

Looser Intel-Sharing Restraints May Be Worth a Look to Facilitate Joint Ops, Navy Data Chief Says



U.S. Sailors conduct pre-flight checks on an E-2C Hawkeye, assigned to the “Liberty Bells” of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 115, as it starts up on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) Jan. 30, 2021. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Zachary Wheeler

ARLINGTON, Va. – Getting actionable, timely data to deployed expeditionary forces is tougher than keeping that data secure from prying adversaries, according to the U.S. Navy’s top data official.

“We’re pretty good at securing information and keeping it from people, which is the exact opposite of making it available for

decision making,” concedes Thomas Sasala, chief data officer, Department of the Navy.

Enhancing data sharing is a key element in the Navy’s Project Overmatch, as part of the Defense Department’s Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) concept to connect sensors from all of the military services into a single network.

For years the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force have been developing tactical communications networks that can’t interface with other services’ networks, hampering joint operations, a pillar of the National Defense Strategy. And that’s keeping crucial data from getting to front-line commanders in an actionable timeframe. It may be worth taking a look at whether security culture is getting in the way, Sasala told the Feb. 17 webinar of the C4ISRNET website’s “Removing Stovepipes” series.

“You have to understand the concept of perishability,” Sasala said. The information given warfighters “is generally highly perishable. And so, if that information is hacked or compromised for one reason or another, it is not useful outside its lifecycle.”

Big strategic decisions are not being sent downrange for kicking-down-the door activity, Sasala said.

“Literally, it’s ‘This guy is on the roof right now.’ And five minutes from now that information is not useful to anyone because he’s no longer on the roof. And so, we have to take that risk calculus into the equation – which we don’t do today.”

All data is treated with the same sensitivity level, the same protection level, Sasala said, adding, it might be time to take a step back.

“The information might be classified. It might come from a highly classified intelligence source, but if it’s only good

for five minutes, and only these three people need to see it, maybe we can just lighten up a little bit on how we get it to them.”

However, he added, issues like keeping sources and methods secret or maintaining plausible deniability on sensitive operations have to be considered when passing data.

“It’s a balancing act,” he said, “more cultural than anything. There are some bandwidth restraints. There are data operability and exchange restraints, but our general risk aversion to kind of opening up the aperture a little bit on what data we send is probably the biggest barrier more than anything.”

The goal of Project Overmatch is to develop networks, infrastructure, data architecture, tools and analytics that enable Navy and Marine Corps operations that swarm the sea, delivering synchronized lethal and non-lethal effects from near-and-far in every domain.

Sasala called Overmatch the maritime contribution to the broader multi-domain battle space.

“From a data perspective, data simply doesn’t care whether you’re Army, Navy, Air Force. Position data is position data whether it’s a plane or a boat – whatever,” he said. But breaking down military department silos or stovepipes “is really the key to getting at something like JADC2.”

USS Dwight D. Eisenhower

Deploys Upon Completion of Historic COMPTUEX



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) departs for a scheduled underway in this 2019 photo. As part of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, it has now departed for deployment. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Daniel E. Gheesling

NORFOLK, Va. – The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) and the ships and aircraft of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 2, the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (IKE CSG), departed for deployment Feb. 18 after successfully completing a historic Composite Unit Training Exercise (COMPTUEX).

That COMPTUEX included a NATO vignette and training with SEALs from an East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Group for the first time in recent history, the U.S. 2nd Fleet said in a Feb. 18 release.

“COMPTUEX provided graduate-level training that simulates the full spectrum of operations, low intensity to high-end combat that IKE CSG must be ready for,” said Rear Adm. Scott Robertson, commander, CSG-2. “The live, virtual and constructive training with a NATO backdrop enabled the team to

hone its application of integrated, multiple domain warfare. We are ready to deploy!”

The inaugural NATO vignette, developed by CSG 4 and Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Centre of Excellence (CJOS COE), consisted of familiarity training designed to facilitate Allied maritime interoperability and integration, in practical terms using NATO procedures, messaging formats and chat capabilities. The vignette developed and refined a clear list of interoperability requirements for future Navy force generation, and improved allied maritime command and control linkages.

