

The Wasp ARG-24th MEU (SOC) Returns Home After a 7-Month Deployment



NORFOLK (Dec. 6, 2024) Sailors assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1) man the rails on the ship's flight deck as the ship returns to Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 6, 2024. Wasp, flagship of the Wasp Amphibious Ready Group (WSP ARG), returned from a seven-month deployment operating in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operation. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Sydney Milligan)

From U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Dec. 6, 2024

The Wasp Amphibious Ready Group (WSP ARG), commanded by Amphibious Squadron (CPR) 4, returned to Hampton Roads, Virginia following a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, Dec. 6.

The WSP ARG flagship, first-in-class amphibious assault ship

USS Wasp (LHD 1) and San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) returned to Naval Station Norfolk, while the Harpers Ferry-class amphibious landing dock ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) is expected to return to Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek.

The embarked 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Special Operations Capable (SOC) returned to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Dec. 3.

“This deployment demonstrated the versatility and strength of amphibious forces,” said Capt. Nakia Cooper, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 4. “Whether enhancing NATO interoperability or on station as the crises response force, the Sailors and Marines of the ARG-MEU team consistently executed with precision and remained ready. To our families and loved ones—thank you for your unwavering love and support.”

Throughout the deployment, the ARG-MEU team operated extensively in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility under the authority of Task Force 61/2, participating in high-profile exercises such as Baltic Operations 2024 in the Baltic Sea and Neptune Strike 24.2 in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The 24th MEU (SOC) routinely rotated its landing forces to the Republic of Cyprus to participate in bilateral training with the Republic of Cyprus National Guard and their elite special operating forces. These engagements reinforced partnerships with NATO Allies and regional partners, highlighting the strategic importance of amphibious forces in fostering multinational cooperation.

The ARG-MEU also conducted more than a dozen port visits across Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, strengthening relationships with Allies and partners while offering opportunities for bilateral training and cultural exchanges. The port visits included Klaipeda, Lithuania and Kiel, Germany

as part of BALTOPS 24; Rota, Spain and Skagen, Denmark for brief stops for fuel and resupply operations; Brest and Cherbourg, France, as part of the ARG-MEU's participation in the 80th D-Day anniversary ceremony; Aksaz and Izmir, Türkiye to strengthen relationships with NATO Ally Türkiye; Souda Bay and Thessaloniki, Greece, where 24th MEU (SOC) units were positioned to conduct bilateral training with Greek military forces; and finally, to Limassol and Larnaca, Cyprus, during bilateral training with the Republic of Cyprus National Guard and their Special Operations Forces.

"We forged stronger ties with our international Allies and partners during this deployment," said Col. Todd Mahar, commanding officer, 24th MEU (SOC). "Every Marine and Sailor displayed remarkable adaptability and professionalism, proving the value of our forward-deployed, rapid response capabilities."

The deployment displayed the ARG-MEU's mission sets as a crises response force by providing readiness and flexibility to the Combatant and Fleet Commanders. From deterring aggression in contested waters to standing by for crisis response, the team consistently demonstrated its ability to adapt and deliver results.

"Our presence ensured regional stability and deterred adversaries," added Mahar. "The ARG-MEU team was ready at every turn to uphold peace, provide aid, and project strength where it was needed most, if called upon."

The deployment's success was underpinned by the ARG-MEU's operational flexibility and the integration of sea, air, and land assets, providing combatant commanders with a versatile contingency force.

"Deployments like these prove the critical role of forward-deployed amphibious forces," said Cooper. "We are a tangible

reminder of America's commitment to our Allies and partners and a powerful deterrent to any potential adversary.”

The WSP ARG-24th MEU (SOC) team began deployment operations on June 1, 2024 following an extensive eight-month pre-deployment training program to certify the Navy and Marine Corps units for deployment. Together, the ARG-MEU is organized, trained, equipped, evaluated, and certified to conduct maritime expeditionary warfare and amphibious operations across the full range military operations. As a highly mobile, versatile, and integrated naval formation, the ARG-MEU offers geographic combatant commanders an organic combined arms force that remains forward deployed and capable of persistent competition.

