

# GA-ASI Completes Full Scale Fatigue Test on MQ-9B



*MQ-9B's Third Lifetime Test Completes the FSF Testing Process With a Total of 120,000 Hours*

From General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.

DUBAI AIRSHOW – 17 November 2025 – On October 31, 2025, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) completed its “third lifetime” of full-scale fatigue (FSF) testing for the MQ-9B Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA). Completion of FSF testing for the third and final lifetime includes a total of 120,000 operating hours (40,000+ flight hours per aircraft life) for the RPA and is a key milestone in validating the design of the airframe. The testing verifies the airframe structural integrity in support of certification to the NATO STANAG 4671 standard.

The aim of the testing is to identify any potential structural deficiencies ahead of fleet usage and assist in developing inspection and maintenance schedules for the airframe. Test results will be used as documentation for certification and will form the basis for in-service inspections of structural components.

“The completion of our full-scale fatigue test validates years of GA-ASI design and analysis efforts,” said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. “The first two lifetimes simulated the operation of the aircraft under normal conditions, and the third intentionally inflicted damage to the airframe’s critical components to demonstrate its ability to tolerate operational damage that could occur over the lifetime of the aircraft.”

Testing was conducted from December 13, 2022, through October 31, 2025, at Wichita State University’s National Institute for Aviation Research in Wichita, Kansas. The airframe tested was a production airframe purpose-built to support the test campaign.

MQ-9B is GA-ASI’s most advanced RPA and includes the SkyGuardian® and SeaGuardian® models as well as the new Protector RG Mk1 that is currently being delivered to the United Kingdom’s Royal Air Force (RAF). In addition to the RAF, GA-ASI has MQ-9B procurement contracts with Belgium, Canada, Japan, Taiwan, Poland, India, Denmark, and the U.S. Air Force in support of the Special Operations Command. MQ-9B has also been featured in various U.S. Navy exercises, including [Northern Edge](#), [Integrated Battle Problem](#), [RIMPAC](#), and [Group Sail](#).

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# Austal USA Leads Effort to Increase Submarine Industrial Base Capabilities under AUKUS



From Austal USA, Nov. 17, 2025

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC) during the 2025 Indo Pacific International Maritime Exposition (INDOPAC 2025) in Sydney, Australia. This MoU marks an agreement to advance the introduction of cutting-edge 3D printing in Australian shipbuilding and submarine sustainment, strengthening the supply chain to support the Virginia-class and Australian Collins-class submarine programs.

“Austal USA is proud of the role we are playing in the international effort to fortify the submarine industrial base through innovations in additive manufacturing capabilities,” stated Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. “We recognize the importance of AUKUS and are excited to be at the forefront of this monumental collaboration of Allies partnering to defend our freedom with an impenetrable fleet of surface and subsurface naval assets.”

The MoU, signed at the Austal USA stand by Austal USA Vice President Business Development & External Affairs, Lawrence Ryder, ASC Chief Capability Officer, Danielle Bull, and Austal Australia Chief Technology Officer, Dr. Glenn Callow, is another indication of the significant role Austal USA is playing in integrating AM technologies into the maritime industrial base of not only the US but also Australia.

“This is another significant advance in our efforts to fully integrate the use of AM in the submarine and shipbuilding production and repair process,” stated Ryder. “Signing the MoU here at INDOPAC in Sydney highlights the growing achievements of AUKUS and the expanding relationship between the US and Australian industrial bases.”

Austal USA’s advanced technologies team has been at the forefront of AM adoption, operating the U.S. Navy’s Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence (AM CoE) in Danville, Va. Austal USA is responsible for developing a national network of vendors with qualified AM machines and processes to provide critical submarine parts. Austal USA has a unique familiarity with end-to-end production pathways using AM across multiple modalities and alloys. The company is using laser powder bed fusion (LPBF), wire arc additive manufacturing (WAAM), wire laser additive manufacturing (WLAM) and exploring the use of cold spray additive manufacturing (CSAM).

One of the most significant challenges is ensuring additive manufacturing digital data smoothly integrates with existing

Navy logistics, inventory, and quality management systems. Austal USA is developing a network that will ensure digital traceability – a digital thread built to Navy requirements – through the development of Digital -Secure Exchange for Additive (Digital – SEA), a purpose-built platform that will connect the Navy and component OEMs with AM suppliers and digital manufacturing information.