“To ensure truly effective deterrence and defense in the North Atlantic, we need to make sure that the navies of NATO can work as one team, and that means interoperability is vital,” said Commodore Tom Guy, Royal Navy, deputy director CJOS COE. “This NATO vignette has been a great step forward in pursuing allied interoperability. CJOS COE looks forward to continuing to develop this for future deploying strike groups.”

Additionally, NSW SEAL, Boat and Reconnaissance units integrated with the IKE CSG team to enhance warfighting lethality in the maritime domain and to educate Fleet leadership on unique NSW capabilities. The SEAL Team focused on supporting COMPTUEX in maritime strike warfare. During the training, personnel helped with over-the-horizon targeting, directed combat aircraft’s action in close-air support, and other offensive air operations. NSW forces controlled operations from a Task Group headquarters. To extend the IKE CSG reach, NSW forces employed multi-mission combatant craft, which allowed operators to get closer to simulated enemies and send the real-time operational picture back to decision-makers on the ship and beyond. The SEAL Team also sent an advisor to the training cell to provide expertise on NSW capabilities.

The opportunity to support IKE CSG objectives by showcasing NSW's unique contributions to distributed maritime operations improved integration and interoperability with the fleet. NSW was able to validate near-peer maritime and land-based tactics, techniques and procedures to demonstrate NSW's critical role in global power competition.

COMPTUEX is a live, virtual, and constructive (LVC) training that provides Sailors from the IKE CSG with an opportunity to operate real equipment with real risk. LVC training increases interoperability and provides the fleet with unprecedented flexibility in conducting training across the spectrum of operations and threat scenarios. CSG 4 was involved in building the scenarios and assessing performance to ensure that when IKE CSG shows up to the fleet they are ready to operate.

The IKE CSG is a multiplatform team of ships, aircraft and more than 6,000 Sailors, capable of carrying out a wide variety of missions around the globe.

Deploying ships and aircraft of the strike group, commanded by Rear Adm. Scott Robertson, include flagship USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), commanded by Capt. Paul F. Campagna; eight squadrons from Carrier Air Wing Three; Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers USS Monterey (CG 61) and USS Vella Gulf (CG 72); Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Mitscher (DDG 57), USS Laboon (DDG 58), USS Mahan (DDG 72) and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) from Destroyer Squadron 22 stationed at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia.

Squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 3, commanded by Capt. Marcos Jasso, embarked on Eisenhower include the "Fighting Swordsmen" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 32, "Gunslingers" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 105, "Wildcats" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 131, "Rampagers" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 83; "Dusty Dogs" of Helicopter Sea Combat

Squadron (HSC) 7; "Swamp Foxes" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 74; "Screwtops" of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 123; "Zappers" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 130, and a detachment from Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 "Rawhides."

C2F exercises operational authorities over assigned ships, aircraft, and landing forces on the East Coast and the Atlantic. When directed, C2F conducts exercises and operations within the U.S. European Command area of operations as an expeditionary fleet, providing Naval Forces Europe an additional maneuver arm to operate forces dynamically in theater.

**HII Awarded \$2.9 Billion
Contract to Execute USS John
C. Stennis RCOH**



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) transits the Pacific Ocean during a replenishment at sea. Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding will carry out its refueling and complex overhaul under a \$2.9 billion contract. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Walter M. Wayman

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Newport News Shipbuilding division has been awarded a \$2.9 billion contract for the refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH) of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), the company said in a Feb. 19 release.

“We are pleased to be awarded the contract to execute this extensive construction and engineering project,” said Todd West, Newport News' vice president, in-service aircraft carrier programs. “Our teams have spent three years preparing and planning for each step of the process along the way, and we look forward to continuing our work with our suppliers and Navy partners in anticipation of the ship's arrival at Newport News.”

