

# Bollinger Celebrates Construction of ULA R/S Spaceship with Keel-Laying Ceremony



From Left to Right: Chris Ellerhorst, Vice President of the Kuiper Program, ULA; Tory Bruno, President and CEO, ULA; Dan Caughran, Vice President of Production Operations & Supply Chain, ULA; and Ben Bordelon, President and CEO, Bollinger Shipyards.

*SpaceShip to transport Vulcan rockets to launch sites in Florida and California*

AMELIA, La. – (October 24, 2024) – Joined by ULA President and CEO Tory Bruno and other ULA executives at Bollinger Marine Fabricators, Bollinger Shipyards (“Bollinger”) today officially laid the keel for the future R/S SpaceShip, a new ship to transport Vulcan rockets from the factory in Decatur,

Alabama to the launch sites at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida and Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. This is the second transport vessel in ULA's maritime fleet.

"We're proud to continue our partnership with ULA in support of their increasing capabilities and launch capacity," said Ben Bordelon, President and CEO of Bollinger Shipyards. "Bollinger's skilled workforce is second to none when it comes to designing, engineering and building complex vessels to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, and we look forward to delivering SpaceShip to further ULA's mission of enabling the future of space exploration."

The keel authenticators were Tory Bruno, President and CEO of ULA, Chris Ellerhorst, Vice President of the Kuiper Program at ULA, and Dan Caughran, Vice President of Production Operations & Supply Chain for ULA.

"SpaceShip's future voyages will transit rivers and seas, delivering powerful rockets to our launch pads and beyond, with that journey continuing literally into space," said ULA President and CEO Tory Bruno. "As all rockets are not created equal, the same is true for ships. Bollinger's legacy of more than 75 years of excellence in shipbuilding is impressive and we are proud to partner with this very capable team."

ULA awarded Bollinger Shipyards a contract in December 2023 to build a second roll-on/roll-off vessel classed for both ocean-going and river service. Construction of the 356-ft-long ship is taking place at Bollinger Marine Fabricators in Amelia, Louisiana, with delivery to ULA expected in early 2026.

ULA is expanding launch capacity in support of its customer Amazon's Project Kuiper. ULA's new Vulcan rocket is contracted for 38 launches to support the deployment for the Project Kuiper constellation, which will provide fast, affordable broadband service to unserved and underserved communities

around the world.

Vulcan is ULA's next generation rocket, and it saw its successful inaugural launch in January 2024. Vulcan will provide high performance and affordability while continuing to deliver superior reliability and orbital precision for all our customers across the national security, civil and commercial markets.

#### ABOUT ULA

All rockets are not created equal. ULA is the nation's most experienced, reliable and accurate launch service provider delivering unmatched value, a tireless drive to improve, and commitment to the extraordinary. Vulcan's inaugural launch marked the beginning of a new era of space capabilities and provides higher performance and greater affordability while offering the world's only high energy architecture rocket to deliver any payload, at any time, directly to any orbit.

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## **Carrier Strike Group Conducts Second Multi-Large Deck Event with Italian ITS Cavour CSG**



U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (Oct. 18, 2024)  
Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and the Italian Carrier Strike Group leadership pose for a group photo aboard the Italian aircraft carrier ITS Cavour (CVH 550). (Official U.S. Navy photo)

By Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group & Cavour Carrier Strike Group Public Affairs | October 24, 2024

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY – The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group (CSG) conducted a Multi-Large Deck Event (MLDE) with the Italian Navy's ITS Cavour CSG, Oct. 18.

MLDE provide the ships and aircrafts of the two naval forces, comprised of more than 7,500 U.S. and Italian Sailors and Marines, an opportunity to advance interoperability by carrying out integrated planning and coordination, communications, cross-deck leadership exchanges, a fast-roping exercise, and an air defense exercise to strengthen combined maritime operations and combat readiness.

“The opportunity to exercise our interoperability with our

Cavour CSG counterparts for a second time in our deployment, highlights our strategic advantage inherent to our network of strong alliances,” said Rear Adm. Adan Cruz, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 3. “We have seized every opportunity to fly and sail with our Italian counterparts to deepen our combined operational capacity anywhere in international waters.”

During the event, Rear Adm. Giancarlo Ciappina, commander, Cavour Carrier Strike Group, hosted Cruz, aboard the ITS Cavour for a visit focused on building relationships.