Austal USA also formed a strategic partnership in 2022 with General Dynamics Electric Boat, supported by the U.S. Navy, to expand the submarine industrial base (SIB) by producing modules for the Virginia and Columbia -class programs. As part of the partnership, Austal USA is constructing and outfitting Command and Control Systems Modules (CCSM) and Electronic Deck Modules (EDM) for the Virginia- and Columbia-class programs.

Austal USA has continued to expand its facilities and workforce to support the growing demand of the SIB. A new production facility, a 369,600 square foot manufacturing building, will be dedicated to submarine module manufacturing. The new building, Module Manufacturing Facility 3, will be fully operational in late 2026.

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## **Vice Adm. Renshaw Assumes Command of U.S. 5th Fleet**



MANAMA, Bahrain (Oct. 5, 2025) U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, left; Vice Adm. George Wikoff, outgoing commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT), U.S. 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), center; and Vice Adm. Kurt Renshaw, incoming commander of NAVCENT, U.S. 5th Fleet and CMF, right; render honors during a change of command ceremony in Manama, Bahrain. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Iain Page)  
From U.S. Fifth Fleet, Nov. 16, 2025

MANAMA, Bahrain – U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Curt Renshaw assumed command of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet (NAVCENT/C5F) and Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) from Vice Adm. George Wikoff during a change of command ceremony on board Naval Support Activity Bahrain, Oct. 5.

U.S. Navy Admiral Brad Cooper, commander, U.S. Central Command, served as guest speaker, and thanked Wikoff for his dedication and lasting impact to NAVCENT, the joint force and the entire C5F area of operations.

“George, on behalf of all of Central Command and a grateful nation, thank you for your leadership, your devotion to your mission and your devotion to your people,” said Cooper. “You leave NAVCENT stronger than you found it and your impact has been immeasurable. So much has been achieved by you and this amazing team that I can’t miss the moment to say, the books will show that this was a tour for the ages.”

Wikoff assumed command of NAVCENT/C5F Feb. 1, 2024, and was charged with leading more than 16,000 service members and civilians. He also oversaw tactical control of 10 U.S. and coalition task forces, including 7,310 Sailors and Marines, during 10 fleet operations. As CMF commander, he managed a 47-nation maritime partnership in one of the world’s most diverse and challenging areas of operations.

“ In my time here, I have seen firsthand the commitment of the United States as a reliable maritime partner in this region,” said Wikoff. “ [I witnessed] the most hazardous operations our surface force has seen in 80 years, and our surface warriors never failed.”

Wikoff conceptualized the NAVCENT Maritime Headquarters/Maritime Operations Center; spearheaded a transnational effort composed of surface and air assets from nine nations to strengthen security to maritime traffic throughout the region; and synchronized CMF, United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations and Oil Companies International Marine Forums to develop a Joint Maritime Information Center, to provide guidance to maritime industry in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

His operational vision directly led to efforts which served to defend non-NATO allies, de-escalate regional tensions, deter threats and reassure regional partners of the U.S. commitment to regional stability and security.

“To the service members and civilians of the NAVCENT family, you are the backbone of these efforts, and you have my deepest admiration,” said Wikoff. “I thank you for your honor, courage and commitment to our important mission. You embody the best of what it means to serve and it has been the greatest honor of my career to lead you in this mission.”

Wikoff is slated to report as commander to U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/Allied Joint Force Command Naples.

Renshaw assumes command of NAVCENT/C5F/CMF following his most recent tour as director of operations for U.S. Central Command. He also previously served at NAVCENT/C5F as the deputy commander.

“I am incredibly proud to join this formidable team,” said Renshaw. “ Together, with our partners, we will continue to promote peace through strength, and maintain maritime security and stability throughout this dynamic region.”

NAVCENT/C5F is the maritime component commander of U.S. Central Command, whose area of responsibility encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman and parts of the Indian Ocean. This expanse, comprised of 21 countries, includes three critical chokepoints at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait at the southern tip of Yemen.

