

# Secret Service's New Trainer Courtesy of Presidential Helicopters Program Office



VH-3D helicopter, bureau number 159351, officially welcomed to the United States Secret Service James J. Rowley Training Center in South Laurel, Md. on January 12. (L to R) Col. Ryan Shadle, Commanding Officer, Marine Helicopter Squadron One, Mr. Milton Wilson, United States Secret Service Assistant Director, Office of Training, and Col. Erica Mantz, Program Manager, Presidential Helicopters Program Office. Photo courtesy of United States Secret Service.

From Naval Air Systems Command, Jan. 16, 2026

LAUREL, Md. – In June 2025, the Presidential Helicopters Program Office (PMA-274) delivered and installed a retired and refurbished VH-3D helicopter, bureau number 159351 (BUNO 351), to the United States Secret Service (USSS). The agency received the aircraft at the James J. Rowley Training Center

(JJRTC) in South Laurel, Maryland, fulfilling its need for a new training aircraft to continue effectively training its agents.

A team of industry and contract support assisted in the seamless transfer of the aircraft and ensured it was treated with top-shelf inspection, maintenance, demilitarization, and white-glove care. The aircraft was delivered to the USSS in quintessential showroom appearance with all tactical features needed for up-to-date training for President and Vice President of the United States (POTUS/VPOTUS) safety and protection.

The aircraft will be used by the USSS to conduct threat reaction and other tactical procedural training, improving agents' skills to optimize their important protective mission.

BUNO 351's journey began years before this delivery, in 2022, when the USSS and United States Marine Corps (USMC) started discussions about upgrading the organization's training asset. Earlier in 2025, initial demilitarization efforts on BUNO 351 were performed by the PMA-274 maintenance department at the Presidential Helicopter Support Facility. The aircraft spent weeks in refurbishment along with having ground training features installed as requested by the USSS. Upon completion the aircraft was shipped to the JJRTC, where it replaced an unserviceable training aircraft.

The USSS explained that the unserviceable training asset was no longer equipped to safely provide needed space and layout for new members who were in training for protective details within the Secret Service. The old training aircraft, now removed from the JJRTC, was a retired U.S. Navy asset. It was painted to resemble Marine One, which is the call sign, or name, of the helicopter when POTUS is aboard.

Trainees can now work both inside and outside of the mock

Marine One safely and more accurately for the Presidential and Vice Presidential protection missions they will provide. BUNO 351 also provides the added value of the proper seating configuration in alignment with the VH-92A Patriot helicopter, the latest model flown by Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1) in support of the presidential lift mission.

“Our teams have collaborated diligently to make this transfer possible,” said Col. Erica Mantz, PMA-274 program manager. “This effort to deliver BUNO 351 has greatly strengthened our partnership with the U.S. Secret Service and contract support team.”

The old U.S. Navy training helicopter was manufactured in October 1963 and has been used by countless special agents and Uniformed Division officers to practice protective movements. It has since been transported to Arizona for shredding and recycling.

“Not only is VH-3D BUNO 351 a significant improvement for our training requirements, our visitors to JJRTC have the opportunity to view a Marine One on tours of the training facility,” said Deputy Special Agent In Charge Troy Sarria. “The new helicopter draws even more attention as an officially retired and demilitarized VH-3D – once flying Presidents and Vice Presidents.”

PMA-274 not only transported the aircraft with industry partners, the program logistics and sustainment teams worked to ensure a comprehensive demilitarization and transfer process was complete end-to-end. An important step is to properly account for all government inventory with a seamless, clear transfer of possession to the USSS.

“We are grateful for the helicopter’s capability and awed by the quality of the final product,” added Sarria.

During the January dedication ceremony officially inducting the retired VH-3D as the USSS training asset, Mantz shared

with attendees, “This aircraft served nearly 50 years, supporting nine U.S. Presidents throughout its distinguished history. Now 351 will continue to serve our great nation in a different, but equally important capacity.”

The retired 159351 VH-3D sits just feet away from half a mock Air Force One, dubbed Air Force One Half, aboard JJRTC. This placement is essential. The configuration of these two training assets mimics real-life events and leads to more effective and realistic training.