The WSP ARG includes the Wasp, New York, and Oak Hill, with embarked units including Fleet Surgical Team 4, Tactical Air Control Squadron 22 Detachment 1, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28, and Beach Assault Unit 21. The 24th MEU (SOC) is a Marine Air Ground Task Force, comprised of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 (Reinforced) as the Aviation Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team 1/8 as the Ground Combat Element, Combat Logistics Battalion 24 as the Logistics Combat Element, and a command element as their higher headquarters.

The USS Green Bay Arrives in San Diego After a Decade in Japan



The San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Green Bay (LPD 20) arrives in its new homeport of San Diego, Dec. 9, 2024, after nearly a decade forward-deployed to Sasebo, Japan as part of the America Amphibious Ready Group operating in the U.S. Seventh Fleet area of operations. (U.S. Navy photo by MCC Mark D. Faram)

Dec. 10, 2024

SAN DIEGO – The San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Green Bay (LPD 20) arrived Dec. 9 in its new homeport of San Diego from Sasebo, Japan. This homeport shift will be a permanent change of station for the crew and family members. This shift complies with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), requiring that U.S. Navy ships not be permanently forward deployed to Japan for more than 10 years.

“USS Green Bay has been the workhorse of Sasebo and the Seventh Fleet for nearly a decade. We are super proud of our reputation as the most ready well deck in the area of operations, and looking forward to continuing a tradition of excellence in our new home port of San Diego,” said Capt. Aaron DeMyer, commanding officer of Green Bay.

The Green Bay served as part of the America Amphibious Ready Group, operating in the U.S. Seventh Fleet area of operations. With a crew of 400 and the ability to embark 700 Marines,

Green Bay's mission is to transport and launch amphibious craft in support of amphibious warfare and humanitarian operations.

"We have a good crew that understands what needs to be done when it needs to be done. The team has been worked hard in Seventh Fleet and I'm proud of my time serving abroad but I am overjoyed to be heading home to see my wife and kids after a year away," stated Electronics Technician 1st Class Blake Cross.

Green Bay participated in numerous operations and exercises across the Indo-Pacific to include Exercise Talisman Sabre, a bilateral military exercise between Australia and the United States, with multinational participation, enhancing collective capabilities to respond to a wide array of potential security concerns; Exercise Keen Sword 25, a joint bilateral exercise Japan designed to increase readiness and interoperability while strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance; Exercise Iron Fist, a bilateral exercise designed to increase interoperability and strengthen the relationships between the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force; Exercise Cobra Gold 2020, a Thailand and United States co-sponsored combined joint task force and joint theater security cooperation exercise in the Kingdom of Thailand; Exercise Garuda Shield 2022, a combined and joint exercise between the Indonesian National Armed Forces and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command designed to strengthen bilateral interoperability, capabilities, trust, and cooperation; Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training Exercise with ships and aircraft from Thailand for allied training, focused on building interoperability and strengthening relationships. Additionally, the Green Bay conducted several humanitarian assistance missions.

"While in Seventh Fleet, the Green Bay crew became my family while I was away from my own. With multiple forward deployed

patrols together, I am thankful for my fellow Sailors. I am excited to go back to the states to see my family and for them to meet my Navy family too," stated Operations Specialist 2nd Class Juana Cerriteno.

USS Green Bay was commissioned January 24, 2009. The ship is named in honor of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and serves to conduct prompt and sustained amphibious operations to support national defense and theater security cooperation.

JMSDF Fleet Air Force, U.S. Navy's Task Force 70 Sign Memorandum to Increase Bilateral Electronic Attack Capability



NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI (Dec. 6, 2024) Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Vice Adm. Koji Kaneshima, Commander, Fleet Air Force (CFAF), right, and U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Greg Newkirk, Commander, Task Force (CTF) 70, sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to increase bilateral operations between the forces' electronic attack squadrons, at the CFAF headquarters aboard Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan, Dec. 6. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Caroline H. Lui)

By Lt.Cmdr. Seth Koenig

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI – Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) Vice Adm. Koji Kaneshima, Commander, Fleet Air Force (CFAF), and U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Greg Newkirk, Commander, Task Force (CTF) 70, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to increase bilateral operations between the forces' electronic attack squadrons Dec. 6, 2024.