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**USS**

**Pierre**

# Commissioned 'Under the Bright Florida Sky'



PANAMA CITY, Fla. (November 15, 2025) – The crew runs aboard the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Pierre (LCS 38) as they bring the ship to life during the ship's commissioning ceremony in Panama City, Fla., Nov. 15, 2025. Pierre is the second U.S. Navy ship to bear this name and will be the final Independence-variant LCS to be commissioned in the U.S. Navy. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Kassandra Alanis)  
By Lt. Brinn Hefron, Public Affairs Officer for Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

PANAMA CITY, Fla. (Nov. 15, 2025) – The Navy commissioned its newest ship, the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Pierre (LCS 38) in a ceremony held in Panama City, Fla., Nov. 15.

During the ceremony, the guest speaker, Honorable John Phelan, 79th Secretary of the Navy, recognized the innovation of the

Independence-variant littoral combat ship and thanked the leadership and crew of USS Pierre as they brought the ship to life and began her commissioned service.

“What an extraordinary day to stand beside to our newest warship under the bright Florida sky, surrounding by those who built her, those who will sail her, and those whose spirit she carries forward,” said Phelan. “It’s an honor to be here in Panama City, and for me to place the USS Pierre, the 19th and final Independence-variant littoral combat ship into commission.”

During the ceremony, Larissa Thune Hargens, Pierre’s sponsor and the daughter of South Dakota Sen. John Thune, gave the crew the order to, “man our ship and bring her to life,” after which the Sailors of Pierre responded, “aye, aye, ma’am” and ran aboard the ship.

“Today marks a moment of pride, purpose and profound connection between the ship, her crew, her namesake city of Pierre and our great nation. As the ship sponsor, I again commit my support and appreciation to each of you and each crew who follows in your wake,” said Hargens. “My connection to the Navy began long before this day with my grandfather. He was a Navy fighter pilot during World War II, flying missions over the Pacific. He was brave, determined, and deeply devoted to his country. Just as my grandfather once took to the skies to defend our freedom, you will take to the seas to protect it with the same bravery, discipline, and devotion to duty that have defined the Navy for generations.”

In the week leading up to the commissioning ceremony, the Pierre crew spent time around Panama City, hosted tours onboard for local organizations and built ties with the city hosting their ship’s commissioning ceremony.

“Many of you have traveled thousands of miles to celebrate this moment with us. To commission a ship that represents our

nation's free and independent spirit, the strength of our constitutional republic, and our willingness to fight for what's right around the world," said Cmdr. Justin Guernsey, commanding officer of USS Pierre. "To my coyotes, these past few months you've had the opportunity to become intimately familiar with the performance and capabilities of the Navy's newest fighting ship. Carry our colors high as we bring this ship to life and forward into what action forward into what action may await."

Other platform guests at the commissioning ceremony included U.S. Sen. John Thune, U.S. Senator Ashley Moody, U.S. Rep. Neal Dunn of Florida, Deputy Director, Joint Interagency Task Force South, Rear Admiral Jeff Jurgemeyer, Mayor of Pierre, South Dakota, Steve Harding, Mayor of Panama City, Florida, Allan Branch and President of Austal USA, Michelle Kruger. The master of ceremonies was Lt. Cmdr. Audrey Munji, executive officer of the USS Pierre.

The ceremony concluded with Guernsey beginning the ship's motto, "On the move!" with the crew completing the phrase, "On the hunt!"

Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ships are fast, optimally manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. LCS ships integrate with joint, combined, manned, and unmanned teams to support forward presence, maritime security, sea control, and deterrence missions around the globe.

The mission of Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.

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# CH-53K King Stallion: 10 Years since First Flight



[From Naval Air Systems Command](#)

NAS PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – October 27, 2015 –The CH-53K King Stallion took to the skies for its first flight. Today, more than 10 years later, there are 20 CH-53Ks executing missions with four different Navy and Marine Corps squadrons.

The CH-53K, which will deploy for the first time in fiscal year 2027, achieved Initial Operational Capability in April 2022 and entered full rate production the following November. The only heavy lift helicopter in the U.S. military, the King Stallion can lift 36,000 pounds; refuel mid-air; provide ship-to-shore mobility and maneuverability along with multiple

other assault support missions.

According to Col. Kate Fleeger, Program Manager, H-53 Heavy Lift Helicopters Program Office (PMA-261), the CH-53K will be used to ensure forces remain agile and supported, sustaining operations and maintaining a forward presence on the battlefield.

