

Coast Guard holds special status ceremony for Cutter Bayberry



[Release from Coast Guard 5th District](#)

June 7, 2023

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The Coast Guard held a special status ceremony at Station Oak Island, N.C. Wednesday morning to signify the beginning of it being decommissioned after 69 years of active Coast Guard service.

The Bayberry was built by Reliable Welding Works in Olympia, WA, and spent its first 17 years in the San Francisco area, with a three year stay in Rio Vista CA, before returning to Seattle in 1971. When it returned to Washington, it was

retrofitted with a 60-foot barge for operations and was the only one of its kind. The cutter also became a primary deployer of the Vessel of Opportunity Skimming System, an oil spill recovery system. The Bayberry's operations in Seattle spanned from 1971 until 2009 when it was relocated to Oak Island.

The Bayberry's recent accomplishments include post-hurricane Dorian operations, where the crew led a waterways reconstitution mission, completed a complex voyage correcting 40 aids to navigation discrepancies, enabling the rapid resumption of ferry service, and facilitating the delivery of emergency supplies to 700 residents stranded on Ocracoke Island. In 2021, when extensive shoaling suddenly compromised Oregon Inlet Channel and no other capable asset was available to respond, the cutter led a 400-mile mission to the Outer Banks to retrieve and relocate five buoys that dangerously misled mariners, significantly enhancing the safety of this busy waterway, preserving search and rescue capabilities, and sustaining the local economy.

Marine Corps Systems Command Begins Fielding Cutting-edge Ultra Light Tactical Vehicle



[Release from Marine Corps Systems Command](#)

June 6, 2023

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – Marine Corps Systems Command has begun fielding the new Ultra Light Tactical Vehicle, or ULTV, reaching initial operational capability and marking a significant milestone in the Corps' Force Design 2030 modernization efforts. This state-of-the-art tactical vehicle is set to enhance infantry, reconnaissance, and logistics mobility and sustainability, providing the modern warfighter with an advanced, lightweight solution tailored for operations in an anti-access/area denial environment.

"Fielding the ULTV serves as a signal that the Corps is keeping in stride with the ambitious roadmap laid out in Force Design 2030," said Col. John Gutierrez, portfolio manager for

Logistics Combat Element Systems. “This new capability will ultimately help forge a more agile and resilient Corps—one which is empowered to overcome the evolving complexities of modern warfare.”

Fielding operations will proceed in conjunction with the First Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Pendleton, California. The first ULTVs have already arrived at I MEF, with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines receiving the initial vehicle set. An ongoing, structured roll-out will continue throughout the MEF, culminating in August, followed by additional fielding events across the Marine Corps.

The ULTV, a modular, off-road utility vehicle, is currently replacing the Utility Task Vehicle, or UTV, which has reached the end of its lifecycle. With its ability to be rapidly configured, the ULTV supports diverse infantry needs, ranging from logistical support and casualty evacuation to command and control and electronic warfare missions. Furthermore, the ULTV can be internally transported in the MV-22 and CH-53E/K, further facilitating rapid deployment.

“The ULTV is more than just a tactical vehicle; it enhances our capabilities across the board, ensuring the success of our mission and the safety of our Marines,” said Program Manager for Light Tactical Vehicles Jennifer Moore. “The ability to rapidly configure the ULTV to suit diverse mission needs— from logistical support to electronic warfare— enhances our capabilities in previously unimagined ways.”

GA-ASI SEAGUARDIAN® SUPPORTS NORTHERN EDGE 2023



[Release from General Atomics](#)

Flights Featured ESM, COMINT, Detect and Avoid, AIS, and Link 16 Capabilities

SAN DIEGO – 07 June 2023 – As part of a U.S. Navy contract, an MQ-9B SeaGuardian® Unmanned Aircraft System from General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) supported the NORTHERN EDGE 2023 (NE23) exercise May 8-19, 2023. The training exercise, which took place in the Gulf of Alaska, was one of a series of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (IPACOM) exercises that prepares joint forces to respond to crises in the Asia Pacific region.