“We are proud to work once again alongside Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, after almost two months from our first interaction in the Pacific Ocean,” said Ciappina. “[It] has represented another precious opportunity to train together and to exchange experiences and knowledge, highlighting the versatility and flexibility of Navies operating on a global scale, wherever a presence is required to keep maritime lines of communication open and safe to strengthen our bonds and to enhance levels of cooperation with commitment to security.”

This marks the second time the Abraham Lincoln CSG participated in an MLDE with the Italian Navy during the 2024 deployment. The previous event in August marked the first-ever MLDE between U.S. and Italian Navies in the Indo-Pacific.

Participating ships in the MLDE included Nimitz-Class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Integrated Air and Missile Defense Commander (IAMDC) USS Frank E. Petersen, Jr. (DDG 121), Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS O’Kane (DDG 77) & USS Michael Murphy (DDG 111), assigned to Destroyer Squadron 21, Italian aircraft carrier ITS Cavour (CVH 550), Italian Frigate ITS Alpino (F 594), and Italian Multipurpose Combat Ship Raimondo Montecuccoli (P 432).

Participating aircraft included MH-60S and MH-60R Sea Hawks, F/A-18E & F Super Hornets, E/A-18G Growlers, F-35C Lightning

II, and E-2D Hawkeye, all assigned to Carrier Air Wing 9; and Italian F-35B Lightning II and AV-8B Harrier II assigned to Cavour CSG.

Cruz and Ciappina conducted a conditions check via virtual teleconference prior to the commencement to ensure all participants were ready, Oct. 17. The exercise started with personnel exchanges where key Abraham Lincoln CSG leadership toured Cavour and Italian officers toured the USS Abraham Lincoln. USS O'Kane and ITS Raimondo Montecuccoli conducted a joint live-fire exercise, while the embarked U.S. explosive ordnance disposal team conducted a subject matter expert exchange and fast rope exercise with Italian counterparts. The event concluded with a complex air defense exercise involving both CSG's tactical aircraft.

"It is an honor to once again have the opportunity to work jointly with our NATO Allies," said Cruz. "I am grateful to Rear Adm. Ciappina and his entire crew of the ITS Cavour for their gracious hospitality aboard their ship. I am also grateful to continue training and operating together to drive interoperability forward."

Ciappina responded with his reflection on the MLDE.

"I am very grateful to Adm. Cruz and to the whole crew of ABE CSG for their great effort and professionalism continuously shown during these challenging times for peace and international stability and that clearly confirm their strong commitment towards own common values, which are shared within the allied and partner Navies on a global scale," concluded Ciappina.

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group stands ready to successfully conduct any mission essential to U.S. National security, spanning combat operations to integrated maritime operations with our allies and partners to maritime security and stability in the U.S. Central Command area of

responsibility. It also operates postured to deliver unfaltering maritime force to deter, defend, and if necessary, defeat coercive behavior from those who seek to challenge the rules-based international order.

The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group consists of USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), embarked staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) Three and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) Nine, IAMDC USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121), and USS O’Kane (DDG 77), USS Spruance (DDG 111), and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112).

CVW-9 consists of an F-35C squadron, the “Black Knights” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314; three F/A-18E/F Super Hornet squadrons, the “Tophatters” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 14; “Black Aces” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 41, the “Vigilantes” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 151; “Wizards” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 133, operating the EA-18G Growler; “Wallbangers” of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 117, operating the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye; “Chargers” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 14 operating the MH-60S Sea Hawk; and “Raptors” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 71, operating the MH-60R Sea Hawk.

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## **Senators Ask Administration to Assess Proposal to Address Submarine Production Delays**



Oct. 25, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-Virginia), Chair of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut), and U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut) led a bipartisan group of their colleagues in asking the Biden Administration to address funding shortfalls for submarine programs as they consider funding levels for Fiscal Year 2025. In two separate letters to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Shalanda Young and Department of the Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro, the lawmakers also urged the Administration to carefully assess the merits of the proposed Shipbuilder Accountability and Workforce Support (SAWS) agreement—which would restructure how the Navy pays for submarines—as a potential solution to address delays and get the programs back on track.

While Congress has invested over \$2.3 billion between 2018 and 2023 and an additional \$3 billion this year as part of a [national security supplemental](#) in the nation's submarine industrial base, the Virginia-class and Columbia-class

submarine programs face significant delays and are expected to be over budget. The on-time completion of Virginia-class submarines, which are built in Virginia and Connecticut, is especially critical to the fulfillment of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) trilateral partnership, through which the United States will sell at least two submarines to Australia to bolster security in the Indo-Pacific.