“With its unique capability to lift all Marine Corps air-transportable equipment from ship-to-shore, the CH-53K will play a crucial role in rapidly and flexibly deploying forces and supplies, supporting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations and Distributed Air Operations concepts, and ultimately enabling the Marine Corps to project power and sustain its presence with greater speed and agility,” she said.

The Marine Corps plans to procure 200 CH-53Ks and the program office recently entered a [five-year, multi-year contract](#) with Sikorsky to purchase up to 99 more helicopters.

“We will be equipping six active-duty squadrons, one reserve squadron, two test squadrons and a training squadron with the CH-53K as the Marine Corps transitions from the CH-53E Super Stallion,” said Fleeger. “The full changeover is expected to be completed in FY32.”

PMA-261 manages the cradle to grave procurement, development, support, fielding and disposal of the entire family of H-53 heavy lift helicopters.

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# Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Enters Caribbean Sea



From USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Public Affairs, Nov. 16, 2025

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group, led by the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), transited the Anegada Passage and entered the Caribbean Sea, Nov. 16.

The maritime forces' operations in the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) area of responsibility come after Secretary of War Pete Hegseth directed the Carrier Strike Group to support the President's directive to dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations and counter narco-terrorism in defense of the Homeland.

"Through unwavering commitment and the precise use of our

forces, we stand ready to combat the transnational threats that seek to destabilize our region," said Adm. Alvin Holsey, Commander, SOUTHCOM. "The USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group's deployment represents a critical step in reinforcing our resolve to protect the security of the Western Hemisphere and the safety of the American Homeland."

The carrier strike group will join joint forces already in the Caribbean Sea, including the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group and embarked marine expeditionary unit, as part of Joint Task Force Southern Spear, established to defeat and dismantle criminal networks that exploit our shared borders and maritime domains.

"Our nation's leaders have called upon the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group as the most capable, adaptable, and lethal platform in the world to be where it matters, when it matters," said Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of Carrier Strike Group 12. "Our force will augment existing capabilities to protect our nation's security and prosperity against narco-terrorism in the Western Hemisphere."

With more than 4,000 Sailors and dozens of tactical aircraft aboard, Gerald R. Ford provides combatant commanders and America's civilian leaders increased capacity to project power through sustained operations at sea. The first-in-class carrier can simultaneously catapult launch and recover fixed-wing aircraft on its flight deck, day or night, in support of tasked operations.

After departing on deployment June 24, 2025, the carrier strike group conducted multi-domain strike group operations in the Atlantic Ocean before transiting east into the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, sailing above the Arctic Circle and throughout the Mediterranean Sea with multiple Allies and partners, participating in NATO's Neptune Strike 25-2 and 25-3 enhanced vigilance activities, and conducting port calls in

Croatia, France, Germany, Norway, and Spain. The force arrived in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility after a westbound transit through the Strait of Gibraltar, Nov. 4, and a transoceanic voyage.

Alongside Gerald R. Ford, the carrier strike group brings additional capable, lethal, and adaptable warfighting assets, including the nine embarked squadrons of Carrier Air Wing Eight, Destroyer Squadron Two's Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Bainbridge (DDG 96) and USS Mahan (DDG 72), and the integrated air and missile defense command ship USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81).

U.S. military forces are deployed to the Caribbean in support of the U.S. Southern Command mission, Department of War-directed operations, and the President's priorities to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and protect the Homeland.

Operation Southern Spear is a Department of War mission to enhance security and stability across the Western Hemisphere by detecting, disrupting, and degrading transnational criminal and illicit maritime networks. This operation enhances maritime domain awareness, supports regional stability, and helps prevent illicit activity from reaching the U.S. Homeland. These efforts reflect the Department's commitment to maintaining a safe, stable, and secure hemisphere.

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**GA-ASI      and      SAAB      Will  
Demonstrate**

# AEW&C on MQ-9B in 2026



*Two Aerospace Leaders Are Bringing Airborne Early Warning and Control to UAS*

From General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc.

DUBAI AIRSHOW – 17 November 2025 – Following [their announcement](#) to bring Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capability to the world's leading Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) platform, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) and Saab will now team up to demonstrate the capability in the summer of 2026. The demo will be conducted at GA-ASI's Desert Horizon flight operations facility in Southern California using a GA-ASI MQ-9B equipped with AEW&C supplied by Saab.