GA-ASI's SeaGuardian is a maritime derivative of the MQ-9B SkyGuardian® and remains the first UAS that offers multi-domain Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Targeting (ISR&T) and has an internal payload suite that can prosecute

surface and subsurface targets in support of Fleet Operations.

During NE23, SeaGuardian provided real-time Maritime ISR&T data feeds to the various IPACOM operations centers including Pacific Fleet, Pacific Air Forces, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Joint Exercise Control Group (JECG) and various exercise and real-world watch floors. Real-time sensor data – including Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), radar, and full-motion video – was Processed, Exploited and Disseminated (PED) by operators via Minotaur Mission System. The Minotaur system was developed by the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. It links sensors, SIGINT, cameras, radar and communications equipment into a single, automated system that allows operators to more efficiently identify, track and target simultaneously with other users for expedited dynamic tasking. This classified data was transmitted to the Joint Fires Network using new DoD technologies allowing for the smart routing of communications between widely distributed communications nodes.

In addition, SeaGuardian showcased an array of operational payloads, including Electronic Support Measures (ESM), Radar Moving Target Indication (MTI) and Inverse Synthetic-Aperture Radar (ISAR), Communication Intelligence (COMINT), Automatic Identification System (AIS), high-definition Electro-Optical/Infra-Red (EO/IR) imaging system and Link 16.

The [ESM](#) payload on SeaGuardian was supplied by Sierra Nevada Corporation and the [COMINT](#) payload was made by L3Harris Technologies. The aircraft featured the [SeaVue](#) Multi-role radar from Raytheon Technologies. GA-ASI's Link 16 solution leveraged the L3Harris Small Tactical Terminal (STT) [KOR-24A](#) radio and Ultra Electronics Air Defense Systems Integrator ([ADSI](#)) host software ran on the Parry Labs [Stellar Relay](#) Common Compute Module.

The GA-ASI-developed Detect and Avoid (DAA) system was also

installed in SeaGuardian and received a limited certification from NAVAIR. This enabled SeaGuardian to perform beyond visual line-of-sight (BVLOS) operations within the exercise airspace.

SeaGuardian's multi-domain capabilities allows it to flex from mission to mission and pass real-time sensor data directly to the fleet through Link 16 and satellite feeds to the shore-based command and intelligence centers. During NE23, the MQ-9B effectively passed ISR&T information to various surface and air units, and a litany of other U.S. and foreign units taking part in the exercise.

In addition to its contributions to the exercise, the SeaGuardian self-deployed from GA-ASI's Desert Horizons flight operations facility in El Mirage, Calif., to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, covering over 2,000 nautical miles in a single flight and demonstrated SeaGuardian's unrivalled expeditionary attributes. The aircraft self-deployed back to El Mirage following the exercise. All flights were flown from a forward deployed Mission Command Element comprised of a Certified Ground Control Station and Mission Intelligence Station located Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, exercising UAS Expeditionary Concept of Operations (CONOPS) in support of Exercise objectives.

Makin Island ARG, 13th MEU Return to Home Port San Diego



Photo By

[Gunnery Sgt. Chad Pulliam](#)

| PACIFIC OCEAN (Dec. 18, 2022) – A U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II pilot with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 122, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, performs a vertical landing aboard amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island as Indonesian servicemembers view the landing from Indonesian Navy vessels during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training/ Marine Exercise (MAREX) Indonesia 2022, Dec. 18. CARAT/MAREX Indonesia is a bilateral exercise between Indonesia and the United States designed to promote regional security cooperation, maintain and strengthen maritime partnerships, and enhance maritime interoperability. In its 28th year, the CARAT series is comprised of multinational exercises, designed to enhance U.S. and partner navies' and marine corps abilities to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Chad J. Pulliam)

Release from [Expeditionary Strike Group Three](#)

SAN DIEGO, CA, UNITED STATES

06.06.2023

Courtesy Story

[Expeditionary Strike Group Three](#)

The Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group, led by commander, Amphibious Squadron 7 and comprised of amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8) and amphibious transport docks USS Anchorage (LPD 23) and USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26), with the embarked 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, returns to San Diego this week following a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations.