The signing, which took place at Naval Air Facility Atsugi in Kanagawa prefecture, Japan, represented a pledge between the two commanders to increase bilateral operations and training between the JMSDF Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ) 81 and CTF

70 electronic attack assets, which include Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5's Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141, as well as expeditionary electronic attack squadron detachments rotationally deploying to Japan from Whidbey Island, Washington.

"Today, 'FUJIN' MOU was revised for the purpose of further strengthening Integrated Fire capabilities between CFAF and CTF70," said Kaneshima. "Besides that, with Rear Adm. Newkirk, we came to an agreement to promote 'FUJIN' program. We will keep developing the mutual understanding and tactical skills between the commands and units through the trainings and exercises."

Task Force 70's electronic attack squadrons fly EA-18G Growler aircraft, while VQ-81 flies UP-3D electronic attack aircraft, among other assets.

The EA-18G Growler integrates the latest electronic attack technology, including the ALQ-218 sensor for airborne situational awareness, as well as ALQ-99 pods capable of jamming adversarial radar and communications systems, and next-generation jamming technology as it is refined and implemented across the force.

"Today, we're formalizing our commitment to generate real warfighting advantage by increasing and enhancing our combined technology and expertise in the field of electronic warfare," said Newkirk. "Our work together moving forward will allow us to expand our shared air and maritime domain awareness, as well as refine and perfect our combined electronic attack capability."

VAQ-141 is forward-deployed to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni as part of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5, while the expeditionary VAQ-134 operates out of Misawa Air Base in the northern part of the country and Kadena Air Base in Okinawa in

the southern part of the country.

Task Force 70 controls the preponderance of forward-deployed air and surface maneuver and striking forces in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations, overseeing Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 51 and VAQ 134, as well as the ships and aircraft operating under Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 5, including the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73), the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Robert Smalls (CG 62), the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Shoup (DDG 86) and CVW-5.

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

**Lockheed Martin and Missile
Defense Agency Demonstrate
Critical Capability for
Defending Guam with
Successful Flight Test**



From Lockheed Martin

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam, Dec. 11, 2024 – Lockheed Martin and the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), in support of United States Indo-Pacific Command and the Department of Defense (DoD), have successfully completed Flight Experiment Mission (FEM)-02. Completion of FEM-02 demonstrates significant regional capability with a live exo-atmospheric intercept of a Medium-Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM) target using the Aegis Guam System (AGS) from the island of Guam.

“In partnership with the MDA, Lockheed Martin went from contract award to intercept flight test in less than two years. This rapid integration of capabilities to demonstrate the defense of Guam was enabled by leveraging proven systems and Lockheed Martin’s systems engineering, production and test excellence,” said Paul Lemmo, vice president and general manager of Integrated Warfare Systems & Sensors at Lockheed Martin. “Lockheed Martin is fully committed to providing 21st Century Security solutions for Guam.”

AGS, integrated with the AN/TPY-6 Radar, Vertical Launching System (VLS), and Standard Missile, could aide with pacing the Indo-Pacific threats and expanding joint all-domain operations for Guam and the region.

The FEM-02 test took place from Andersen AFB in Guam and demonstrated the defense of Guam against an air-launched MRBM. AGS was successful in acquiring and tracking the target using the AN/TPY-6 radar, planning and conducting the missile engagement using the Aegis system, launching the interceptor from the VLS on Guam, and intercepting the target over the broad ocean area.

This test provided DoD a better understanding of the missile defense system's ability to counter threats in a realistic environment and the preliminary analysis indicates a significant step forward in the MDA's efforts to protect the United States and its allies from emerging missile threats.

HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding Undocks USS Zumwalt



From HII, Dec. 6 2024

PASCAGOULA, Miss., Dec. 06, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII’s (NYSE: HII) Ingalls Shipbuilding division successfully undocked USS *Zumwalt* (DDG 1000), the lead ship of the U.S. Navy’s *Zumwalt*-class of guided missile destroyers, taking the ship one step closer to testing and returning to the U.S. Navy fleet.