In partnership with Saab, a leading company in AEW&C systems, GA-ASI is pairing Saab's AEW sensors with the world's longest-range, highest-endurance RPA, the MQ-9B. At sea or over land, adding AEW capabilities on MQ-9B enables persistent air surveillance and enables AEW in areas of the world where it doesn't currently exist or is unaffordable, such as for navy aircraft carriers at sea.

“Adding AEW&C to the MQ-9B brings a critical new capability to our platform,” said GA-ASI President David R. Alexander. “We want to deliver a persistent AEW&C solution to our global operators that will protect them against sophisticated cruise missiles as well as simple but dangerous drone swarms.”

MQ-9B models include the SkyGuardian® and SeaGuardian®, the United Kingdom’s MQ-9B variant known as Protector, and the new MQ-9B STOL (Short Takeoff and Landing) configuration currently in development.

The AEW solution for MQ-9B will offer critical aloft sensing to defend against tactical air munitions, guided missiles, drones, fighter and bomber aircraft, and other threats. Operational availability for a medium-altitude, long-endurance UAS is the highest of any military aircraft, and as an unmanned platform, its aircrews are not put into harm’s way.

GA-ASI and Saab’s AEW offering will span a wide range of applications, including early detection and warning; long-range detection and tracking; and simultaneous target tracking and flexible combat system integration – all over line-of-sight and SATCOM connectivity.

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## **Military Deploys Foreign Disaster Relief Support for Philippine Response to Successive Storms**



From 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Nov. 13, 2025

CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines – At the request of the government of the Philippines, the U.S. military is working shoulder to shoulder with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to provide foreign disaster relief to communities affected by consecutive Typhoons Kalmaegi (Tino) and Fung-Wong (Uwan), which caused extensive damage and tragic loss of life.

The forward presence and ready posture of United States Indo-Pacific Command in the region facilitated a rapid and effective response to these natural disasters, demonstrating the U.S. commitment as friends, allies, and partners during times of need.

Working in close coordination with the AFP, Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Philippine Office of Civil Defense, Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group, Task Force – Philippines, and U.S. Department of State, the U.S military deployed a variety of assets and personnel to the Philippines to support with

foreign disaster relief operations.

“I have been thoroughly impressed by the preparedness and forward-leaning measures taken by the Philippine government during this situation, and we will support the lead of our Philippine counterparts as we carry out this relief mission together as a fully-aligned team,” said U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Robert Brodie, the 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade commanding general. “Support to our friends, allies, and partners, and their people in a time of need, is non-negotiable. Together, we are overcoming distance, weather, and logistical challenges to save lives.”

Since Nov. 5, 2025, the U.S. military has coordinated mission planning with the Philippine government and military agencies to continue the work of providing vital supplies to regions impacted by the storm. This effort highlights the long-standing U.S.-Philippine Alliance and the shared commitment to regional resilience and humanitarian assistance.

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## **U.S. 7th Fleet Holds Change of Command, Welcomes New Commander**



YOKOSUKA, Japan (Nov. 13, 2025) – Vice Adm. Patrick Hannifin, left, salutes Adm. Steve Koehler, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, as he assumes command of Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet from Vice Adm. Fred Kacher, right, during the U.S. 7th Fleet Change of Command ceremony on board Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Nov. 13. Vice Adm. Hannifin assumed command as the 55th commander of U.S. 7th Fleet. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Charles Oki)

By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, Nov. 14, 2025

YOKOSUKA, Japan – U.S. 7th Fleet held a change of command ceremony Nov. 13 at the Fleet Theater on board Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka.

Vice Adm. Patrick J. Hannifin relieved Vice Adm. Fred W. Kacher, becoming the 55th commander of the world's largest forward-deployed naval force, U.S. 7th Fleet.

“I’m deeply proud of our U.S. 7th Fleet ships, aircraft, and Sailors who operate forward to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific,” said Kacher. “Our goal at U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet is that this One Team is so prepared, so ready, that every day our

potential adversaries look out at what we do and how we do it and conclude, 'today is not the day'."

Under Kacher's leadership, U.S. 7th Fleet executed more than 460 operations and exercises to maintain maritime security and deter adversary aggression in the region.