“Our goal was to achieve interoperability with our allies and partners and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. We accomplished that mission and brought every single Sailor and Marine home safely,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Andria Slough, commanding officer of Makin Island. “While the world witnessed our ARG-MEU team strengthening partnerships, I had a front-row seat to the tremendous amount of skill, dedication and hard work of 2,500 people each day of deployment. It’s awe-inspiring to watch Sailors and Marines at their very best!”

The Makin Island ARG and the 13th MEU successfully integrated capabilities of approximately 4,500 Sailors and Marines, supported allied interoperability during seven exercises, and traveled more than 47,000 nautical miles across the Indo-Pacific while deployed. Makin Island embarked all elements of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, consisting of the 13th MEU Command Element; the Ground Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team 2/4; the Logistics Combat Element, Combat Logistics Battalion 13; the Aviation Combat Element, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 362 (Reinforced), and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 122, which included a full squadron of 10 F-35B Lightning IIs.

The ARG-MEU team began the deployment with Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercises alongside regional partners and allies. The CARAT 2022 maritime exercise series promoted regional security cooperation, maintained and strengthened maritime partnerships, and enhanced interoperability among participating forces. Makin Island executed CARAT missions with Indonesia in December and Singapore in January, and Anchorage and John P. Murtha spent time training with members of the Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste militaries, respectively.

From February to March 2023, the Makin Island ARG and the 13th MEU participated in the 42nd iteration of exercise Cobra Gold with the Royal Thai Navy and Marine Corps. Cobra Gold is one of the largest multilateral theater security cooperation exercises in the Indo-Pacific and reflects the U.S. commitment to allies and partners, providing a continuous and reliable platform to train, prepare, and enhance regional stability and interoperability. Participants included Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Singapore, as well as participants from more than 20 other nations.

“I am so proud of all our Marines and Sailors as we return from this action-packed, seven-month deployment after exceeding all of our goals,” said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Samuel Meyer, commanding officer of the 13th MEU. “Through our Navy and Marine Corps integration, we worked with our partners and allies, creating personal bonds that will last a lifetime. From the CARAT series with Indonesia, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Sri Lanka to our three large exercises with Thailand, Republic of Korea and the Philippines, we further strengthened these critical relationships that will continue to grow with routine ARG-MEU deployments to the region.”

The ARG-MEU participated in bilateral Exercise Ssang Yong 2023 alongside the ROK Navy and Marine Corps from March to April, reinforcing U.S. commitment. Operational exercises such as

SY23 demonstrate the alliance remains ironclad, contributes to regional security, and promotes stability in northeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. During Ssang Yong, the 13th MEU disembarked the entirety of Battalion Landing Team 2/4 to participate in military operations in urban terrain training, close-quarters battle training, and various live-fire ranges with our ROK counterparts.

The Makin Island ARG and the 13th MEU wrapped up the deployment by participating in exercise Balikatan 2023 with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in April. The 17,600 participants made it the largest iteration of the exercise to date. Together, the two militaries trained side-by-side, developing interoperability and improved capability in the areas of maritime security, amphibious operations, live-fire training, urban and aviation operations, cyber defense, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness.

An integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary to flawlessly execute our Navy's role across the full spectrum of military operations that range from combat operations to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security for the Indo-Pacific region.

Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) embarked on Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG) are characterized by their sea-based forward presence and expeditionary nature. As the Nation's premier crisis response force, the ARG/MEUs provide a flexible and lethal force ready to perform a wide range of military, humanitarian, and diplomatic operations around the globe without the need for access, basing and overflight. Operating in international waters, this Navy-Marine Corps team also

provides flexible deterrence options in key sea lines of communication and adjacent littorals near strategic chokepoints and can seize and hold maritime terrain in the defense of national interests.

Expeditionary Strike Group 3 comprises three amphibious squadrons, 15 amphibious warships, and eight naval support elements including approximately 18,000 active-duty and reserve Sailors and Marines. As the deputy commander for amphibious and littoral warfare, U.S. 3rd Fleet, the ESG 3 commander also oversees Mine Countermeasures Group 3 and the 14 littoral combat ships and two subordinate divisions under Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1. ESG 3 is postured in support of U.S. 3rd Fleet as a globally responsive and scalable naval command element, capable of generating, deploying, and employing naval forces and formations for crisis and contingency response, forward presence, and major combat operations focusing on amphibious operations, humanitarian and disaster relief and support to defense civil authorities, and expeditionary logistics.