In their letter to OMB Director Young, the members wrote, "The United States' submarine programs provide our nation an undersea advantage that is critical to our national security... Based on the information available so far, the Shipbuilder Accountability and Workforce Support (SAWS) agreement strikes us as a promising approach to ensure our submarine industrial base rises to the occasion, accelerates submarine production, and fully meets the critical and building demand on U.S. shipyards... We request that you give all due consideration to this initiative, while ensuring it includes the accountability and leverage measures necessary to ensure our federal investments in submarine production go as far as possible in getting these critical programs on track."

In their letter to Secretary of the Navy Del Toro, the members wrote, "It is our understanding that over months of conversation Pentagon leadership, the Navy, and industry reached an agreement to maximize use of taxpayer funding for construction of the next tranche of Columbia-class and Virginia-class submarines – including by raising wages to attract and retain America's skilled and organized shipyard workforce, addressing rising costs, and advancing much-needed infrastructure investments, all to improve program reliability and schedule."

"We therefore urge more consistent communication with Congress and with OMB so that all parties clearly understand the Navy's position on SAWS and overall plans to get our nation's submarine production on track," they continued. "It is critical that our submarine programs be on schedule and on

budget.”

In addition to Kaine, Murphy, and Blumenthal, the letters were signed by U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-New Hampshire), Angus King (I-Maine), Kevin Cramer (R-North Dakota), and Mark R. Warner (D-Virginia).

The letter to OMB is available [here](#). The letter to the Navy is available [here](#).

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# **U.S. Navy Awards MEDUSA Contract to Advance Innovative Unmanned Technology**



By Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC) Public Affairs, Oct. 25, 2024

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy competitively awarded a contract to General Dynamics Mission Systems Inc., to develop the Mining Expendable Delivery Unmanned Submarine Asset (MEDUSA) System. The contract underscores the Navy’s commitment to developing a manned-unmanned hybrid fleet to enhance operational effectiveness and mission agility across all maritime environments.

MEDUSA is a mining system utilizing an expendable Unmanned Underwater Vehicle (UUV) that can be deployed from a submarine. It is a cutting-edge unmanned system designed to meet the Navy’s requirement for an advanced maritime mining system. The tasks under this contract include program management, design, systems engineering, fabrication, and testing and integration of the MEDUSA system for employment from Navy submarines.

“The award of the MEDUSA contract represents our commitment to advancing unmanned technology and integrating it into Navy operations,” said Capt. Matthew Lewis, program manager of the unmanned maritime systems program office. “Innovation is critical to our national security and directly contributes to the readiness of our fleet. This contract enables us to invest in future operational capabilities and to push the boundaries of what we thought possible.”

The base contract, currently valued at \$15.9 million, will provide for program management, design, systems engineering, fabrication, testing and integration activities through September 2026. However, if contract options are exercised, work will continue through 2032 and the total contract value could reach \$58 million. This strategic investment in unmanned technology is vital for maintaining maritime superiority and ensuring the readiness of our naval forces in an evolving security landscape.

“MEDUSA is an exciting leap forward for our Navy, aligning with CNO’s updated NAVPLAN and the evolving nature of

warfare,” said Rear. Adm. Kevin Smith, Program Executive Officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants. “This innovative mining system enhances our capabilities, allowing us to stay one step ahead in a rapidly changing environment. By empowering our warfighters with cutting-edge unmanned technology like MEDUSA, we’re ensuring they have the tools they need to thrive in complex situations and protect our interests at sea.”

The Navy’s unmanned maritime systems program office is a part of the Program Executive Office Unmanned and Small Combatants portfolio, which designs, develops, builds, and delivers the Navy’s unmanned maritime systems; mine warfare systems; special warfare systems; expeditionary warfare systems; and small surface combatants.

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## **Austal USA Breaks Ground on New Manufacturing Facility for Submarine Modules**



From Austal USA

Mobile, Ala. – Austal USA celebrated the start of construction for a new manufacturing facility for submarine modules (MMF3) today. This new building, scheduled to be fully operational in late 2026, will significantly increase Austal USA's capacity to support the U.S. Navy Submarine Industrial Base (SIB).