BUNO 351 served HMX-1 shy of 50 years before reaching its end of service life. The aircraft entered into service in July 1975 and was decommissioned in October 2024. This venerable aircraft carried nine presidents: Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Regan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden.

[PMA-274](#) provides safe, ready, high-performing, and affordable aircraft, capabilities, and support to HMX-1.

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## **Cutter Alert Returns Home After Interdicting \$18.4M in Narcotics During 45-day Patrol**



Members of the Servicio Nacional de Fronteras and U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alert conduct a training exercise near Panama City, Panamá, Dec. 19, 2025. The Coast Guard's long-standing cooperation with Panamanian security institutions is a small part of broader ongoing cooperative security efforts between the U.S. and partners in Central America. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Trey Woodard)

**Coast Guard Cutter Alert returns home after interdicting more than \$18.4M in narcotics during 45-day patrol**

[From U.S. Coast Guard Southeast District](#)

Cape Canaveral, Fla. – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) returned to their home port in Cape Canaveral, Thursday, following a 45-day counter-drug patrol in the Windward Passage, Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

While underway in the Coast Guard Southeast District area of responsibility, Alert's crew interdicted a go-fast style vessel trafficking illegal narcotics in the Windward Passage. The crew seized 2,250 pounds of cocaine valued at

\$18.4 million, seven pounds of marijuana valued at \$7,000 and an illegal firearm. The four suspected smugglers on board, narcotics and firearm were transferred to the Bahamas government for prosecution.

“I am immensely proud of my crew’s unwavering dedication,” said Cmdr. Mario Gil, commanding officer of Alert. “Time spent away from family and missed holidays represents a significant sacrifice, which makes their commitment to combating narco-terrorism and protecting our nation’s borders from illicit drugs all the more commendable, as demonstrated by the extraordinary success of this patrol.”

In the region, Alert’s crew also patrolled in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry while underway in the Coast Guard Southeast District area of responsibility. Crew member presence in the vicinity of Haiti served to deter unsafe and illegal migration.

While transiting the Panama Canal, the crew had the distinct honor of hosting Ambassador Kevin Marino Cabrera, U.S. Ambassador to Panama, aboard the cutter for a tour of the ship, discussions about current operations and a Miami-inspired lunch prepared by Alert’s culinary specialists.

The crew also supported U.S. – Panama relations by hosting eight members from Panama’s National Aeronaval Service (SENAN) and Joint Maritime Force – Panama for joint training and a professional exchange of counter-narcotics best practices. Crew members conducted multiple joint pursuit-style, simulated interdictions with vessels and forces from SENAN. This training provided continued support of the Salas-Becker Complementary Agreement of 2002, which created a framework for U.S.–Panama bilateral cooperation to counter illicit drug trafficking by sea and air.

During a port-of-call visit to Golfito, Costa Rica, Alert’s crew welcomed representatives from the Costa Rican Coast Guard

aboard for a tour of the ship and an embarked MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from the Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, based in Jacksonville. The visit fostered joint nation interoperability and strengthened international counter-drug efforts in the region.

While at sea in the Coast Guard Southwest District area of responsibility, the crew conducted boardings to verify and enforce international law at sea in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

In addition, Alert crew members earned the title of shellback after crossing the equator, a title few sailors earn during a career.

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## **US Navy and Marines Select L3Harris T7 Robots to Enhance Ordnance Disposal Capabilities**



The L3Harris large T7 robotic systems will provide U.S. Navy and U.S. Marines with enhanced dexterity and performance to safely execute explosive ordnance disposal missions. (L3Harris)

[Release From L3Harris Technologies](#)

MELBOURNE, Fla., Jan. 14, 2026 – L3Harris Technologies (NYSE: LHX) has received an award to support the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marines with 34 large [T7™ robots](#) that will deliver enhanced capabilities for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) missions.

L3Harris T7 robots help keep troops out of harm's way by neutralizing explosive threats from a safe distance. The company designed the robotic systems for high-risk missions, providing mobility, manipulation and intuitive control.

