

USS Annapolis Visits Perth, Australia, in AUKUS Event



ROCKINGHAM, Australia (March 10, 2024) The Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Annapolis (SSN 760) pulls alongside Diamantina Pier at Fleet Base West in Rockingham, Western Australia, March 10, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaitlyn E. Eads)
March 10, 2024

USS Annapolis (SSN 760) arrived in HMAS Stirling in Perth, Western Australia Sunday.

This marks the second visit by a U.S. fast-attack submarine to HMAS Stirling since the announcement of the AUKUS Optimal Pathway in March 2023. The Optimal Pathway is designed to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine capability to the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

“Historically, we’ve had allied SSNs visit Australian ports

for many decades totaling more than 1,800 days,” said Rear Adm. Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability at the Australian Submarine Agency. “Starting with USS North Carolina (SSN 777) last August, these visits are taking on a more important meaning for the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Submarine Agency as we build the infrastructure, knowledge, and stewardship needed to establish SRF-West in 2027.”

Increasing the number of SSN visits to Australia and the establishment of SRF-W comprise the first of three Optimal Pathway phases. As early as 2027, the United States will begin rotational presence in the Western Australia facility as a way to grow the RAN’s ability to operate and maintain a fleet of SSNs. Ultimately, there will be up to four U.S. Virginia-class submarines and one United Kingdom Astute-class submarine at HMAS Stirling.

The second phase of the Optimal Pathway begins in the early 2030s, with the United States selling Australia three Virginia-class submarines, with the potential to sell up to two more if needed. Phase Three sees the combination of a base British submarine design and advanced United States technology to deliver SSN-AUKUS, the future attack submarine for both Australia and the United Kingdom. Australia plans to deliver the first Australian-built SSN-AUKUS in the early 2040s.

“Having our submarines rotating through HMAS Stirling is critical to building Australia’s sovereign capability to safely and competently operate SSNs,” shared Rear Adm. Lincoln Reifsteck, the U.S. AUKUS Pillar One Program Manager. “Each visit will build upon the previous one and allow the RAN team to grow its capabilities. This visit will see Australians take a more active role in the execution of a voyage repair period.”

“For decades, the U.S. Navy, Royal Australian Navy, and Royal Navy have trained and operated together,” said Rear Adm. Chris

Cavanaugh, Commander, Submarine Group (CSG) 7. “AUKUS is a natural extension of our already close relationship, building unprecedented capability and interoperability that will pay dividends for generations.”

“It’s an honor to be here and the team looks forward to working with the Australians and furthering our relationship,” said Cmdr. James Tuthill, Commanding Officer, USS Annapolis. “The enthusiasm and professionalism of the HMAS Stirling team is apparent, and we look forward to making this visit as productive as possible.”

Initially announced in September 2021, the AUKUS trilateral agreement is a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of the three nations that also promotes stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia will acquire conventionally armed SSNs for the Royal Australian Navy under Pillar I of AUKUS via the Optimal Pathway announced by the heads of the three partner nations on March 13, 2023.

**UPDATE: US and Coalition
Defeat Houthi Attack in Red
Sea Area**



USCENTCOM, March 9, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Following further engagements through the morning, U.S. and Coalition forces downed a total of at least 28 uncrewed aerial vehicles between 4:00 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. (Sanaa time) on March 9.

No U.S. or Coalition Navy vessels were damaged in the attack and there were also no reports by commercial ships of damage.

US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red Sea Area

March 9, 2024

US and Coalition Defeat Houthi Attack in Red Sea Area Between 4 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. (Sanaa time), Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists conducted a large-scale uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) attack into the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. CENTCOM and coalition forces identified the one-way attack (OWA) UAVs and determined that they presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels, U.S. Navy, and coalition ships in the region. U.S. Navy vessels and aircraft along with multiple coalition navy ships and aircraft shot down 15 OWA UAVs. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure.