Marine Corps Announces the 20th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps



Release from Communications Directorate, Headquarters Marine Corps

WASHINGTON – Sergeant Major Carlos A. Ruiz has been selected to serve as the 20th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps.

Sgt. Maj. Ruiz is currently serving as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader for U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve and U.S. Marines Corps Forces South. He will replace Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Troy E. Black during a relief and appointment ceremony slated for Aug. 8, 2023.

Sgt. Maj. Black has served as the 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps since July 26, 2019. Following the ceremony, he will relinquish his post as the highest-ranking enlisted Marine and principal enlisted advisor to the Commandant.

Sgt. Maj. Ruiz is a native of Phoenix, Arizona. He joined the Marine Corps Nov. 2, 1993, and attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, California. He began his career as a Marine Corps warehouse clerk with 3rd Supply Battalion, 3rd Force Service Support Group, in Okinawa, Japan. He continued his career as an enlisted leader serving across the Corps to include 1st Service Support Group; 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment; and

4th Marine Logistics Group.

He has deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and operations with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Outside of the Marine Corps operating forces, Sgt. Maj. Ruiz has served as a recruiter in Los Angeles, a drill instructor with 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, MCRD San Diego, and as an instructor, drill master and chief instructor for Drill Instructor School, MCRD San Diego.

Sgt. Maj. Ruiz will serve as Commandant of the Marine Corps' preeminent enlisted advisor with a protocol equivalency of a three-star general officer.

The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps typically serves a four-year term, though service in the position is at the discretion of the Commandant.

The post of Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps was established in 1957 as the senior enlisted advisor to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the first such post in any of the branches of the United States Armed Forces.

Navy accepts upgraded E-6B Mercury, delivering enhanced capabilities to the fleet



Members of the U.S. Navy and Northrop Grumman Corp. in Lake Charles, Louisiana, with the first E-6B Mercury upgraded by Northrop Grumman under the new Integrated Modification and Maintenance Contract. They include Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, commander of Naval Air Systems Command, and Capt. Adam Scott, program manager for the Airborne Strategic Command, Control and Communications Program Office. Photo courtesy of Northrop Grumman Corp.

[Release from Naval Air Systems Command](#)

Published: Jun 6, 2023

LAKE CHARLES, La. – The U.S. Navy this month accepted the first E-6B Mercury upgraded by Northrop Grumman Corp. in Lake Charles, delivering enhanced airborne strategic communication capabilities to the warfighter.

The upgrade supports the Navy's nuclear deterrence mission, ensuring the president, secretary of defense and U.S. Strategic Command remain connected to the U.S. nuclear arsenal

in a worst-case scenario.

Northrop Grumman Corp. conducted the upgrades over the last year at its Aircraft Maintenance and Fabrication Center at Lake Charles. Under its Integrated Maintenance and Modification Contract (IMMC) with the Navy, it will overhaul multiple E-6B Mercury aircraft by 2027. The \$111 million contract provides six major modifications – called Block II – to improve the aircrafts' command, control and communications functions connecting the National Command Authority with U.S. strategic and non-strategic forces.

Block II will ensure the E-6B can successfully execute their mission for years to come.

Upgrades to the second aircraft are already underway.

"The delivery of the first IMMC aircraft is a monumental achievement," said Bob Stailey, the E-6B deputy program manager for the Airborne Strategic Command, Control, and Communications Program Office (PMA-271), which awarded and manages the maintenance contract. "We are delivering enhanced capabilities to the fleet quicker and ensuring they have the tools to successfully execute this critical mission for years to come."

Working with the Navy, Northrop Grumman is getting closer to the contract's required turnaround time of six months by implementing process improvements that span engineering, scheduling, management and production. This is the first time a single company is responsible for the entire installation, reducing bureaucracy and improving speed.