“Recognized by both the Navy and Marines for outstanding dexterity and performance, L3Harris T7 robotic systems will provide them a significant advantage for their most challenging EOD missions,” said Dave Kornick, President, Intelligence and Cyber, Space and Mission Systems, L3Harris. “We’re honored to continue working with the Department of War and our key partners in the U.K. and Australia, who also use

the most advanced robotic technology available.”

Deliveries under this multi-year contract are scheduled to begin this year. L3Harris will also provide robotic system and comprehensive operator training.

This award follows a U.S. Air Force order for more than 100 robots in 2021. The Australian Defence Force and U.K. Ministry of Defence also use large T7 and medium-sized T4 robots to support their EOD missions.

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## Coast Guard Releases Force Design 2028 Initial Update, Highlights Return on Investment



[Release From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters](#)

WASHINGTON – The United States Coast Guard today released the [Force Design 2028 Initial Update](#), detailing the reforms implemented since January 2025 and the significant, measurable impacts these changes have delivered for the American people. The update underscores how Force Design 2028 has strengthened the Service’s operational effectiveness, improved workforce readiness, accelerated capability delivery, and generated unprecedented value for the Nation.

As a result of these reforms, the Coast Guard is better positioned today than at any point earlier this year to control, secure, and defend the U.S. southern border and maritime approaches; facilitate the uninterrupted flow of commerce; and rapidly respond to national and global contingencies.

“The United States Coast Guard serves as a vital instrument of national power, advancing security both at home and abroad, safeguarding the American economy, and providing rapid response to emergent contingencies. When I became the Secretary of Homeland Security, we took steps to change the Coast Guard in support of President Trump’s America First Agenda,” said Kristi Noem, Secretary of Homeland Security. “Through the implementation of Force Design 2028, the extraordinary return on investment—the value the Coast Guard provides to our Nation—is poised to grow even further. The men and women of the Coast Guard exemplify the very best of our Nation. We are immensely proud of their achievements through Force Design 2028. Together we will continue to put America First.”

“As we deliver the first update on Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard is already a stronger, more agile, capable, and responsive fighting force,” said Adm. Kevin Lunday, Acting Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. “The Service is better positioned than it was in January 2025 to effectively control, secure, and defend the U.S. borders and maritime approaches, facilitate the uninterrupted flow of commerce, and rapidly respond to contingencies. Force Design 2028 is already improving operational outcomes while establishing the foundation for even greater achievements in the future.”

### **Unmatched Return on America’s Investment**

Through disciplined and aggressive stewardship of its \$12.1 billion annual budget, the Coast Guard delivers an unmatched return on investment for the Nation. Conservative analysis shows the Service generates more than \$74 billion in social

and economic value through cost avoidance—representing a 6-to-1 return on taxpayer investment.

### **Historic Counter-Drug and Law Enforcement Results**

Since January 2025, the Coast Guard has seized more than 466,000 pounds of cocaine—equivalent to over 176 million lethal doses, enough to kill more than 52 percent of the U.S. population. In Fiscal Year 2025 alone, the Service interdicted more than 510,000 pounds of cocaine, the highest total in Coast Guard history and an increase of more than 200 percent over FY24.

Beyond interdictions, Coast Guard counter-drug and law enforcement missions generate substantial social value. Conservative estimates indicate these operations saved the Nation over \$10 billion in avoided costs, including more than \$2.27 billion in healthcare costs associated with cocaine interdiction alone.

### **Facilitating Commerce and Responding to Contingencies**

The Coast Guard's continued governance and protection of the Marine Transportation System enabled the safe movement of 1.8 billion tons of cargo in FY25—an increase of more than 13 percent from FY24—returning more than \$28 billion in value to the American people.

The Service also reaffirmed its enduring commitment to saving lives at sea. In FY25, Coast Guard crews saved nearly 5,000 lives and preserved/assisted more than \$974 million in property while responding to mariners in distress across the Nation's waterways.

### **Building a Larger, Healthier, and More Ready Workforce**

Force Design 2028 continues to advance efforts to build a healthier, more resilient, and mission-ready workforce, including progress toward expanding the force by 15,000 military members to meet evolving operational demands and support new assets.