The new building will provide 369,600 square feet of indoor manufacturing space purpose-built to manufacture submarine modules. The production from this building will support the U.S. Navy's goal of delivering one Columbia-class and two Virginia-class submarines annually. It will include a material storage area, machine shop, assembly area, and waterfront improvements to support the shipment of the completed modules via barge.

This project, combined with the recent groundbreaking for another manufacturing building, represent over \$750M in expansion of Austal USA's Mobile facility further solidifying

Austal USA's role as a major contributor to Alabama's economy. The two buildings, when fully operational, will add over 2,000 new jobs. In 2023, Austal USA's contracts were supported by 259 Alabama-based suppliers accounting for over \$115 million of business. This includes 185 small businesses, over 50 percent of the total spend.

"Austal USA's continued expansion in Mobile is a testament to Alabama's growing leadership in the defense industry and our commitment to supporting our nation's security needs," Governor Kay Ivey said. "This new facility for submarine module manufacturing reinforces Austal's vital role in delivering the advanced capabilities required by these vital submarine programs. The creation of 2,000 jobs and the investment in cutting-edge manufacturing technologies further demonstrates Austal's dedication to both Alabama's economy and our national defense."

"Austal USA is committed to supporting national security initiatives like the Navy's Virginia and Columbia-class submarine programs, evidenced by our aggressive infrastructure and workforce expansion efforts," commented Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. "The key to our success is the strong partnerships we have built with not only our customers but also our employees and the amazing community surrounding us. We are grateful for the unending support we continue to receive from the city and county of Mobile and the great state of Alabama."

In July Austal USA started construction on a new assembly building to enable the erection of large steel modules for Navy and Coast Guard ships, including the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) and TAGOS-25 programs. The building will occupy four and a half acres providing over 192,000 square feet of new indoor manufacturing space. This project will include a shiplift system that features an articulated lifting platform approximately 450 feet long by 125 feet wide. The shiplift will provide a safe and reliable system to launch ships as

they are completed in the assembly buildings and will also enable bringing ships back on the land-side facility for repair and maintenance.

Upon completion of these buildings, Austal USA's Mobile, Ala. ship manufacturing facility will include a 117,000 square-foot steel panel line, two module manufacturing facilities totaling over one million square feet of covered manufacturing space optimized for serial production, and seven assembly bays providing over 400,000 square feet of indoor erection space. In all, the Mobile facility covers 180 acres and, when this project is complete, over 1.5 million square feet of indoor manufacturing space.

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## **USCGC Resolute Crew Returns Home, Offloads \$115M Worth of Drugs in St. Petersburg**



The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Resolute unload interdicted narcotics onto Sector St. Petersburg South Moorings, Florida, Oct. 23, 2024. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Riley Perkofski)

From Public Affairs Detachment Tampa Bay, Oct. 23, 2024

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Resolute offloaded approximately 9,690 pounds of cocaine and 5,490 pounds of marijuana, worth an estimated \$115 million, in their homeport of St. Petersburg, Wednesday.

In addition to the contraband, Resolute's crew previously transferred five suspected smugglers ashore to face federal prosecution by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Resolute's crew deployed to the Caribbean Sea for 38 days in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South), an interagency and international task force that conducts counter-illicit trafficking and security

cooperation operations in the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. During their patrol, the Resolute crew was strategically positioned to deny drug trafficking organizations access to maritime smuggling routes from Central and South America to prevent harmful narcotics from reaching the United States.

Early in the patrol, Resolute's crew launched two small boat crews to pursue a go-fast vessel across 40 nautical miles of open ocean in six-foot seas. Despite the vessel's significant horsepower, the Resolute crew worked with a Dutch aircraft to disrupt the go-fast vessel, forcing the smugglers to jettison their illicit contraband. Two weeks later, the Resolute crew located a suspicious sailing vessel traveling through the central Caribbean. During the late-night boarding, Resolute's law enforcement boarding team discovered nearly 1,653 pounds of cocaine in a hidden compartment. The boarding team seized the contraband and detained the suspected smugglers onboard. The crew's efforts in both cases prevented an estimated \$58.1 million worth of contraband from reaching the United States.

"Time and time again, the crew demonstrated their professionalism, cohesion and excellence in mission execution," said Cmdr. Ian Starr, commanding officer of Resolute. "I am so incredibly proud of their efforts and their ability to achieve success in conditions where success is never guaranteed."

