-ship cruise missiles that presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for merchant and U.S. Navy vessels.

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# USS McCampbell Returns to Forward Deployment in Japan



By Lt.j.g. Kathryn Cole

March 4, 2024

YOKOSUKA, Japan – The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS McCampbell (DDG 85) returned to its forward-deployed location of Yokosuka, Japan, to rejoin Commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, March 2nd, 2024.

“We are excited for the opportunity to rejoin 7th Fleet and the forward-deployed naval forces in Yokosuka, Japan” said Cmdr. James Pierce III, McCampbell’s commanding officer. “Our Sailors have trained diligently over the past four years since our departure to prepare for our return to Japan. We are ready to support our allies and partners in the region in maintaining maritime security. Additionally, we are

appreciative of the hospitality shown to our families who arrived in Japan earlier this year.”

McC Campbell will make its return as one of the ten forward-deployed Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. The ship is named after Capt. David S. McC Campbell, a naval aviator who distinguished himself as the Navy’s leading fighter pilot during World War II. The ship was commissioned in his honor on August 17, 2002. McC Campbell was previously in Yokosuka for 13 years, from 2007-2020, before relocating to Portland, Oregon to undergo its midlife modernization, fortifying its warfighting capability.

“The addition of USS McC Campbell further strengthens Destroyer Squadron 15’s fighting force,” said Capt. Justin Harts, Commander, Destroyer Squadron 15. “In this demanding and ever-changing theater, McC Campbell’s dedicated crew will be a key part of our mission to operate alongside our allies and partners and ensure we remain committed to maritime security in the region and uphold the promise of a free and open Indo-Pacific. We are thrilled to have them back in Yokosuka.”

The United States values Japan’s contributions to the peace, security and stability of the Indo-Pacific and its long-term commitment and hospitality in hosting U.S. forces forward deployed there. These forces, along with their counterparts in the Japan Self-Defense Forces, make up the core capabilities needed by the alliance to meet common strategic objectives and support a free and open Indo-Pacific.

McC Campbell is a Flight IIA Arleigh Burke-class Aegis guided missile destroyer that can deploy with two MH-60 variant helicopters. It also has ballistic missile defense, anti-air and surface warfare capabilities. The ship is 155 meters in length; displacing approximately 9,250 tons, with a crew size of over 300 Sailors.

McCampbell is forward-deployed and assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy's largest DESRON and the U.S. 7th Fleet's principal surface force.

U.S. 7th Fleet is 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.

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**Bollinger Shipyards Hosts  
Chief of Naval Operations,  
Asst. Commandant of the  
Marine Corps, PEO Ships, &  
U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker**



PASCAGOULA, Miss., March 6, 2024 – Earlier this week, Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding Shipyards hosted a delegation of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps leaders at its facility in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The delegation included Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Christopher Mahoney, Program Executive Officer-Ships Rear Admiral Tom Anderson, and U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Mississippi. The visit underscored the critical role Bollinger plays in American shipbuilding in enhancing our nation’s defense capabilities and bolstering the economy.

“Bollinger Shipyards was honored to welcome Admiral Franchetti, General Mahoney, and Senator Wicker to Pascagoula,” said Ben Bordelon, president and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. “We take great pride in our contribution to the strength and readiness of America’s naval forces and remain dedicated to maintaining our legacy of quality, durability, and innovation in shipbuilding. This visit provided a unique opportunity to demonstrate our capabilities and ongoing

commitment to fulfilling the critical needs of our military, both today and in the years to come.”

During their visit, Franchetti, Mahoney, Anderson, Wicker toured the facility, engaged with Bollinger’s skilled workforce, and were briefed by Bollinger leadership on current and future projects. Bollinger Mississippi currently builds the T-AGS and APL programs for the U.S. Navy, as well as the Polar Security Cutter program of the U.S. Coast Guard.

“I will always showcase our skilled Gulf Coast shipbuilders and the impressive work they do. The Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and world benefit from what comes out of our shipyards,” said U.S. Senator Roger Wicker. “As one of Mississippi’s U.S. Senators and the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I look for every opportunity to advance our region’s national defense contributions. This visit was worthwhile.”

This was Franchetti’s and Mahoney’s first visit to Bollinger Mississippi. The visit was part of a tour of Gulf Coast shipyards.

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## **Bataan ARG, 26th MEU(SOC) to Return to Homeport**



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (Feb. 25, 2024) The Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), Harpers Ferry-class dock landing ship USS Carter Hall (LSD 50), San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19), and guided-missile destroyer USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) transit in formation with the United Kingdom primary casualty receiving ship RFA Argus (A135) in the Mediterranean Sea, Feb. 25, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Matthew F. Brown)

By Amphibious Squadron 8 Public Affairs

STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR – The ships of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), along with the embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) exited the Mediterranean Sea after conducting operations in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, March 6, 2024. In the coming weeks, Sailors and Marines will sail across the Atlantic Ocean and return home to Norfolk, Virginia and Camp LeJeune, North Carolina.

Since December, the Bataan ARG and the 26th MEU(SOC) have conducted training, exercises, and operations in the U.S.

European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility in support of maritime stability and security in defense of U.S., allied, and partner interests.

“Throughout our time in the U.S. Fifth and U.S. Sixth Fleet regions, the Sailors and Marines of the Bataan ARG and 26th MEU(SOC) showcased the unique capabilities that we bring as a response force to our allies and partners,” said Amphibious Squadron 8 Commodore, Capt. Martin Robertson. “Our presence in the Eastern Mediterranean was exactly what our nation needed: an integrated Navy and Marine Corps force ready to respond when called upon.”

Completing this transit and entering the Atlantic Ocean is a major milestone and one of the last scheduled operations of the Bataan ARG and the 26th MEU(SOC)’s nearly 8-month deployment.

The Bataan ARG is comprised of the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), Harpers Ferry-class dock landing ship USS Carter Hall (LSD 50), and San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19). The ships deployed from Norfolk, Virginia, July 10, and have conducted training, exercises, and operations to support maritime stability and security in defense of U.S., allied, and partner interests.

The 26th MEU(SOC) serves as one of the Nation’s premier crisis response forces capable of conducting amphibious operations, crisis response, and limited contingency operations, to include enabling the introduction of follow-on forces and designated special operations, in support of theater requirements of the Geographic Combatant Commander. Coupled with the BAT ARG, the 26th MEU(SOC) serves as a premier stand-in force with a full complement of all-domain capabilities to operate persistently within the littorals or weapons engagement zones of an adversary.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility. U.S. 6th Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.