The RCOH represents 35% of all maintenance and modernization in an aircraft carrier's 50-year service life. Stennis' RCOH

will include the refueling of the ship's reactors, as well as extensive modernization work to more than 2,300 compartments, hundreds of tanks and systems. In addition, major upgrades will be made in the propulsion plant, to the flight deck, catapults, combat systems and the island.

Built at Newport News, Stennis was christened in 1993 and delivered to the Navy in 1995. The ship is the seventh Nimitz-class carrier to undergo this major life-cycle milestone. More than 4,000 Newport News employees will support the execution effort, which will continue through late 2025.

Cutter Harriet Lane Returns Home following Interdiction of \$40M Worth of Drugs



An MH-65 Dolphin Helicopter rests on the deck of the Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane during their 71-day patrol. The Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane is home-ported in Portsmouth, Virginia. U.S. Coast Guard
PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The Coast Guard Cutter Harriet Lane returned to its homeport in Portsmouth, Virginia, after a 71-day counter-drug patrol Feb. 12, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a Feb. 18 release.

In support of the Coast Guard's 11th District and Joint Interagency Task Force South, the Harriet Lane crew worked throughout the duration of the patrol in conjunction with a deployed aviation detachment from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) based in Jacksonville, Fla. HITRON specializes in the execution of airborne use of force for the purpose of disabling non-compliant vessels suspected of illicit drug smuggling.

Harriet Lane joined forces with the Colombian navy to conduct

joint maritime operations in the Caribbean, focusing on interoperability, communications, and counter-narcotics efforts. Upon crossing into the Pacific via the Panama Canal, the Harriet Lane crew and her embarked aviation detachment interdicted two non-compliant vessels suspected of illicit drug smuggling.

These interdictions included the seizure of 980 kilograms of cocaine and 1,600 pounds of marijuana, an estimated street value of \$40 million. Harriet Lane also detained seven suspected drug smugglers associated with the interdictions. Between operational tasking, the cutter crew completed aviation, damage control, seamanship and navigation training to maintain operational readiness and prepare for future multi-mission deployments.

“I could not be more proud of the crew of Harriet Lane for their perseverance and operational success amid the continued pandemic,” said Cmdr. Dorothy Hernaez, commanding officer of the Harriet Lane. “The crew flawlessly executed COVID-19 mitigation protocols leading up to and during the deployment to remain healthy and operationally ready throughout. The success we had during this deployment would not have been possible without the continued support of our families and friends, who we are looking forward to seeing again upon our return to port.”

Prior to returning home, Harriet Lane stopped in Port Everglades, Florida, to transfer 17 suspected drug smugglers and \$206 million of illicit drugs to partner agencies for prosecution. In addition to the interdictions by Harriet Lane, people and drug evidence transferred in this evolution came from interdictions in the eastern Pacific and Caribbean by Coast Guard Cutters Bertholf, Munro, and Mohawk, as well as the USS William P. Lawrence with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment Team 101 and USS Comstock with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment Team 403.

Harriet Lane is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter responsible for a variety of Coast Guard missions, including search and rescue, enforcement of laws and treaties, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment.

Heavy icebreaker Polar Star Completes Months-Long Arctic Deployment



The Seattle-based Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) sits at anchor in Taylor Bay, Alaska, Feb. 10, ahead of its scheduled logistics stop in Juneau, Alaska, near the end of its months-long Arctic deployment and return to its Seattle homeport. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class

Cindy Oldham

SEATTLE – The Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star (WAGB 10) returned to its homeport in Seattle Feb. 20 following a months-long Arctic deployment to defend the nation's maritime sovereignty and security throughout the region, develop future Arctic Sailors, and gather high-latitude scientific data, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

The 45-year-old heavy icebreaker's crew spent a majority of the patrol operating in the Bering and Chukchi Seas. Notably, on Dec. 25 the crew traversed a historic winter latitude when they navigated through dense sea ice to patrol beyond 72 degrees latitude, farther north than any U.S. surface asset ever traversed in the winter.