As part of the international partnerships under JIATF-South, the Resolute crew worked with the Royal Netherlands Navy ship HNLMS Holland and their embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 102 from Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific to transfer custody of seized contraband and suspected smugglers for future prosecution in the United States. Holland's crew transferred more than 5,000 pounds of marijuana and 4,409 pounds of cocaine to Resolute, promoting

diplomatic relations through the shared efforts to stem the flow of illegal narcotics through the Caribbean joint operating area.

In support of Homeland Security Task Force-Southeast and Operation Vigilant Sentry, Resolute's crew also worked with the crews of Coast Guard cutters William Trump and Reliance to interdict an overloaded and unseaworthy vessel with 181 migrants off the coast of Haiti. Resolute's crew worked throughout the night to safely transport Haitian migrants to Coast Guard Cutter Reliance, allowing the crew to provide timely shelter and care to dozens of men, women and children.

Resolute also conducted flight operations with an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew from Coast Guard Air Station Miami, successfully completing their Aviation Standardization Inspection. During the assessment, Resolute completed 30 helicopter evolutions including in-flight refueling, vertical replenishment and shipboard launch and recovery operations to enhance mission readiness.

The Resolute crew was permitted to return home early to reunite with their families following the devastating impacts of Hurricane Helene, but almost as soon as they arrived, they went back underway again for storm avoidance before Hurricane Milton made landfall on the west coast of Florida. The Resolute crew provided offshore search and rescue support to Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg in the wake of Hurricane Milton, along with Coast Guard Cutter Thetis and Coast Guard Cutter Pablo Valent.

The fight against drug cartels in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean requires a unity of effort in all phases, from detection and monitoring to interdiction and apprehension, through criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. attorneys' offices in districts across the nation. Joint Interagency Task Force-South in Key West,

Florida conducts the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs. The law enforcement phase of operations in the Caribbean is conducted under the authority of the [Seventh Coast Guard District](#), headquartered in Miami, and cases in the Eastern Pacific Ocean are conducted under the authority of the [Eleventh Coast Guard District](#) headquartered in Alameda, California. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

These interdictions relate to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces' (OCDETF) Strike Force Initiatives and designated investigations. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

Resolute is a 210-foot, Reliance-class medium endurance cutter homeported in St. Petersburg. The cutter's primary missions are counter drug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere. Resolute is under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area based in Portsmouth, Virginia. U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf.

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

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# SECNAV Visits Georgia Tech Research Institute, Underscoring Commitment to Innovation and Collaboration



From SECNAV Public Affairs, 23 October 2024

ATLANTA – Oct. 23, 2024 – The Secretary of the Navy Hon. Carlos Del Toro visited the Georgia Tech Research Institute today to highlight the vital role of research and development in maintaining naval dominance and warfighting excellence. The Secretary addressed Georgia Tech students and faculty, and Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps students from Georgia Tech, Spelman College and Morehouse College, emphasizing the importance of their contributions to national security.

The Secretary's visit underscored the Navy's commitment to fostering strategic partnerships with academic institutions

like Georgia Tech. GTRI, the applied research division of Georgia Tech, plays a crucial role in developing cutting-edge technologies for the Department of the Navy and the Department of Defense.

“Georgia Tech is a powerhouse of innovation, and GTRI’s research is critical to ensuring our Sailors and Marines have the technological edge they need to prevail in any conflict,” said Secretary Del Toro. “The work being done here, particularly in areas like artificial intelligence, cyber-physical systems, and electromagnetic spectrum operations, is directly aligned with the Navy’s strategic priorities.”

The Secretary highlighted GTRI’s contributions to the DON, including:

**Collaborative Research:** GTRI works closely with the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and other DoD entities to address specific technological needs.

**R&D Contributions:** GTRI develops advanced systems such as autonomous vehicles, millimeter wave radar technologies, and electronic warfare solutions.

**Prototyping and Testing:** GTRI provides facilities for testing and validating new technologies to meet military specifications.

**Technology Transition:** GTRI focuses on translating research outcomes into practical applications, enhancing operational capabilities for the Navy and broader defense community.

The Secretary’s remarks also emphasized the importance of innovation in the face of evolving global challenges.

“To win the fight of the future, we must embrace and implement emerging technologies,” said Del Toro. “We are in an innovation race, and it is one we must win.”