In FY25, the Coast Guard exceeded 110 percent of its active-duty enlisted recruiting goal, enlisting more than 5,200 members—the highest total since 1991. The Service also achieved 104 percent of its Reserve Enlisted recruiting goal and 100 percent of its active-duty Officer mission.

### **Enhanced Agility in Response to National Priorities**

Increased agility resulting from Force Design 2028 initiatives enabled the Coast Guard to rapidly address emerging threats and national priorities:

- **Operation Border Trident**, launched in March 2025, targeted transnational terrorist and criminal organizations and illegal alien activity in the California Coastal Region, increasing interdictions by 44 percent compared to FY24.
- **Operation River Wall**, initiated in October 2025, secured approximately 260 miles of the Rio Grande River, resulting in the interdiction of 47 illegal aliens and the deterrence of 237 more.
- **Operation Pacific Viper**, launched in August 2025, doubled the Coast Guard's most capable assets in the Eastern Pacific. In just over four months, crews seized more than 170,000 pounds of illegal narcotics—averaging approximately 1,600 pounds of cocaine interdicted per day.

### **Structural Reform and Rapid Capability Delivery**

These outcomes were made possible by sweeping reforms enacted under Force Design 2028. The Coast Guard established new leadership roles—including Chief of Staff, Deputy Commandant for Systems, Deputy Commandant for Personnel, and Program Executive Offices—while eliminating 14 Admiral positions (32

percent) to streamline decision-making and maximize efficiency.

The Service also created the Rapid Response Prototype Team (RAPTOR) to deliver technology solutions at speed. RAPTOR transitioned a capability from concept to operational use in just three weeks, supporting Operation Border Trident with a contractor-owned, contractor-operated long-range unmanned aerial system employing artificial intelligence.

Additionally, the Coast Guard empowered commanders by revising administrative policies related to non-judicial punishment and delegating surface and airborne use-of-force authorities, increasing operational effectiveness at the tactical level.

### **Accelerated Investment and the Road Ahead**

Capability delivery is being further accelerated through Force Design 2028 and resources provided by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OB3). More than \$3 billion in OB3 funds have already been obligated, with 75 percent of total funding expected to be obligated by the end of FY26. In the coming months, the Coast Guard will implement major structural changes and investments, including:

- Establishing a Deployable Specialized Forces Command to enhance integration with the Department of War and optimize force employment.  
Expanding training capacity to support a growing force of more than 15,000 additional military members.
  
- Enhancing Maritime Domain Dominance through *Coastal Sentinel*, improving sensor integration and operational responsiveness.  
Rapidly identifying, testing, and acquiring commercially available boats, cutters, and aircraft to empower Coast Guard personnel across all mission areas.

- Executing a comprehensive Force Posture and Operational Concepts Campaign to transform how the Service organizes, trains, equips, and employs forces—streamlining strategic decision-making, decentralizing execution, and leveraging next-generation technologies to ensure enduring U.S. maritime dominance.

The [Force Design 2028 Initial Update](#) affirms the Coast Guard's commitment to reform, readiness, and results—delivering security, prosperity, and unmatched value for the American people today and into the future.

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## **BAE Systems Awarded \$62 Million Contract to Stand up Hawkeye IFF Service Depot**



*New depot capability speeds up repairs and increases combat readiness for U.S. Navy*

[Release From BAE Systems](#)

GREENLAWN, N.Y. – January 15, 2026 – The U.S. Navy has awarded BAE Systems a \$62 million contract to begin a new capability in the current depot line at the Fleet Readiness Center Southwest in San Diego, California for the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye aircraft interrogator system. The effort will provide testing, troubleshooting, diagnostic, and repair capabilities for the AN/APX-122A Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) interrogator system.

“This onsite maintenance center will enable the Navy to enhance mission readiness and platform availability, while reducing lifecycle costs and turnaround time,” said Damon Brady, director of Tactical Systems at BAE Systems. “It will establish a new operational capability to get critical command and control technologies to U.S. joint forces and allies faster.”

The interrogator system provides enhanced identification and enables faster decision making to distinguish between allied forces and potential threats in contested scenarios, giving operators the situational awareness they need to complete their missions. The E-2D carries out a variety of tactical missions that include command and control, border security, search and rescue, and missile defense.