March 8 Red Sea Update

TAMPA, Fla. - At approximately 9:50 a.m. (Sanaa time), United States Central Command conducted a self-defense strike against two Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists' truck-mounted anti-ship missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. At approximately 3:55 p.m. (Sanaa time), Houthi terrorists fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen into the Gulf of Aden at M/V Propel Fortune, a Singapore-flagged, owned, and operated vessel. The missiles did not impact the vessel. There were no injuries or damages reported. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

Bell Announces Weapon Systems Integration Lab



Arlington, Texas (March 11, 2024) – Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. company, announced today the Grand Opening of its Weapon System's Integration Lab (WSIL) in Arlington, TX. The state-of-the-art facility will aid in the safe, rapid, and efficient integration and test of a next generation fly-by-wire tiltrotor and mission systems using a modular open systems approach (MOSA) for the United States Army's Future Long- Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA).

As part of our commitment to deliver the U.S. Army's FLRAA capability to our nation's warfighters, Bell is pleased to announce the opening of its latest systems integration lab," said Ryan Ehinger, Bell's senior vice president and Program Director, FLRAA program. "This dedicated SIL supports the application, verification and validation of Bell's innovative digital engineering approach and open architecture, playing a critical role in delivering outstanding operational performance and versatility to the U.S. Army."

"We are grateful for our partnership with Bell, who has made Arlington the home of its Flight Research Center for nearly six decades now. The Arlington Economic Development

Corporation's recent strategic investment shows our city's continued commitment to supporting innovation right here in our backyard," Mayor Jim Ross said.

In 2021, Bell began construction of a new 47,000 sq. ft. facility to house future development programs at its Flight Research Facility in Arlington, Texas. The FLRAA WSIL is Bell's fifth generation System Integration Lab located at its Flight Research Center. This latest SIL facility supports end-to-end integration of our fly-by-wire systems with state-of-the-art Avionics, Electrical, Hydraulic, Flight Controls, and Mission and Sensor Systems for multiple current and future programs, manned and unmanned.

Bell and the City of Arlington have a history spanning over 55 years. Beginning in 1967, the City of Arlington has played a major role in supporting the innovation of flight-testing for new programs at Bell's Flight Research Center.

Canadian-led Combined Task Force 150 seizes 770 kg of methamphetamine in the Arabian Sea



Bags of illegal narcotics seized from a vessel are stacked on the deck of the U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class fast response cutter USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144) in the Arabian Sea, March 5. Glen Harris was operating under Combined Task Force 150, one of five task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, the largest multinational naval partnership in the world. CTF 150 focuses on maritime security operations outside the Arabian Gulf.

By Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs | March 09, 2024

MANAMA, Bahrain – A U.S. Coast Guard cutter operating under the Canadian-led Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 of Combined Maritime Forces seized 770 kg of methamphetamine from a dhow in the Arabian Sea, March 5.

Based on intelligence provided by CTF 150, the Sentinel-class fast response cutter USCGC Glen Harris (WPC 1144) seized the methamphetamines and, after documenting and weighing the illicit haul, properly disposed of it.

“I am extremely proud of the work of the Combined Task Force 150 team and USCGC Glen Harris in preventing these drugs from

reaching their final destination. This interdiction demonstrates the value of multinational efforts within the Combined Maritime Forces to prevent and disrupt criminal and terrorist organizations at sea,” said Canadian Navy Capt. Colin Matthews, Commander CTF 150.

Glen Harris is forward deployed to Bahrain. The fast response cutter is part of a contingent of U.S. Coast Guard ships operating in the region under Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA). PATFORSWA deploys Coast Guard personnel and ships alongside U.S. and regional naval forces throughout the Middle East.

CTF 150’s mission is to deter and disrupt the ability of non-state actors to move weapons, drugs and other illicit substances in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman.

CTF 150 is one of five task forces under CMF, the world’s largest multinational naval partnership, and focuses on maritime security operations in the region. CTF 150 supports other CMF Task Forces and their member nations, with support and intelligence further enabling weapons and drug interdictions in the region. The 41-nation naval partnership upholds the international rules-based order by promoting security and stability across 3.2 million square miles of water encompassing some of the world’s most important shipping lanes.

Navy Reserve Receives Its

First P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft



TUKWILA, Wash. (March 6, 2024) Cmdr. James Tilden (fifth from left), executive officer of Patrol Squadron 62, presents a dedication plaque to Vice Adm. John B. Mustin (sixth from left), chief of Navy Reserve and commander of Navy Reserve Force, after taking delivery of the first new P-8A Poseidon for the Naval Air Force Reserve during a ceremony at Boeing Military Delivery Facility in Tukwila, Washington, March 6, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Harry Andrew D. Gordon)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The first Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft for the Navy Reserve has been delivered to Patrol Squadron 62 (VP-62).