Additionally, in mid-January, the Polar Star crew and a Russian Border Guard aircraft crew patrolled a portion of the 1,700-mile international maritime boundary line. The joint effort supported mutual agreements to prepare for a potential natural or manmade maritime disaster and reduce any impacts it might have.

Capt. Bill Woityra, the Polar Star's commanding officer, said he is incredibly proud of Polar Star's crew for their hard work and perseverance through the long and arduous mission.

"Spending a majority of the patrol navigating dense, constantly shifting sea ice, consistently below-zero temperatures and day-long darkness, the crew's resilience was unyielding," said Woityra. "With their tremendous effort and positive attitudes, we accomplished everything we set out to do, and more."

Throughout the patrol, the crew continued progress toward developing future icebreaker leadership by honing ice navigation proficiency and regional familiarity. The crew also hosted scientists and researchers aboard to better understand Arctic operational capabilities and lessen the void of winter

data available from the world's most northern oceans.

Woityra said the United States and the Coast Guard are fiercely committed to defending national interests in the Arctic and, looking to the future, the U.S. must continue to invest in the infrastructure and platforms that will enable year-round Arctic operations, and continue to pursue technologies that will mitigate operational risks and enable mission performance in such a challenging environment.

In April 2019, the Coast Guard released the [Arctic Strategic Outlook](#), which reaffirms the service's commitment to American leadership in the region through partnership, unity of effort, and continuous innovation.

The Coast Guard has been the sole provider of the nation's polar icebreaking capability since 1965 and is seeking to increase its icebreaking fleet with up to six new polar security cutters (PSCs) to ensure continued national presence and access to the Polar Regions.

The Coast Guard awarded VT Halter Marine Inc. of Pascagoula, Mississippi, a contract for the design and construction of the Coast Guard's lead polar security cutter, which will also be homeported in Seattle. The contract also includes options for the construction of two additional PSCs.

AeroVironment Completes Acquisition of Arcturus UAV



Arcturus UAV's Jump 20 VTOL drone. Arcturus UAV
SIMI VALLEY, Calif. – AeroVironment Inc. has completed its acquisition of Arcturus UAV Inc., a designer and manufacturer of high-performance unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). The approximately \$405 million transaction was previously announced in a press release on Jan. 13.

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) selected Arcturus UAV as one of six companies qualified for the potential \$975 million indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity MEUAS IV [Medium-Endurance UAS IV] contract in June 2020. The contract enables awardees to compete for site-specific task orders and provide USSOCOM with unmanned aircraft systems services and support for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.

Arcturus UAV employs its vertical takeoff and landing Jump 20 UAS in support of USSOCOM operations, minimizing the logistical footprint of UAS operations while delivering multi-payload, multi-mission capabilities. Arcturus UAV is also one of four awardees selected for funded development and demonstrations supporting the U.S. Army's FTUAS [Future Tactical UAS] program, a potential billion-dollar, next-generation UAS program.

“Like AeroVironment, the Arcturus UAV team is laser-focused on

supporting its customers around the world with the most reliable and effective products and services for their missions,” said Wahid Nawabi, president and CEO of AeroVironment. “As we welcome the Arcturus UAV team to AeroVironment, we commit to maintaining or exceeding the high level of service our existing and new customers experience. The Jump 20 and T-20 platforms, combined with associated ISR services, represent a significant expansion to AeroVironment’s portfolio of intelligent, multi-domain robotic systems that will enhance long-term shareholder value and help our customers around the world proceed with certainty.”

AeroVironment completed the acquisition of Arcturus UAV on Feb. 19, resulting in Arcturus UAV becoming a wholly owned subsidiary operating under the AeroVironment brand.

**With Crew Vaccinations
Increasing, Newest Navy
COVID-19 Guidance Looks to
Ease Liberty Restraints**



Sailors prepare syringes of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine aboard Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2). This marked the first time personnel received vaccines aboard a Pacific Fleet warship. Essex is homeported in San Diego. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brett McMinoway ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy’s newest operational guidance for dealing with the coronavirus pandemic includes provisions for more Safe Haven ports like Guam and Rota, Spain to provide secure liberty opportunities for crews on increasingly lengthy deployments, according to senior officers.