The Secretary highlighted several DON innovation initiatives,

including:

**The Naval Science and Technology Strategy:** This strategy guides the Navy and Marine Corps' investments in science and technology research.

**The Naval Innovation Center (NIC) at the Naval Postgraduate School:** The NIC accelerates the innovation process by bringing research concepts out of the lab and into the field faster.

**The Department of the Navy's Science and Technology Board:** This board provides independent advice and counsel on matters relating to science, technology, and acquisition.

**The Disruptive Capabilities Office (DCO):** The DCO identifies and implements already-available or emerging technologies to address the fleet's capability gaps.

"With today's enemies developing more advanced technological threats, we are grateful that the Secretary of the Navy made time to visit our Atlanta Region NROTC Midshipmen," said Atlanta Region NROTC Commanding Officer Capt. Jesus Rodriguez. "Our future Naval officers were provided with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity when the Secretary personally impressed on them the importance of continued studies in science and technology. Our Midshipmen and NROTC staff are all appreciative for the opportunity to meet with and listen to our Navy's leadership emphasize the importance of our students' initiative in technological development during their Naval careers."

The Secretary concluded by issuing a call to action to the students in attendance.

"Innovation must permeate every aspect of our department's approach to deliver technologies and capabilities at a speed and scale necessary for our Navy and Marine Corps to confront the challenges of today and the future."

Read Secretary Del Toro's remarks [here](#).

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# Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk Returns Home From 62-Day Migrant Interdiction Operations Patrol



A Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk (WMEC 913) small boat crew rescues 25 migrants from a disabled vessel, Aug. 20, 2024, while underway in the Florida Straits. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Brian Morel)

From U.S. Coast Guard 7th District, Oct. 23, 2024

KEY WEST, Fla. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Mohawk (WMEC 913) returned to their homeport of Key West, Oct. 11, following a 62-day migrant interdiction operations patrol in the Florida Straits.

Mohawk's crew deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast (HSTF-SE) and Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS) while underway in the Seventh Coast Guard District's area of responsibility. While on patrol, crew members worked alongside additional Coast Guard units and partner agency crews to detect, deter and intercept unsafe and illegal migrant ventures bound for the United States.

While at sea, Mohawk crew members interdicted and rescued 41 migrants from unseaworthy vessels. Of these, Mohawk's crew rescued 25 migrants aboard a single disabled vessel found taking on water in the Florida Straits on Aug. 20. Throughout the deployment, Mohawk cared for a total of 53 migrants, providing shelter, sustenance, hydration and medical care before conducting safe repatriation back to their country of origin.

On Oct. 3, Mohawk's crew conducted a rescue of four personnel stranded on the remote island of Cay Sal, Bahamas after their seaplane was disabled. Mohawk coordinated with a U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon airplane and a Coast Guard Air Station Miami HC-144 Ocean Sentry airplane to vector in Mohawk's small boat crew for the rescue.

Most recently, the crew of Mohawk extended their deployment in response to the approach of Hurricane Milton. Mohawk sortied alongside other Key West-based Coast Guard cutters to avoid

potential storm damage and ensure response readiness after the hurricane. Mohawk's crew also conducted a tow of the Isaac Mayo during the sortie for several days of rough seas as the cutter was disabled due to scheduled maintenance.

Of note, this patrol marked a significant historical event for the Coast Guard's Famous-class medium endurance cutter fleet. Mohawk was the last in its class to fire the onboard Mk 75 mm gun weapon system. The largest caliber weapon in the Coast Guard inventory, it has been utilized by Famous-class cutters like Mohawk since they were first commissioned in the 1980's. Now, large caliber weapon systems onboard Famous-class cutters are being modernized for a service life extension program.

To successfully conduct the migrant interdiction mission, Mohawk partnered with U.S. Customs and Border Protection – Air and Marine Operations air and boat crews as well as additional Coast Guard units to include Coast Guard Cutters Charles Sexton (WPC 1108), Raymond Evans (WPC 1110), Isaac Mayo (WPC 1112), Maple (WLB 297), Coast Guard Station Key West, Coast Guard Sector Key West and Coast Guard Air Station Miami.

“Outstanding work by the Mohawk crew. I am very proud of our ability to secure our nation's maritime borders while maintaining the safety of life at sea,” said Cmdr. David Ratner, commanding officer of Mohawk. “We understand the importance of deterring unlawful and dangerous maritime migration attempts on often overloaded and unseaworthy vessels. One such vessel with 25 migrants on board was disabled with insufficient fuel to make it to land and was taking on water.”