“In partnership with the Navy we are steadfast in our commitment to complete this complex work that adds significant hypersonic capability to *Zumwalt*,” HII President and CEO Chris Kastner said. “We are proud to support the incorporation of the conventional prompt strike for the Navy.”

The undocking marked the completion of significant modernization work at Ingalls since the ship arrived at the Pascagoula shipyard in August 2023. Shortly after its arrival, the ship was put back on land in order to receive technology upgrades including the integration of the Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) weapon system. The Ingalls team also replaced the original twin 155mm Advanced Gun Systems on the destroyers with new missile tubes.

Zumwalt-class destroyers feature a state-of-the-art electric propulsion system, wave-piercing tumblehome hull, stealth design and is equipped with the most advanced warfighting technology and weaponry. These ships will be capable of performing a range of deterrence, power projection, sea control, and command and control missions while allowing Navy to evolve with new systems and missions.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/his-ingalls-shipbuilding-undocks-uss-zumwalt-ddg-1000/>.

Navy Accepts Delivery of Ship to Shore Connector, Landing Craft, Air Cushion 111



By Team Ships Public Affairs, Dec. 9, 2024

NEW ORLEANS – The latest Ship to Shore Connector (SSC), LCAC 111 was delivered to the Navy from Textron Systems on Nov. 27.

The delivery of LCAC 111 comes after completion of Acceptance Trials conducted by the Navy’s Board of Inspection and Survey, which evaluated the readiness and capability of the craft to effectively meet requirements. This new addition to the fleet enhances Navy amphibious capability, providing a vital asset for rapid deployment and logistical support.

“This new craft will provide the Navy and Marine Corps team with unparalleled capability in amphibious warfare, ensuring we remain agile and responsive to emerging threats and global challenges,” said Capt. Jason Grabelle, program manager for Amphibious Assault and Connectors Programs, Program Executive Office, Ships (PEO Ships). “The introduction of LCAC 111 into our fleet marks a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance operational readiness.”

LCACs are built with configurations, dimensions, and clearances similar to the legacy LCACs they replace – ensuring that this latest air cushion vehicle is fully compatible with existing well deck-equipped amphibious ships, the Expeditionary Sea Base and the Expeditionary Transfer Dock . LCACs are capable of carrying a 60 to 75-ton payload. They primarily transport weapon systems, equipment, cargo, and assault element personnel through a wide range of conditions, including over-the-beach.

As one of the Defense Department's largest acquisition organizations, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, auxiliary ships, special mission ships, sealift ships, and support ships.

USS Arleigh Burke Returns Home After 4-Month Patrol



From U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa / U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs

Dec. 9, 2024

ROTA, Spain – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) returned home Dec. 7 after a four-month patrol, its fifth since shifting homeport to Rota.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) returned home Dec. 7 after a four-month patrol, its fifth since shifting homeport to Rota.

Arleigh Burke departed Rota, Spain Aug. 15 on patrol in support of regional Allies and partners, and U.S. national security interests in Europe and Africa. The ship began its patrol transiting east through the Strait of Gibraltar.

“Arleigh Burke Sailors continuously amaze me with their hard work and dedication, no matter the challenges thrown their way,” said Cmdr. Tyrchra Bowman, the ship’s commanding officer. “I could not have asked for a better crew, and I am

immensely grateful for having the opportunity to command America's Lead Destroyer."

Burke's patrol included many significant milestones, including deterrence operations in the eastern Mediterranean Sea; numerous gunshoot qualifications utilizing the MK 15 – Phalanx Close-In Weapon System (CIWS), the MK 38 25 mm machine gun system (MGS), and the 5-inch (127 mm)/54-caliber (Mk 45) lightweight gun; the pinning of eight new Chief Petty Officers; and a visit by Italian Navy Rear Admiral Andrea Petroni, Commander of Second Naval Division and Commander of Italian Maritime Forces, along with crew members of the Italian frigate Luigi Rizzo (F 595) for a passenger exchange; and seven underway replenishments, 11 flight quarters, and 14 small boat operations.