COVID-19 Standardized Operational Guidance (SOG) 4.0 is the first directive for commanders since vaccines against the novel coronavirus became available in January. Although predominantly focused on shipboard environment, SOG 4.0 applies to all uniformed Navy personnel at home and deployed.

Fully immunized Sailors enable the Navy “to begin to unwind the limits” placed on Sailors at sea, where the consequence of a wide-spread outbreak is greatest, the Guidance issued Feb. 16, noted.

“Where a ship at sea can be a challenge to contain the spread, having a high immunization rate [among crew] could cause the disease to have nowhere to go and burn itself out,” Rear Adm. Karl Thomas, Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy, (N3/N5B), said Feb. 19.

In a roundtable with reporters, Thomas said 35,000 Sailors have received at one vaccine injection and 45,000 are totally immunized. Rear Adm. Bruce Gillingham, the Surgeon General of the Navy, said those numbers amounted to about 23% of the Fleet having at least one dose of the vaccine. Whether immunized Sailors can still transmit the virus remains “the \$64,000 question,” Gillingham said.

Since a COVID outbreak in early 2020 infected more than 1,000 crew members of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and sidelined the aircraft carrier at Guam for months, deployed ships have spent nearly all their time at sea. Additionally, increased operational tempo has led to longer deployments and quick turn arounds, or double pumps, for carrier strike groups, causing stress for crews and their families. The carrier USS Dwight Eisenhower, at sea for seven months in 2020, was deployed again in February.

“Up until this point, we’ve really had to restrict the Sailors to liberty on the pier,” Thomas said, adding. “In Guam there’s a beach right next to the pier and we’re able to keep it segregated from the population so they can get some liberty on the pier as well as get down to the beach.”

But in SOG 4.0, he said “we actually put a paragraph in there about Safe Haven ports in places like Guam, Yokosuka, Bahrain.” Officials hope that crews with higher immunization rates will be able to have more quality liberty opportunities at ports with more services like Exchanges and Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities.

The final decision on safe haven ports will be up the

geographically dispersed Navy component commanders “but we wanted to put [the opportunity] into the guidance for them to be able to do that type of thing,” Thomas said.

Taking COVID into account, NATO presses on with ambitious ASW exercise in Mediterranean



Lt. Stefan Knight, a naval flight officer assigned to Patrol Squadron (VP) 4, speaks to the press about VP-4's involvement in Dynamic Manta 2020, Feb. 25, 2020. Dynamic Manta is an annual exercise hosted by NATO's Allied Maritime Command to provide training in anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface

warfare in order to enhance overall multi-lateral operations among NATO allies. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Juan Sua

NATO will exercise its anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare capabilities of allied naval units from Feb. 22 to March 5 during Exercise Dynamic Manta in the central Mediterranean.

Dynamic Manta 2021 includes five surface combatants with their organic helicopters from France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey; six submarines from France, Germany, Italy, Turkey and the U.S.; five land-based maritime patrol aircraft from France, Germany, Greece, Italy and the U.S.; and the French Navy's Charles De Gaulle Carrier Strike Group, with escorts from France, Germany, Greece and the U.S.

Spanish navy Rear Adm. Manuel Aguirre Aldereguía, commander of Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG 2), is the on-scene commander of Exercise Dynamic Manta.

Last year, Dynamic Manta 2020 began just as the global pandemic was gripping Italy and the world. This year, the exercise was planned and is being executed with all the precautions and health regulations to keep people safe.

According to French navy Vice Adm. Didier Piaton, deputy commander of NATO Allied Maritime Command, Dynamic Manta in the Mediterranean is one of two major anti-submarine warfare exercises held each year, along with Dynamic Mongoose in the high North Sea.