In March 6 ceremonies at the Boeing Military Delivery Facility

in Tukwila, Washington, Vice Adm. John B. Mustin, chief of Navy Reserve and commander of Navy Reserve Force, was on hand for the delivery, where a dedication was presented to him by Cmdr. James Tilden, executive officer of VP-62.

VP-62, based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, is one of two Navy Air Reserve patrol squadrons. It formerly operated the P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft. The transition brings the Navy closer to full operational capability with the P-8A. The other reserve VP squadron, VP-69 at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, also will be equipped with the P-8A.

Coast Guard offloads \$4.5 million in seized cocaine, transfers custody of 2 smugglers to federal law enforcement in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico



March 8, 2024

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier offloaded 182 kilograms of cocaine and transferred custody of two male smugglers to federal law enforcement authorities in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Friday.

The British Royal Navy HMS Trent (P224), operating with a Coast Guard LEDET onboard, seized the contraband and apprehended two smugglers, Dominican Republic nationals, following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel in Caribbean Sea waters southwest coast of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, March 3, 2024.

The interdiction is a result of interagency efforts in support of the Coast Guard's Western Hemisphere Strategy and Operation Unified Resolve. The Drug Enforcement Administration is leading the investigation in this case.

"We appreciate the work and collaboration of our British Royal Navy partners in stopping drug smuggling vessels in the high seas," said Cmdr. Gerard Wenk, Coast Guard Sector San Juan chief of response. "The work we do together daily with our federal and local and regional partners helps protect and bring stability to the Caribbean region from this threat."

"Drug smuggling organizations pose the greatest threat to the safety and health of our citizens," said DEA's Caribbean Division Special Agent in Charge Denise Foster. "The dedication of all maritime surveillance assets is crucial to the success of the mission at hand, we will continue to work with our counterparts and allocate all our law enforcement resources to make a greater impact in vulnerable areas where criminal organizations dedicated to drug trafficking are causing greater damage."

The Coast Guard's efforts under Operation Unified Resolve contribute to the interagency results being achieved daily under Operation Caribbean Guard, which coordinates efforts between the Coast Guard, DHS, and Commonwealth and Territorial law enforcement partners, who are working diligently to deter, detect and disrupt illicit maritime trafficking to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Detecting and interdicting illegal drug traffickers on the high seas involves significant interagency and international coordination. The Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West, Florida conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. Once interdiction becomes imminent, the law enforcement phase of the operation begins, and control of the operation shifts to the U.S. Coast Guard throughout the interdiction and apprehension. Interdictions in the Caribbean Sea are performed by members of the U.S. Coast Guard under the authority and control of the Coast Guard's Seventh District, headquartered in Miami.

Under Secretary Raven Visits United Kingdom and Norway to Discuss Regional Security, Highlights Importance of Interoperability



March 8, 2024

From Under Secretary of the Navy Public Affairs

OSLO, Norway – The Under Secretary of the Navy Erik

Raven visited the United Kingdom and Norway, March 3-8, to meet with partner navies, government and military leaders, Sailors and Marines, and to observe a NATO arctic exercise.

The international trip began in London, and was followed by visits to Oslo, Trondheim, Evenes, and Alta in Norway.

In London, Raven met with First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff of the United Kingdom Adm. Sir Ben Key, Minister of the Armed Forces James Heappey, and Chief Defence Nuclear Maddie McTernan where they discussed Ukraine, U.S.-UK Carrier Cooperation, and AUKUS progress.

The Under Secretary visited Barrow-In-Furness to speak with Royal Navy leaders, Sailors, and industry partners about undersea warfare, to include progress made on implementing AUKUS Pillar I. He toured shipyard facilities, a dry-dock, and the Submarines Academy for Skills and Knowledge.

"I want to thank Admiral Key and the Royal Navy for their global contributions to maritime security and stability," said Raven. "We fly, sail, and operate on a daily basis with the United Kingdom, and together our strong partnership helps us to ensure security, stability, and prosperity."