Arleigh Burke closed out its fifth patrol by joining the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group to serve as Air and Missile Defense Commander while the strike group transited to the Mediterranean Sea. The ship then returned to Rota, where the crew was welcomed by friends, family, and volunteers from the USO on Dec. 7, 2024 after 115 days away from home and 22,450 miles traveled.

Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with Allied and interagency partners to advance U.S. national interests, security and stability in Europe and Africa.

HII Christens Virginia-Class

Attack Submarine Arkansas



From HII, Dec. 7, 2024

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., Dec. 07, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – HII (NYSE: HII) today christened Virginia-class submarine Arkansas (SSN 800) at the company’s Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) division.

“Today we celebrate the mighty submarine Arkansas, and we honor bravery and impact: the heroes and heroic moments that shape our future and make us who we are,” NNS President Jennifer Boykin said. “As high school students, the Little Rock Nine exhibited courage, and showed the American people what determination and perseverance look like. Their spirit guided them then, and today SSN 800 will be instilled with this same spirit of courage, determination, and resilience.”

The ship’s sponsors are the six women of the historic group known as the Little Rock Nine, the first African American students to attend all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas during desegregation. NNS honored all nine members during Saturday’s ceremony.

The Little Rock Nine made history in 1957 with their response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, declaring racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. Faced with shouting mobs, threats of violence and hostile state leaders who blocked their way, the teenagers were escorted into the school by federal troops at the direction of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/news/hii-christens-virginia-class-attack-submarine-arkansas-ssn-800/>.

On behalf of the other members, sponsor Carlotta Walls LaNier performed the traditional honor of breaking a bottle of American sparkling wine across the submarine's bow during the ceremony. She also addressed the assembled crowd in-person and those joining virtually from around the world, thanking the shipbuilders who have helped construct Arkansas.

"You are part of the crew who built Arkansas," LaNier said. "Your craftsmanship, your attention to detail, and your support for each other in the workplace made today a reality. Being able to point to something you have done that will outlast and outlive you is a worthy achievement. We offer a grateful nod to each of you who had some part in building Arkansas. Surely, this is an achievement to which you can point with pride."

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro provided the keynote address.

"*Arkansas* represents the very best of our submarine force capabilities and will operate confidently with her crew at sea," Del Toro said. "She will always be propelled by the proud legacy of her namesake, represented here today by three of her courageous sponsors, who overcame tremendous adversity as members of the Little Rock Nine."

Arkansas is the 27th Virginia-class submarine and the 13th to

be delivered by NNS.

“The christening of Arkansas demonstrates the power of innovation and the dedication of our shipbuilders,” said Cmdr. Michael Huber, commanding officer of the pre-commissioning unit. “Today, Arkansas is one step closer to sailing away from our shores, building on the brave example set by her sponsors, defending American ideals and protecting freedom around the world.”

NNS is one of only two shipyards capable of designing and building nuclear-powered submarines for the U.S. Navy. The advanced capabilities of Virginia-class submarines increase firepower, maneuverability and stealth.

A video of the ceremony, along with additional information on Arkansas, the Little Rock Nine, and the Virginia-class submarine program, can be found at: www.HII.com/SSN800.

Coast Guard Cutter Alert Completes First Patrol After Relocating to East Coast



Credit: U.S. Coast Guard photo courtesy of Petty Officer 1st Class Jeremy Humphreys
From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, Dec. 9, 2024

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Alert (WMEC 630) returned home to Cape Canaveral, Thursday, following a 60-day patrol in the Florida Straits.

This marked the cutter's first patrol since it shifted home ports from Astoria, Oregon to Cape Canaveral in June of this year.

The crew deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while operating in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of responsibility. Throughout the patrol, the crew of Alert conducted maritime safety and security missions to protect life at sea and enforce U.S. maritime law.

While on patrol, the crew rescued four Cuban migrants in the south Florida Straits after they were discovered adrift after

several days in the water. After embarking the migrants, Alert's crew provided care to include treating signs and symptoms of severe sunburn and attending to dehydration.