BAE Systems will develop a depot test station within its facilities to perform diagnostics and repairs on critical modules within the E-2D IFF system and provide sustainment support once delivered to the U.S. Navy at the Fleet Readiness Center Southwest.

With more than 80 years of [IFF experience](#), BAE Systems has delivered over 16,000 transponders, 1,500 interrogators, and 6,000 combined interrogator transponder systems for use on new

and existing platforms, including unmanned aerial vehicles, ships, and rotary- and fixed-wing aircraft. IFF products are available for all service branches and support the U.S. and coalition forces in air defense, weapon systems, air traffic control, and range instrumentation.

The Hawkeye interrogator system is manufactured at BAE Systems' facilities in Greenlawn, New York and Manassas, Virginia.

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# **Lockheed Martin Delivers 350th Helicopter to U.S. Navy**



From Lockheed Martin

OWEGO, N.Y., Jan. 13, 2026 – In a recent ceremony, Lockheed

Martin (NYSE: LMT) delivered its 350th MH-60R "Romeo" helicopter to the United States Navy. The aircraft was delivered to HSM-41, the U.S. Navy's Helicopter Maritime Strike Fleet Replacement Squadron, training the U.S. Pacific Fleet's newest naval aviators and naval aircrewmembers to operate the MH-60R helicopter. This milestone marks a significant achievement in the production and delivery of world's most advanced naval helicopter.

The Sikorsky MH-60R has earned a reputation as the premier global anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopter platform, thanks to its advanced sensors, integrated mission systems, precision weapons and network-centric capability. Its proven operational performance has made it an unmatched asset in the global effort to counter increasingly capable submarine threats.

"The delivery of the 350th MH-60R helicopter is a testament to the exceptional capabilities of this aircraft and the dedication of our team," said Ali Ruwaih, Maritime Systems vice president. "We are proud to support the U.S. Navy and our global partners with this highly advanced multi-mission platform, which will remain a critical component of global ASW operations for decades to come."

With advanced [sensors](#), radars, Electronic Support Measures, data links and weapons, the [MH-60R](#) has repeatedly proven its combat worth, most recently shooting down an enemy drone during a maritime security patrol in the Gulf of Aden by utilizing its advanced sensor suite and rapid engagement capability. The Romeo crew successfully sank multiple Houthi-armed skiffs in the Red Sea, neutralizing threats to merchant vessels and safeguarding vital shipping lanes. The MH60R also played a key role in the Resolute Hunter exercise, integrating seamlessly with allied surface combatants, enhancing antisubmarine warfare coordination and showcasing its versatility in joint multinational operations.

“The MH-60R has been the U.S. Navy’s primary anti-submarine and surface warfare helicopter since 2010. This true multi-mission asset has proven itself in all aspects of land or maritime operations providing various mission requirements around the globe. We are grateful to the artisans at Sikorsky for keeping this invaluable asset at the ready for all our service men and women for decades to come,” said Captain William Hargreaves, H-60 Multi-Mission Helicopters program manager.

With its network-centric design, the MH-60R enables seamless communication and data exchange with other ASW assets, enhancing situational awareness and facilitating coordinated ASW operations. Aligned with Lockheed Martin’s 21st Century Security framework, the aircraft’s openarchitecture avionics suite allows rapid integration of emerging sensors and weapons.

The Romeo’s service life is expected to extend into the 2050s, and its active production line ensures that customers can continue to acquire new aircraft and upgrade their existing fleets with the latest capabilities.

With more than one million collective flight hours, Lockheed Martin has delivered MH-60R aircraft to the United States, Australia, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, India, Greece and South Korea, with upcoming scheduled deliveries to Spain and Norway.

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**Undersea**

**Technology**

# Innovation Consortium and Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport Enter Cooperative Research and Development Agreement



From The Undersea Technology Innovation Consortium

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. – The Undersea Technology Innovation Consortium (UTIC) announced today that the organization has entered into a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) with the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) Division Newport.

Through this agreement, UTIC and NUWC Division Newport will collaborate to advance and promote innovative undersea technologies that will help maintain U.S. dominance of the undersea domain.