In Norway, Raven met with Norwegian Minister of Defense State Secretary Anne-Marie Aanerud, Chief of Defense Staff Lt. Gen. Ingrid Gjerde, Chief of Staff, Chief of Defense General Erik Kristofferson, and Norwegian Intelligence Service Vice Adm. Andreas Stensønes.

Discussions focused on military capabilities, maritime surveillance, security challenges in the Nordic region, and ways to further increase cooperation and interoperability.

"The Arctic is a region of strategic importance," said the Under Secretary. "Working together, the Navy and Marine Corps are supporting maritime statecraft while maintaining freedom of navigation and adhering to the rules-based

international order.”

“Working with our Allies and partners, we will preserve the Arctic as a space free of conflict, where nations act responsibly, and where economic and energy resources are developed in a sustainable, transparent manner.”

Raven toured the Marine Corp Prepositioning Program-Norway in the Frigaard Cave in Trondheim, Norway. At Evenes, he observed a combat craft demonstration in the Norwegian fjords and met with U.S. Navy Seabees providing maritime support.

The trip concluded with the observation of the NATO-led arctic exercise Northern Response 24, in Alta. Nordic Response 24 is hosted by Norway and supported by Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe, along with contributions from all U.S. military services. This is one of a long list of impactful engagements underscoring the longstanding alliance between Norway and the United States. With diplomatic relations forged nearly 120 years ago in 1905, the two nations and their militaries remain strategically and operationally synchronized.

“The rules-based international order depends on free and open oceans, and the militaries and service members of the European nations participating in this exercise have an instrumental role in upholding that standard,” said Raven. “Realistic exercises like Northern Response 24 allow us to work with like-minded nations to strengthen our partnerships and ensure we are trained, ready, and interoperable for crises or conflict.”

More than 20,000 service members from 14 nations are participating in Nordic Response 24. Participating nations include: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The trip marked Raven’s second to the United Kingdom and his

first to Norway.

NAVAIR returns V-22 Osprey to flight status



Mar 8, 2024

Naval Air System, PAX River – Effective March 8, 2024 at 7 a.m. EST, Naval Air Systems Command is issuing a flight clearance for the V-22 Osprey thereby lifting the grounding. This decision follows a meticulous and data-driven approach prioritizing the safety of our aircrews.

A U.S. Air Force investigation began following the tragic loss of eight Airmen during the November 29, 2023, mishap off Yakushima, Japan. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the fallen.

In response to the preliminary investigation indicating a materiel failure of a V-22 component, the V-22 grounding was initiated on December 6, 2023. The grounding provided time for a thorough review of the mishap and formulation of risk mitigation controls to assist with safely returning the V-22 to flight operations.

In concert with the ongoing investigation, NAVAIR has diligently worked with the USAF-led investigation to identify the materiel failure that led to the mishap. Close coordination among key senior leaders across the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Air Force has been paramount in formulating the comprehensive review and return to flight plan, and this collaboration will continue.

Maintenance and procedural changes have been implemented to address the materiel failure that allow for a safe return to flight. The U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Air Force will each execute their return to flight plans according to service specific guidelines.

NAVAIR remains committed to transparency and safety regarding all V-22 operations. The V-22 plays an integral role in supporting our Nation's defense and returning these vital assets to flight is critical to supporting our nation's interests. NAVAIR continuously monitors data and trends from all aircraft platforms, so service members are provided the safest, most reliable aircraft possible.

The safety of our pilots, aircrew and surrounding communities remains of paramount importance.

Marine Corps Returns MV-22 to Flight Status



HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS – The Marine Corps returned its MV-22s to flight on March 8, following Naval Air Systems Command's (NAVAIR) announcement that deemed the aircraft safe to fly.

In a release announcing the flight clearance, Naval Air Systems Command said, "This decision follows a meticulous and data-driven approach prioritizing the safety of our aircrew."

The Nov. 29, 2023, crash of an Air Force CV-22 off the coast of Japan remains under investigation. The tragic mishap is what precipitated the temporary grounding of all services' V-22s. The grounding provided time for a thorough review of the mishap and formulation of risk mitigation controls to assist with safely returning the V-22 to flight operations.