"An incredible amount of work went into this aircraft, which can now perform its nuclear deterrence mission better than ever." said Capt. Adam Scott, PMA-271 program manager. "During the past year, the team that fielded this capability worked tirelessly to implement improvements to deliver the Block II capability with urgency."

Pilots from Strategic Communications Wing One (SCW-1) picked up the plane on June 6 and flew it home to Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma.

The E-6B Mercury is a communications relay and strategic airborne command post aircraft. It executes the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission, connecting the president and secretary of defense with naval ballistic missile forces during times of crisis, and the Airborne Command Post mission, which facilitates the launch of U.S. land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles using an airborne launch control system.

It is flown by Navy Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadrons 3 and 4 under SCW-1 out of Tinker Air Force Base.

PMA-271 is an acquisition command with the mission of delivering and supporting survivable, reliable and endurable airborne command, control and communications for the president, secretary of defense and U.S. Strategic Command. The program's vision is to provide national security and deterrence through assured airborne strategic communications.

Coast Guard Cutter Maurice Jester commissions in Rhode Island



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard 1st District](#)

June 6, 2023

Coast Guard Cutter Maurice Jester commissions in Rhode Island

BOSTON – The Coast Guard's newest cutter, the Coast Guard Cutter Maurice Jester (WPC-1152), was commissioned at Fort Adams State Park, Rhode Island, Friday.

Lt. Terry Netusil, assumed command of the cutter during a ceremony presided over by Vice Adm. Kevin Lunday, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area commander. The Maurice Jester is the third of six Fast Response Cutters that will be homeported in Boston, serving along the 1st Coast Guard District.

The Sentinel-class fast response cutter (FRC) is designed for multiple missions, including drug and migrant interdiction; ports, waterways and coastal security; fishery patrols; search and rescue; and national defense. The Coast Guard has ordered

65 FRCs to replace the 1980s-era Island-class 110-foot patrol boats. The FRCs feature advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment; over-the-horizon cutter boat deployment to reach vessels of interest; and improved habitability and seakeeping.

Born in Chincoteague, Virginia, Lt. Cmdr. Maurice Jester enlisted in the United States Coast Guard in 1917, rising to the rank of Chief Petty Officer Boatswains Mate by 1936. As the United States entered World War II in 1941, Chief Jester was promoted to Lieutenant and given command of the USCGC Icarus (WPC 110). Only one year later, LT Jester along with his crew, became the first U.S. Ship to capture the crew of a German U-Boat after it's sinking. For his heroics in the sinking and rescue of the German Sailors aboard U-352, LT Maurice Jester was awarded the Navy Cross and promoted to Lieutenant Commander for his leadership.

TRANSCOM to Double Sealift Tanker Force



ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) plan to double the number of fuel tankers in its Tanker Security Program to improve the capacity to deliver fuel to forward operating forces, particularly in the Pacific, the TRANSCOM's commander said.

"We are concerned about not having enough U.S.-flagged vessels to meet our requirements, so we are absolutely getting after that with the support of Congress," said Air Force General Jacqueline Van Ovost, commander, U.S. Transportation Command, speaking June 6 to an audience of the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. "We have stood up the Tanker Security Program. We now have 10 U.S.-flagged tankers – manned with U.S. merchant mariners – medium-range tankers that we will be able to use to assuredly be able to have access to in times of conflict. And we're working on the next 10 as well to assuredly move fuel to inside the first and second island chain, more shallow-draft vessels that we didn't have before."

TRANSCOM has taken on from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) the role of transporting and delivering fuel to U.S. forces abroad.

“The new strategic environment exposes vulnerabilities to our supply chain management that we just didn’t have before,” Van Ovost said. “So, this new global fuel mission allows us to take the very best of DLA Energy and what they’re doing, which is the business end of managing supply chains and allows us to put our TRANSCOM expertise of command and control and planning and posture to ensure that we can deliver that fuel wherever and whenever we need it.

“We also need to re-look where our fuel posture is to meet the requirements – what do we have to have forward, where are the refineries, etc., how are we going to move that fuel and how are we going to have the assets to do it,” she said.