This collaboration directly supports NUWC Division Newport's *Mastery of the Seas*, a strategic plan to expand the battlespace from the seabed to space, drive the integration of new technologies, and strengthen partnerships with industry to accelerate the delivery of systems and platforms to the warfighter.

The CRADA establishes a formal framework for communication and collaboration between UTIC and NUWC Division Newport on emerging technologies and capabilities relevant to undersea warfare and maritime operations.

“Through this CRADA, UTIC is proud to deepen our partnership with NUWC Division Newport and further our shared commitment to advancing undersea technology,” said Molly Donohue Magee, Chief Executive Officer at UTIC. “By connecting innovators from industry and academia with government experts and real-world challenges, we can accelerate the development and adoption of technologies that strengthen our undersea advantage.”

Under the agreement, UTIC will serve as a liaison and facilitator for industry outreach efforts. These efforts are designed to elevate promising undersea and maritime technologies developed by industry and academic partners.

“This partnership enhances our ability to identify, assess, and engage with emerging technologies that support the Navy’s

undersea mission,” said Marie Bussiere, Technical Director, NUWC Division Newport. “Working with UTIC expands our reach into the private sector’s innovation ecosystem and helps ensure we remain at the forefront of undersea warfare capabilities.”

As part of the collaboration, UTIC, with input from NUWC Division Newport, will host a minimum of two Industry–NUWC engagement events, two Undersea Virtual Tech Talks, and one in-person Tech Showcase annually, creating multiple opportunities for collaboration and information sharing throughout the year.

“Agreements like this CRADA enable NUWC Division Newport to work closely with trusted partners to accelerate innovation,” said CAPT Kevin J. Behm, Commanding Officer of NUWC Division Newport. “By fostering collaboration with nonprofit organizations, industry, and academia, we are strengthening our ability to deliver advanced undersea capabilities in support of the U.S. Navy.”

The CRADA underscores UTIC’s mission to foster a collaborative environment for the rapid development of innovative undersea and maritime technologies, while supporting NUWC Division Newport’s role as the Navy’s center of excellence for undersea warfare research, development, testing, and evaluation.

### **About the Undersea Technology Innovation Consortium (UTIC)**

The Undersea Technology Innovation Consortium (UTIC) promotes the rapid development, prototyping, and commercialization of innovative undersea and maritime. UTIC represents a united undersea and maritime industry voice, breaking down barriers to growth by identifying and integrating undersea and maritime technology resources and opportunities, and providing the environment to collaborate on innovative solutions. For more information on UTIC, visit <https://www.underseatech.org/>.

### **About Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport (NUWC)**

NUWC Newport is the oldest warfare center in the country, tracing its heritage to the Naval Torpedo Station established on Goat Island in Newport Harbor in 1869. Commanded by Capt. Kevin Behm, NUWC Newport maintains major detachments in West Palm Beach, Florida, and Andros Island in the Bahamas, as well as test facilities at Seneca Lake and Fisher's Island, New York, Leesburg, Florida, and Dodge Pond, Connecticut.

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## **GA-ASI and USN Test Expanded Sonobuoy Dispensing System for MQ-9B SeaGuardian**



From General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.

SAN DIEGO – 13 January 2026 – General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and the U.S. Navy continue to expand the Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capability of the

MQ-9B SeaGuardian® Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS). Flight test was performed on December 17 and featured Sonobuoy Dispensing System (SDS) pods, more than previously tested, doubling the number of sonobuoys available.

“Expanding sonobuoy capacity, including Multi-static Active Coherent (MAC) technology for SeaGuardian, has been an integral part of our advanced ASW strategy to broaden and enhance search areas,” said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. “The wider maritime coverage our MQ-9B’s ASW capability provides is extremely valuable to our customers.”

Sonobuoys are naval sensors that drop from an aircraft into the ocean and help detect submarines. The SeaGuardian deployed AN/SSQ-36 Bathythermal, AN/SSQ-53G Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording (DIFAR) (passive), and AN/SSQ-62F Directional Command Activated Sonobuoy System (DICASS) (active) buoys. This was the first time Multi-static Active Coherent (MAC) buoys have been dispensed from an uncrewed aircraft. The MAC buoys are better at detecting submarines over large areas and require fewer buoys compared to using DIFAR and DICASS.