The Marine Corps, after a thorough review of all available engineering data and with revisions to the flight manual in place, is now enacting a deliberate plan to return all 17 MV-22 squadrons to full capability. Close coordination among key senior leaders across all three services, the Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy and the Safety Investigation Board (SIB) has been paramount in formulating the comprehensive review and return to flight plan, and this collaboration will continue.

The Marine Corps' three-phased approach begins with a focus on regaining basic flight currency, rebuilding units instructor cadres, and achieving proficiency in Core and Basic skill training for pilots and aircrew. After that, squadrons will follow well-established training and readiness manuals to gain proficiency in basic and advanced mission sets, demonstrating their ability to conduct the core missions of an MV-22 Squadron. Finally, squadrons will conduct specific pre-deployment training for their next assigned mission, executing the advanced, all-weather tactics that distinguish our MV-22 squadrons among other aviation capabilities and units. The second and third phases of this plan will vary in length, and some units will extend into the late Spring or early Summer of 2024 before they return to operational capability.

"The Marine Corps has confidence in the Osprey and we are laser focused on the safety and mission readiness of our pilots and aircrew," said Lt. Gen. Bradford J. Gering, Deputy Commandant for Marine Corps Aviation. "Our people have been and will always be our top priority. The Air Force CV-22 mishap is a tragedy, and we honor the legacy of those eight fallen service members by diligently and deliberately applying what we have learned from that day as we return to flight operations. We have worked extensively on plans and timelines that support a deliberate, methodical, and safe return to flight. We are flying the Osprey again because our airworthiness authority cleared it for flight, because we

trust our well-established operational risk management procedures, and most of all because we trust our professional pilots, aircrew and maintainers to safely get this combat-proven aircraft back into the fight.”

Since mid-January, Marines in Africa have been flying the MV-22 safely, under a very specific operationally necessary banner. Those missions, in support of U.S. Africa Command priorities, have been conducted safely and demonstrate the range, speed, and maneuverability the MV-22 provides the combatant commander.

Amphib Warship Part Suppliers Press Congress for Stability in Shipbuilding



The future USS *Richard M. McCool Jr.* (LPD 29), the Navy's next

Flight I San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship, seen on sea trials. (HII)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. companies that supply components and parts for the U.S. Navy's amphibious warfare fleet expressed support for the Marine Corps baseline requirement of 31 large and medium amphibious warfare ships in the U.S. fleet and the industry's need for stability and predictability in schedules.

Retired Coast Guard Capt. Paul J. Roden, chairman of the board of the Amphibious Warfare Industrial Base Coalition (AWIBC), which represents approximately 650 companies throughout the United States, told Seapower that the Marine Corps has stressed that "ready and available" 31-ship requirement is "not a ceiling, it's the floor."

Roden stressed the point that it is difficult for suppliers to produce efficiently when production schedules are unpredictable. He said that the stability needed is best achieved when the large-deck amphibious assault ships (LHAs) are built with construction intervals of four-year centers and the amphibious platform dock ships (LPDs) are built with intervals of two-year centers.

Full funding by Congress for LPD 33 in the fiscal 2025 defense budget is a priority for the AWIBC, he said.

AWIBC recently conducted a survey of its member companies.

Regarding the shipbuilding intervals, "50% of the survey respondents replied that extending those would result in an increase in cost of their products and services. When you are throwing uncertainty to any procurement, then there is risk, and risk is addressed by cost, so it is really in the Navy's best interest to maintain those centers."

Roden said that if an LHA or LPD were delayed by a year or

more, “40% of all of our members [companies] would anticipate needing to lay off workers due to uncertainty and not having full capacity in plants of the AWIBC suppliers. About a third said they would have to explore commercial contracts as well as de-prioritize shipbuilding, but in many cases, there is just not a commercial market.”

He said that “about 70% of our respondents said that the most helpful thing that the government could do is provide predictability and stability.

“One way of going about that – that has been proven successful in other programs—is through multi-ship and multi-year procurement strategies,” he said.

Roden also said that “just over 50% of the suppliers that contribute to both amphibious warship and submarine programs ... said that steady amphib contracts benefit their company’s capacity and capability to deliver on submarine programs. Having predictability and stability in shipbuilding programs allows suppliers to make investments. If they know the business is coming, they can make investments in work force training, enhancing work force, investing in equipment, investing in other infrastructure that would improve the quality and on-time delivery of products.”