Amidst an active hurricane season, the crew maneuvered throughout the South Florida Straits to evade Hurricane Milton. Alert avoided storm damage to ensure response readiness after the hurricane.

Working alongside other Coast Guard units, Alert's crew provided care to additional migrants who were transferred to the cutter. Once on board the cutter, 7 Cuban and 13 Ecuadorian migrants all received medical and humanitarian care.

During the patrol, the crew of Alert worked with Coast Guard Cutters Margaret Norvell (WPC 1105), William Trump (WPC 1111), Paul Clark (WPC 1106) and William Flores (WPC 1103).

"Coast Guard Cutter Alert is a legacy 210-foot medium endurance cutter that is currently maintaining a vital stopgap ahead of final delivery of the next generation offshore ships," said Cmdr. Lee K. Crusius, commanding officer of Alert. "America's Coast Guard is sustaining this current fleet but will be superior at executing missions aboard our future cutters."

HSTF-SE serves as the Department of Homeland Security lead for operational and tactical planning, command and control, and acts as a standing organization to interdict unlawful maritime migration attempts with federal, state and local partners. HSTF-SE continues to enhance enforcement efforts in support of OVS, which is the 2004 DHS plan to respond to mass maritime migration in the Caribbean Sea and the Florida Straits.

The next generation of Coast Guard cutters is the Offshore Patrol Cutter, a 360-foot ship designed for sustained offshore presence and capabilities. Coast Guard Cutter Argus (WMSM

915), the first cutter produced in this class of ships, was launched in October of 2023.

Alert is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter homeported in Cape Canaveral. The cutter's primary missions are counter-narcotic and migrant interdiction operations, living marine resources protection, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit www.GoCoastGuard.com to learn more about active duty and reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found [here](#).

VMFA-251 Reactivated as Marine Corps' First East Coast-Based F-35C Lightning II Squadron



U.S. Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 251 march in formation during the reactivation ceremony for VMFA-251 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, Dec. 5, 2024. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Orlanys Diaz Figueroa)

From the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. – Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 251, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 14, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), reactivated during a ceremony on Thursday aboard Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, North Carolina, following a four-year, seven-month hiatus.

VMFA-251, known as the “Thunderbolts” or “T-Bolts,” was previously deactivated during a ceremony on April 23, 2020, aboard MCAS Beaufort, South Carolina, after returning from deployment in 2020 in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. The Thunderbolts’ deactivation concluded its 34 years as an F/A-18 Hornet squadron. The squadron was then relocated to MCAS Cherry Point to begin its transition to the F-35.

VMFA-251 received its first F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter delivery on Sept. 17, 2024, marking a key milestone in the squadron's transition process. VMFA-251 is the Marine Corps' first East Coast-based operational F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter squadron.

The F-35 is a fifth-generation fighter jet with advanced stealth, agility and maneuverability, sensor and information fusion, and provides the pilot with real-time access to battlespace information. It is designed to meet an advanced threat, while improving lethality, survivability, and supportability. The F-35C is designed to operate from conventional aircraft carriers or land bases and provides operational maneuverability and persistence to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Superior internal fuel capacity results in a significantly increased combat radius and longer on-station times as compared to the F-35B, the F-35's short takeoff and vertical landing (STOVL) variant.

"Today, almost 83 years to the day after it was founded, VMFA-251 reactivates as an F-35C Lightning II squadron. The T-Bolts are humbled and honored for the privilege of carrying that proud legacy forward," said Lt. Col. Evan Shockley, commanding officer, VMFA-251. "Our immediate focus is working towards initial operational capability, which means that VMFA-251 has enough operational F-35C Lightning II aircraft, trained pilots, maintainers, and support equipment to self-sustain its mission essential tasks. Following that, we will turn our attention towards reaching full operational capability to ensure that, when called upon, the T-Bolts will stand ready to serve our great nation."

VMFA-251 is a subordinate unit of 2nd MAW, the aviation combat element of II Marine Expeditionary Force.