Mohawk is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter with a crew of 100. The cutter's primary missions are counter-drug and migrant interdiction operations, enforcement of federal fishery laws as well as search and rescue in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere. Mohawk falls under the command of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic

Area, which is based in Portsmouth, Virginia. U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area oversees all Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf.

For information on how to join the U.S. Coast Guard, visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.goatguard.com) to learn 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](#).

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## US, Australian Naval Forces Conduct Bilateral Operations



BAY OF BENGAL (Oct. 20, 2024) – Royal Australian Navy Communication Information Systems Specialist Able Seaman Karl Jamieson (left), from Albany, Australia, talks with U.S. Navy Information Systems Technician Caleb Jones, from Phoenix, on a

missile deck aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey (DDG 105) while operating in the Bay of Bengal, Oct. 20, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Greg Johnson)  
By MC1 Gregory Johnson. Oct. 24, 2024

STRAIT OF MALACCA – The U.S. Navy (USN) and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) conducted bilateral operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific in the Strait of Malacca, Oct. 20-23.

Participating ships included the USN Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey (DDG 105) and the RAN Anzac-class frigate HMAS Stuart (FFH 153). The two ships took part in exercise Malabar 2024 earlier in October.

“This exercise further builds on our existing interoperability and combined readiness we have with the Royal Australian Navy,” said Vice Adm. Fred Kacher, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet. “Every time we operate together, we strengthen our capabilities and shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Over four days, the ships engaged in a formation sailing exercise, an air defense exercise, maritime communications training, personnel cross-decks and visit, board, search and seizure drills.

“Conducting a joint sail with USS Dewey has been of great value, with multiple different activities conducted between the ships, including personnel exchange, boarding practices, manoeuvring in close company, and warfare drills,” said Cmdr. Warren Bechly, commanding officer, HMAS Stuart. “Whether it is large scale exercises, or ships in transit between the same ports, working with our allies and partners is always a valuable opportunity to build closer ties and enhance interoperability.”

The U.S. Navy regularly operates alongside our allies in the

Indo-Pacific region as a demonstration of our shared commitment to the rules-based international order.

Bilateral operations such as this one provide valuable opportunities to train, exercise and develop tactical interoperability across allied navies in the Indo-Pacific.

Dewey is forward-deployed and assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy's largest DESRON and the U.S. 7th Fleet's principal surface force.

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.

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## **Navy's Third Operational F-35C Lightning II Squadron Achieves Safe For Flight Certification**



An F-35C Lightning II from VFA-86 performs a touch and go aboard USS Nimitz (CVN 68) in the Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Carson Croom)

From Lt. John Choi, Oct. 23, 2024

VFA-86 has earned a Full Safe for Flight certification on the F-35C.

The F-35C enhances the carrier strike group's ability to project power, supporting U.S. national security and integrating seamlessly with other carrier air wing assets.

"I couldn't be more proud of the Winder Team for this achievement," said Cmdr. Nathan Staples, VFA-86 Commanding Officer. "Our team has excelled since the transition began in February 2023, and I look forward to our future achievements and the standards we set for the Lightning II community."

The squadron's transition from the F/A-18, flown for 36 years, began in September 2023. Nearly 200 personnel completed training at Eglin AFB, Fla., and NAS Lemoore, while nine

pilots finished their flight syllabus with VFA-125, the Navy's F-35C Fleet Replacement Squadron, while simultaneously executing tactical training events with Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center and TOPGUN.

After achieving several key milestones, including a perfect score on the Conventional Weapons Technical Proficiency Inspection and the highest Maintenance Program Assist inspection score, VFA-86 earned Interim Safe for Flight certification in June 2024. In July, they conducted their first embarked operations aboard USS Nimitz (CVN 68), culminating in Full Safe for Flight certification.

"Our success is due to proactive management, engaged leadership, and a can-do attitude," said AFCM Rich Brickey, VFA-86 Maintenance Master Chief. "Our Sailors have excelled in every metric and will continue to do so whenever called upon."

Established in 1951, VFA-86 has flown nine different aircraft and supported combat operations in Vietnam, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. As the Navy's newest F-35C squadron, the Sidewinders remain committed to their motto: "When diplomacy fails... 86 'em!"