Marine Corps Generals to Integrate with Navy Numbered Fleet Staffs



CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa (Feb.16, 2023) U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Derek Trinque, commander Task Force 76/3, left, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Rear Admiral Motoyuki Kanezashi, commander, Amphibious and Mine Warfare Force, left-center, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Maj. Gen. Shingo Nashinoki, commander, Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, right-center, and U.S. Marine Brig. Gen. Fridrik Fridriksson, deputy commander TF 76/3, right, pose for a photo during Iron Fist 23 aboard Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, Feb. 16, 2023. This visit took place during Exercise Iron Fist and provided an overview of TF 76/3, focusing on the command-and-control structure and command position, and how it improves the commander's ability to control forces and command from ashore without the need to embark. Iron Fist is a U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific-directed, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit-executed, bilateral training exercise between the U.S. Marine Corps and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and aims to improve staff planning, enhance core competencies in amphibious operations and interoperability, and maintain a positive military-to-military relationship between Japan and the United States. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Ochoa)

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps is planning to

establish integrated staffs with two U.S. Navy numbered fleets next year, according to the latest update to its Force Design 2030 concept.

The Corps plans to integrate a brigadier general in the headquarters staffs of U.S. Sixth Fleet and the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

"We need to formalize the process for establishing integrated Navy-Marine Corps staffs with numbered fleets while giving the MEF CGs [Marine Expeditionary Force commanding generals] the ability to adapt organizations to the specific needs of their partner numbered fleets," said General David H. Berger in the latest Force Design 2030 document. "Whenever feasible, and in coordination with the efforts of the appropriate combatant commanders, these integrated staffs should also include key ally and partner representation to strengthen our integrated deterrence, offering a mature approach to campaigning.

"NLT 1 September 2024, Commander, Marine Corps Forces Pacific (COMMARFORPAC) and Commander, Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa (COMMARFOREUR/ AF) will formalize the establishment of O-7 staffs within Sixth and Seventh Fleet headquarters."

Lieutenant General Karsten S. Heckl, deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration and commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, speaking June 2 to reporters in press conference, said the move would be in accordance with the commandant's guidance to returning to a Fleet Marine Force.

"A big piece of that is getting the staffs right," Heckl said. "We realize now more than ever that in this operating environment – now that we're back to great power competition, without question – it is important that these staffs be properly, fully integrated, or we're going to have problems.