Sponsored by the U.S. Navy, the flight tests were specifically aimed at certifying the SDS. This flight testing supports the Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet’s Operational Evaluation deployment to SEVENTH Fleet and enjoyed additional support and governmental supervision from the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) AIRWorks.

Upon completion of the testing and data review, the U.S. Navy is expected to give GA-ASI deployment flight clearance for ASW operations using MQ-9B SeaGuardian in January 2026.

SeaGuardian has also been used by the U.S. Navy in various recent exercises, including [Northern Edge](#), [Integrated Battle Problem](#), [RIMPAC](#), and [Group Sail](#).

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# Navy Demonstrates AI-enabled Autonomy for Future Collaborative Combat Aircraft



The U.S. Navy's BQM-177A subsonic aerial target launches autonomously from a simulated platform during a Dec. 11 demonstration at Point Mugu Sea Range, California. (U.S. Navy photo)

From Naval Air Systems Command, Jan 12, 2026

NAS PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy recently completed a second successful demonstration advancing multi-platform coordination of autonomous systems, an essential step toward developing future Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA).

The Dec. 11 event at Point Mugu Sea Range in California focused on maturing manned-unmanned teaming

capabilities for CCA, which are intended to extend the reach of carrier air wings and deliver scalable, cost-effective platforms capable of operating in contested environments.

“This demonstration is an important step toward advancing autonomous capabilities for the fleet,” said Rear Adm. Tony Rossi, Program Executive Officer for Unmanned Aviation and Strike Weapons (PEO (U&W)). “Integrating AI-enabled autonomy across manned and unmanned platforms will be critical as the Navy develops next-generation air wing concepts and prepares for more complex operational environments.”

PEO (U&W)’s Aerial Targets (PMA-208) and Strike Planning and Execution Systems (PMA-281) program offices led the effort with industry partners Shield AI, Kratos, and CTSI. Shield AI served as lead systems integrator and mission autonomy provider, overseeing platform modifications, payload integration, and technical coordination across government and industry. Kratos supplied the aircraft, and CTSI delivered the mission planning and pilot-vehicle interface front end.

During the demonstration, two BQM-177A subsonic aerial targets were flown autonomously using Shield AI’s Hivemind software and connected to a Live Virtual Constructive (LVC) environment. This environment included a virtual F/A-18 and two simulated adversary aircraft, allowing real and simulated assets to operate together in the same scenario.

In this setup, the virtual F/A-18 acted as the mission lead, directing the BQM-177As to defend designated Combat Air Patrol locations. When the simulated adversary aircraft attempted to move into those areas and threaten U.S. forces, the autonomously controlled BQM-177As responded according to their mission tasking.

The event also marked major progress in implementing the Navy’s Autonomy Government Reference Architecture (A-GRA) interfaces, which is key to improving interoperability

and accelerating the integration of mission autonomy across future unmanned naval platforms.

“The fact that this is the first time we’re flying a fully autonomous aircraft in execution of a mission beyond the visual range of the remote-control operator is laying the foundation for allowing autonomous mission planning in the future,” said Veronica Wesson, PMA-281 special projects integrated program team lead. “Being able to accomplish all of this over only a 16-month period using the new agile methods of contracting was a great experience.”

This event builds on an August demonstration in which the Navy and Shield AI validated the foundational Advanced Vehicle Control Laws (AVCL) and basic autonomous behaviors required for autonomous control of the BQM-177A.

The Navy and Shield AI plan to conduct additional development and fleet exercises in 2026 and beyond. The use of surrogate platforms like the BQM-177A allows for rapid testing and improvement, providing a cost-effective alternative to operational platforms during early development phases. This approach validates that surrogate platforms accelerate the autonomy testing cycle, ensuring the system can handle real-world conditions, enabling continuous improvement in a cost-efficient and iterative manner.

PMA-208 and PMA-281 fall under the PEO (U&W) and play critical roles in delivering advanced capabilities to the fleet.