"Like all MARCOM exercises, this one will demonstrate NATO's willingness and capacity of keeping resilience and readiness, and to maintain the security of our allied nations," Piaton said.

This year, the French navy's Charles DeGaulle carrier strike group will join for training for a limited time, and will enhance its own ASW skills on its way to its operational

deployment. This interaction is an opportunity for NATO and allied units to train together to enhance interoperability and build expertise.

The Italian navy is hosting the exercise in waters near the Sicilian city of Catania, not far from the naval air station at Sigonella. Rear Adm. Andrea Petroni, commander of the Italian navy's submarine service, said the central Mediterranean and its location on the southern flank of Europe represents a realistic and valuable training opportunity.

"It's important to participate in this kind of advanced International training activity to exchange knowledge and share lessons learned in order to increase the operational capabilities and professional development of the crews," Petroni said.

Aldereguía said COVID-19 was a new factor in exercise planning process. Procedures were instituted to prepare the units of SNMG 2 so the task group can maintain its high degree of readiness while taking care of the health and well-being of the crews and staff members.

"We are in a COVID-limited environment," said U.S. Navy Rear Adm. E. Andrew Burcher, Commander Submarines, NATO, and exercise director. "A year ago, we became aware of the virus just as Dynamic Manta 2020 was starting. We had to make adjustments as we went. We were able to hold Dynamic Mongoose 2020 later in the summer. And we're going ahead and conducting this exercise, with no material impact on the operation or the exercise. It shows how well the NATO Alliance and the countries have adapted to this new reality and travel-restricted environment. We're doing the best we can under the circumstances, and that's a testament to how great this organization is."

While NATO is technically able to complete the exercise and have a productive training experience, Burcher said the

pandemic has precluded a lot of personal interaction compared to previous years.

“What’s lost are the personal connections that make the alliance stronger,” he said. “Our center of gravity of NATO is alliance cohesion, and the reason alliance cohesion exists is because of the friendships and partnerships that exist when we meet personally on ships and shake hands with each other.”

Burcher said there are other differences between the 2020 and 2021 event. Although NATO’s Science and Technology Organization Center for Maritime Research and Experimentation (CMRE) will not join the ships at sea with its research ship, the Alliance, and its group of unmanned vehicles as they did in 2020, CMRE will still be involved this year. “We will be utilizing CMRE for technical analysis capability to improve our training as well as our understanding of the operating environment,” Burcher said.

“Most importantly, we’re going to have the benefit of having the Charles de Gaulle carrier strike group go through the exercise area,” Burcher said. “This is an important and unique opportunity for both the submarines and the surface ships to engage in a high threat environment. The submarine will be looking at how they prosecute a high-value unit as it transits in a typical transit scenario, while at the same time the CSG will be able to proceed through a submarine-dense environment and practice their ASW skills. That is a unique opportunity. We are taking advantage of integrating the schedules of national operations with NATO operations.

“Even in the COVID environment we are advancing and moving forward with our ASW skills,” Burcher said.

Navy Begins Retirement of Cyclone-Class Patrol Ships Without Replacement



Sailors conduct a decommissioning ceremony aboard the Cyclone-class patrol ship USS Shamal (PC 13) at Naval Station Mayport, Florida. Shamal is one of three Cyclone-class patrol ships being decommissioned at Naval Station Mayport. U.S. Navy / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Austin G. Collins
ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy held ceremonies this week to mark the decommissioning of three Cyclone-class coastal patrol ships this week, beginning the retirement of the class which has no direct replacement.

The three decommissioning ceremonies held over three days – Feb. 16, 17, and 18 – marked the imminent retirement of the Cyclone-class coastal patrol ships USS Shamal (PC 13), USS Zephyr (PC 8) and USS Tornado (PC 14), respectively, at Naval

Station Mayport, Florida.

In recent years, the three PCs were used to train crews for the 10 PCs forward deployed to the Persian Gulf. They also participated in homeland security missions such as drug interdiction countering illegal immigration.