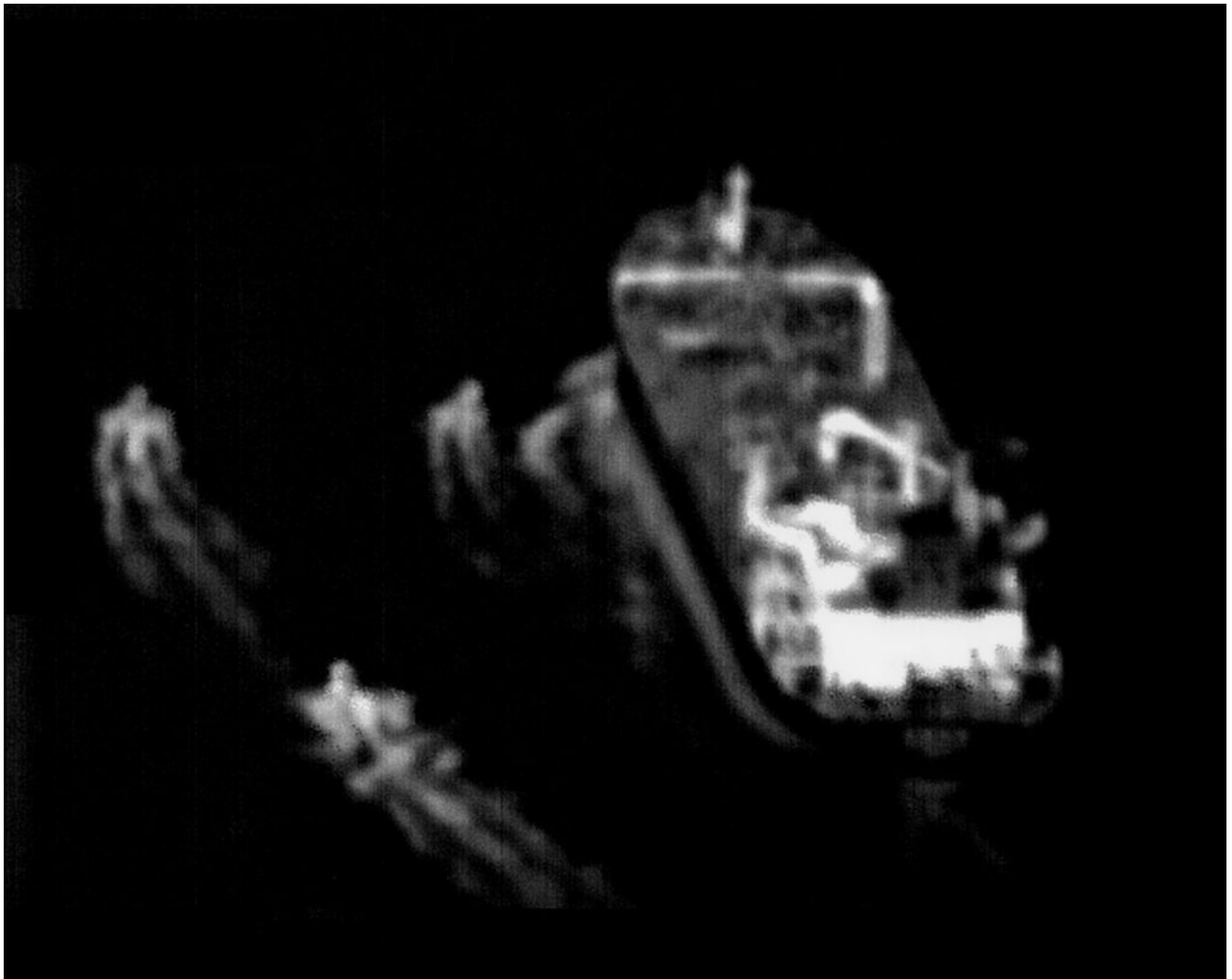
"A mentor of mine told me 30 years ago that if you get the command and control of any problem figured out, you've got 90%

of it solved, and that's what we're doing here" he said.

Brigadier General Kyle Ellison, commanding general of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, also speaking at the press conference, stressed that such a staff would be integrated to the point that it could have a Navy rear admiral in command with a Marine Corps brigadier general as deputy, or vice versa. He mentioned Task Force 79 – III Marine Expeditionary Force – and Task Force 76 – the 7th Fleet's amphibious force – as a "completely integrated staff with an integrated maritime operations center right there on Camp Courtney [Okinawa].

"It's critically important to recognize that it's not just the O-7," Ellison said. "It's integrating the staffs so you have a truly naval staff to execute naval operations in support force. That is exciting in that typically happens only when you are task-organized and for a specific mission. Now we're standing it up and experimenting with it as a permanent structure, and that's happening as we speak as an 18-month experimentation that was agreed upon by two three-stars – commander of III MEF and the 7th Fleet commander."

U.S., UK Navies Respond to Merchant Vessel Distress Call in Strait of Hormuz



[Release from U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs](#)

By U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs | June 04, 2023

STRAIT OF HORMUZ – United States and United Kingdom Royal Navy forces responded to a distress call from a merchant vessel transiting the Strait of Hormuz, June 4, as Iranian fast-attack boats harassed the commercial ship.

The internationally flagged merchant vessel made a radio distress call at 4:56 p.m. local time while transiting the narrow strait. The civilian crew reported three fast-attack craft with armed personnel approached and followed the merchant vessel at close distance. The fast-attacked craft

were assessed to be from the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy.

U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS McFaul (DDG 74) and UK Royal Navy frigate HMS Lancaster (F 229) both received the distress call, and Lancaster launched a helicopter to provide surveillance. U.S. 5th Fleet also directed a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft to monitor the scene.

The situation deescalated approximately an hour later when the merchant vessel confirmed the fast-attack craft departed the scene. The merchant ship continued transiting the Strait of Hormuz without further incident.

U.S. 5th Fleet remains vigilant and is bolstering defense around the key strait with partners to enhance regional maritime security and stability.