Prior to commanding U.S. 7th Fleet, Kacher served as the 64th Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy. A career surface warfare officer, he served primarily on cruisers and destroyers, deploying multiple times as part of both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. At sea, he most recently served as commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 7 forward deployed to the Western Pacific. Kacher's follow-on assignment will be Director, Joint Staff.

Hannifin began his career as an F/A-18C Hornet aviator with Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 27. He served as executive officer of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), and commanding officer of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 81, San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock USS Arlington (LPD 24) and Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). As a flag officer, he served as deputy director for Political-Military Affairs – Asia, Joint Staff, J5, Washington, D.C.; commander, Carrier Strike Group 5 embarked onboard Ronald Reagan; and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command director for operations, J3, Camp H.M. Smith.

"It is a privilege to assume command of U.S. 7th Fleet—a force unmatched in power, partnership and purpose," said Hannifin. "To the men and women of U.S. 7th Fleet, thank you for your service, toughness, and professionalism. You hold the line. It is an honor of a lifetime to serve with you once again."

Adm. Steve "Web" Koehler, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, served as guest speaker at the ceremony.

"For more than 80 years, U.S. 7th Fleet has safeguarded freedom, security and prosperity. U.S. 7th Fleet's peerless

capabilities are essential in the Indo-Pacific, where we have many threats and challenges,” said Koehler. “Deterrence requires a strong, combat credible force that maintains peace through strength, and is constantly ready to take the fight forward and win. U.S. 7th Fleet is that force.”

U.S. 7th Fleet, the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

For more news from Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, visit <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/>.

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## **USS St. Louis Returns from Deployment in Support of Southern Border Operations**



NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. (Nov. 10, 2025) – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19), operating under U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), returns to Naval Station Mayport, Fla., after completing a surge deployment, Nov. 10, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Jasmin L. Aquino)

From Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, Nov. 11, 2025

The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS St. Louis (LCS 19), operating under U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in the Gulf of America, returned to Naval Station Mayport ), along with the “Valkyries” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50 Detachment 5 and embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 408 after completing a surge deployment on November 10, 2025

U.S. Navy assets are deployed under U.S Northern Command’s maritime homeland defense authorities with a U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment embarked to enable maritime interdiction missions to prevent the flow of illegal drugs or other illegal activity. USNORTHCOM is working together with

the Department of Homeland Security to augment U.S. Customs and Border Protection along the southern border with additional military forces.

“The crew of St. Louis is grateful for the opportunity to support and defend the homeland,” stated Cmdr. Lee Shewmake, commanding officer, USS St. Louis (LCS 19). “We are always ready to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to international cooperation and supporting regional security and prosperity. Our Officers and Sailors onboard welcome every opportunity to collaborate with our partners, strengthening our interoperability and shared goals in the area.”

In support of USNORTHCOM’s mission to restore territorial integrity at the U.S. southern border, St. Louis reinforced the nation’s commitment to border security by enhancing maritime efforts and supporting interagency collaboration. The ship’s deployment highlights the Department of War and Navy’s dedication to national security priorities, contributing to a coordinated and robust response to combating maritime-related terrorism, weapons proliferation, transnational crime, piracy, environmental destruction, and illegal seaborne immigration.

“The U.S. Navy commends the crew of the St. Louis for their deployment in support of U.S. Northern Command’s mission,” stated Capt. Wade Smith, commodore, Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 2. “St. Louis reinforced our nation’s commitment to border security and interoperability with our partners and Allies.”

St. Louis brought maritime capabilities in response to Presidential executive orders and a national emergency declaration and clarification of the military’s role in protecting the territorial integrity of the United States.

A U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) was embarked aboard St. Louis. Coast Guard LEDETs carry out a

variety of maritime interdiction missions, including counter-piracy, military combat operations, alien migration interdiction, military force protection, counter terrorism, homeland security, and humanitarian response.

USS St. Louis (LCS 19) is assigned to Littoral Combat Ship Squadron (LCSRON) 2 and homeported in Mayport, Fla. The Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) is a fast, agile, mission-focused warship designed to operate in near-shore environments to counter 21st-century threats. It is a class of small surface combatants armed with capabilities to defeat challenges in the world's littorals. LCS can operate independently or in high-threat scenarios as part of a networked battle force that includes larger, multi-mission surface combatants such as cruisers and destroyers.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime ready forces to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.