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## **USCGC Hickory Arrives in**

# Guam, Restoring Full Buoy Tender Capacity in Oceania



The USCGC Hickory (WLB 212), a 225-foot Juniper-class seagoing buoy tender, arrives in Apra Harbor as it comes to their new homeport in Guam on Jan. 14, 2026, following a more than 13,000-mile transit over 71 days from the U.S. Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore through the Panama Canal. After an extended Major Maintenance Availability at the Yard, part of the In-Service Vessel Sustainment Program that modernizes the entire Juniper-class fleet with hull repairs, system upgrades, and replacement of obsolete equipment, the Hickory is now fully revitalized. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Chief Warrant Officer Muir)

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia, Jan. 14, 2026

SANTA RITA, Guam – The USCGC Hickory (WLB 212), a 225-foot Juniper-class seagoing buoy tender, arrived at its new

homeport in Guam on Wednesday, following a more than 13,000-mile transit over 71 days from the U.S. Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore through the Panama Canal.

After an extended Major Maintenance Availability at the Yard, part of the In-Service Vessel Sustainment Program that modernizes the entire Juniper-class fleet with hull repairs, system upgrades, and replacement of obsolete equipment, the Hickory is now fully revitalized.

These enhancements ensure the cutter's reliability for its full 30-year service life, boosting operational efficiency and mission readiness. The Hickory's arrival marks a key milestone for the U.S. Coast Guard Oceania District, restoring the full complement of three seagoing buoy tenders dedicated to the vast Pacific region. Homeported in Guam, the Hickory specializes in maintaining aids to navigation, critical for safe passage through strategic sea lanes that support military forward posture and vital commercial shipping.

The cutter's area of responsibility encompasses 143 ATON, of which 90 are federally maintained. Reliable ATON is essential for marking navigational hazards and preventing maritime accidents that could disrupt maritime traffic, endanger vessels, or cause economic impacts in this geopolitically significant theater. En route to homeport, Hickory visited Majuro from Jan. 7 to 8 to conduct joint reconnaissance of existing port buoys with the Marshall Islands Ports Authority. The assessment supported future maintenance and upgrade planning aimed at improving maritime safety, port access, and resilience.

During Hickory's absence, U.S. Coast Guard personnel maintained operations through resourceful measures, including deploying jump teams. In the fall of 2023, cutter personnel, having safely delivered Hickory's predecessor, USCGC Sequoia, to the Yards, conducted a full assessment of the local ATON

constellation and made repairs through a combination of dive teams and shoreside support to all the aids affected by the Category 5 Typhoon Mawar, which made landfall in May.

The sister ship USCGC Juniper came out in November 2023 to work on aids. More recently, in October 2025, a jump team from the Aids to Navigation Team Honolulu rapidly repaired seven critical aids across Guam, Rota, Saipan, and Tinian, demonstrating exceptional ingenuity amid operational challenges as the cutter crew worked to bring the ship back to Guam.

With Hickory's specialized crane and capabilities, the cutter is poised to address up to seven outstanding federal aids in the Guam and Saipan areas, including several buoys, dayboards, and ranges, further enhancing maritime safety.

As a multi-mission platform, the Hickory crew will also support search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection, and homeland security operations across Oceania's expansive waters.

"This crew has shown remarkable resilience through extended separations and demanding preparations. We are excited to reunite with our families in Guam and eager to get underway on ATON missions that keep these vital sea lanes safe. As a multi-mission cutter, Hickory stands ready to support the full spectrum of Coast Guard operations in this critical region," said Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan Lash, commanding officer of Hickory.

Hickory was previously known as "The Kenai Keeper" and "Bull of the North" while in Alaska. Its current moniker is "Bull of the Pacific." The USCGC Juniper (WLB 201) and USCGC Hollyhock (WLB 214), both homeported in Honolulu, round out the roster of seagoing buoy tenders in the Oceania District.

The U.S. Coast Guard operates 16 Juniper-class 225-foot seagoing buoy tenders (WLB 201-216), commissioned between 1996 and 2004. These multi-mission cutters feature a length of 225

feet, a beam of 46 feet, twin diesel propulsion for a 6,000 nautical-mile range at 12 knots, and a crew of approximately 48. As of 2025, all 16 have completed or are undergoing their Midlife Maintenance Availability program to extend their service life and enhance operational reliability.