The Navy commissioned 14 Cyclone-class PCs between 1993 and 2000. They were built by Bollinger Shipyards and designed for coastal interdiction and support of special operations forces such as SEALs. They were built with a 15-year service life and even the newest already has operated for six years beyond that.

The lead ship, USS Cyclone, was transferred to the Philippine Navy after being briefly transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard, which did not operate the ship.

Several PCs operated in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and ultimately 10 were forward deployed to the U.S. Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf.

During 2004, five PCs were transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard to perform homeland security missions. All five were returned to the Navy by August 2008.

“The decision to decommission these three ships [Shamal, Zephyr and Tornado] stems from the fact that they have all exceeded their designed service life,” the Navy said in a Feb. 17 web article. “Based on the rising cost of modernization efforts, the Navy will receive a better return by decommissioning and freeing up funds to invest in other platforms.”

The PCs offer rare command-at-sea opportunity for lieutenants, one reason the ships will be missed. The ships will have no direct replacements, but their presence in the Persian Gulf eventually will be assumed by littoral combat ships.

“These three warships have served our Navy and our country well,” said Capt. Mike Meyer, commander, Naval Surface Squadron Fourteen, in the Navy release. “Each of them has operated well past their designed service life, with their crews contributing demonstrably to meeting our national objectives.”

The three PCs being retired are being transferred to the Navy’s inactive ship facility in Philadelphia, where they will be decommissioned officially. The official decommissioning dates are Feb. 25, March 2 and March 4 for Shamal, Zephyr and Tornado, respectively. Tornado will be held for Foreign Military Sales; the other two will be scrapped.

MDSU 2 Hosts Ice Dive Training for Arctic Training



Navy divers assigned to Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) 2 prepare to enter the water during ice dive training at Camp Ripley in Little Falls, Minnesota. The training hosted by MDSU 2, is in its third iteration and has become more relevant, showcasing how Navy divers are assisting in building a more capable arctic naval force. U.S. Navy / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Jeff Atherton

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) 2, headquartered at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, hosted the third iteration of ice dive training for Navy divers and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technicians at Camp Ripley in Little Falls, Minnesota, in February, the group said in a Feb. 16 release.

The course, run by qualified Navy divers and civilian instructors, teaches the fundamentals of operating on and diving under the ice.

Ice diving is unique and it can be hazardous without the proper training. Dry suit familiarization dives must be completed prior to diving under the ice, and scuba cold-water set-up training and familiarization must also take place prior

to the operation.

Familiarization and training on all aspects must be conducted prior to operating in an Arctic environment, which is why civilian instructors are used who have a wealth of experience operating in these cold environments. The courses hosted by Dive Rescue International are introductory and provides the tools necessary for Navy divers to execute ice diving operations in an Arctic environment. The extensive logistical considerations, medical considerations, emergency evacuation procedures, and topside personnel considerations are also taken into account prior to execution.

Camp Ripley is an outstanding site to conduct ice and cold weather dive training. The site allows Navy divers to train in a subzero temperature and arduous conditions at training ranges that provide bodies of water similar to operating in the Arctic environment. The Army National Guard has been a tremendous help in supporting with base facilities and logistical support making it an ideal location to train in the Arctic environment now and in the future.

In the course, the divers are responsible for dive setup, which includes building tents, heating the tents and cutting holes in the ice before diving.

While the Arctic environment is not outside of the skill set of Navy divers, it is a significant difference from the comparatively warmer waters of Virginia Beach and the significantly warmer waters of Key West, Florida, where many divers are accustomed to training.

With the recent release of the Department of the Navy's strategic blueprint for the Arctic, this annual training event has become even more relevant, showcasing how Navy divers are assisting in building a more capable arctic naval force.

MDSU 2 is part of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group (EODGRU) 2, which oversees all East Coast explosive ordnance disposal

and a mobile diving and salvage unit which are capable of providing skilled, capable, and combat-ready deployable forces around the globe to support a range of operations.

Article by Chief Petty Officer Jeff Atherton, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group Two