

U.K. and U.S. Conduct SINKEX during Atlantic Thunder 22



The U.K. and U.S. navies conducted a sinking exercise Sept. 7 in the North Atlantic. *U.S. NAVY*

ATLANTIC OCEAN – Ships and aircraft from the United Kingdom and the United States conducted a long-planned multi-domain sinking exercise (SINKEX) called Atlantic Thunder 22 in the North Atlantic, Sept. 7, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Public Affairs said Sept. 23.

Atlantic Thunder 22 participants, assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Europe, U.S. Air Forces Europe, the U.K. Royal Navy and U.K. Royal Air Force sank the decommissioned guided missile frigate ex-USS Boone, during the live-fire SINKEX to develop combined proficiency in tactics, targeting and live-firing against a surface target at sea.

“Sinking exercises not only provide excellent opportunities to gain real world operational experience in long range maritime strikes but also demonstrate the collective power of our combined forces,” said Rear Adm. Oliver “Ollie” Lewis, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa’s (NAVEUR-NAVAF) Director of Maritime Operations. “Most importantly, gaining real world proficiency in the tactics, techniques and procedures we have developed and tested alongside our British Allies not only validate our weapons systems but ultimately contribute to NATO alliance readiness.”

The exercise was not only a unique and valuable opportunity for sharpening and proving partner capabilities, but also an exercise of multiple firsts.

The ex-Boone was struck by Martlet air-to-surface missiles from Wildcat helicopters assigned to the Type 23 frigate HMS Westminster. The helicopters provided inaugural laser targeting for fixed-wing U.K Royal Air Force Typhoons using Paveway IV precision guided munitions.

A U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft assigned to Patrol Squadron 46 shot a long range anti-ship missile. U.S. Air Force F-15E Eagles, assigned to 494th Fighter Squadron, dropped maritime strike joint direct attack munitions.

Finally at sea, the U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyer USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) struck the ex-Boone with a Standard Missile 6 (SM-6), the first anti-ship SM-6 engagement in the U.S. European Command area of responsibility, while HMS Westminster fired the first live

RGM-84D Harpoon missile salvo from the U.K. since 2004.

Also aboard Arleigh Burke, Marines assigned to the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit provided vital imagery and battle damage assessment by deploying a V-BAT 128 vertical take-off and landing unmanned aerial vehicle, marking the first launch of a V-BAT 128 from an Arleigh Burke guided-missile destroyer.

“Ex Atlantic Thunder has demonstrated that U.K. and U.S. naval and air forces can integrate to deliver an end-to-end kill chain against a maritime target at long range,” said Cmdr. Ed Moss-Ward, commanding officer of HMS Westminster. “The integration of high end weapons, sensors and communications with our NATO allies is key to the collective war fighting capability of the Alliance demonstrated by the sinking exercise. The firings have supported the development of the Royal Navy’s targeting and weapon capabilities, and afforded opportunity to conduct realistic training to validate tactics and operating procedures.”

Former U.S. Navy vessels used in SINKEXs, referred to as hulks, are prepared in strict compliance with regulations prescribed and enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency under a general permit the Navy holds pursuant to the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act.

Prior to being transported for participation in a sinking exercise, each vessel undergoes a rigorous cleaning process for environmental safety. Aligned with U.K. Ministry of Defense environmental policy, robust monitoring was conducted above and below the sea’s surface with trained personnel using specialized equipment to reduce the overall risk of inadvertently impacting the marine environment and marine mammals during the SINKEX.

Ex-Boone is a decommissioned guided missile frigate, which entered United States Naval service, May 15, 1982. It was decommissioned on Feb. 23, 2012. The 20th ship of the Oliver

Hazard Perry class, it was the first ship named for Vice Adm. Joel Thompson Boone, a Medal of Honor recipient and the most highly decorated medical officer during World War I.

Admiral: Safety, Retention, and Efficiency Are Navy's Top Priorities for Shipyard Workers



Rear Adm. Scott Brown visited Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF) in May to review shipyard operations in his new role as the deputy commander for industrial operations, Naval Sea Systems Command. *U.S. NAVY / Marc Ayalin*

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – Retaining shipyard workers and increasing their efficiency are the top priorities – aside from ensuring their safety – for the Navy's deputy commander of industrial operations, he said at an American Society of Naval Engineers Conference in Virginia Beach on Sept. 20.

Rear Adm. Scott Brown, deputy commander of logistics, maintenance and industrial operations at Naval Sea Systems Command, said the Navy is doing all it can to maximize its workforce's capabilities while also growing it to meet maintenance challenges.

The Navy has been battling a submarine maintenance backlog for years, causing the service to even resort to sending some attack submarines to private yards and hiring more personnel. A Congressional Budget Office report predicted the Navy is likely to see labor supply shortages for the next few decades.

Brown said his top three priorities were safety, production capacity, and throughput and efficiency.

On the subject of safety, he stated there were 37,000 shipyard workers and their safety remains his top priority. After that, he is focused on production capacity as retention proves difficult in a hot economy where there is a high demand for workers. His office is trying to deal with that by focusing on retention so there are fewer gaps the Navy must fill through hiring, he said.

The final priority is throughput in efficiency, as Brown stated he wanted to make the workforce they have now as productive as they can possibly be.

Marine Corps ACVs Ok'd for Open-Ocean Waterborne Operations



U.S. Marines assigned to the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division, conduct waterborne training with an Amphibious Combat Vehicle from shore to loading amphibious transport dock ship USS Anchorage (LPD 23) at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 12. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Willow Marshall*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Marine Corps Amphibious Combat Vehicles are authorized to return to open-ocean waterborne operations following the establishment of interim guidance to enhance operational safety when conducting ACV training, Headquarters Marine Corps said Sept. 22.

On July 20, the Marine Corps paused all waterborne ACV operations as a result of a training incident at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, two days prior. The service

immediately began an internal review to ensure the assault amphibian community's practices and procedures maintain a capable and ready force without sacrificing the safety of Marines and Sailors.

On July 22, Headquarters Marine Corps authorized ACV water operations in protected waters only, Area 21 and the Del Mar Boat Basin, to sustain crew proficiency and meet entry-level training requirements, but open-ocean and surf restrictions remained until Sept. 22.

"We remain steadfast to the safety of our Marines who conduct amphibious operations, and expect strict adherence to established standards that allows our ACVs to return to waterborne operations," said Lt. Gen. David J. Furness, deputy commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations. "Our training and discipline allows us to continue sharpening our warfighting abilities to remain the Nation's premier expeditionary force in readiness."

The interim maximum surf conditions identified include a significant breaker height of four feet, which allows the ACV to operate safely while maintaining a high-state of readiness for the ACV community. The interim maximum surf conditions are conservative and derive from existing safe operating surf conditions for U.S. Navy and Marine Corps landing craft, and allows the service to better understand surf conditions through ongoing vehicle testing.

Prior to the implementation of the interim guidance, ACV operations remained restricted to protected waters and land operations, to include live-fire training.

U.S. , Israel Complete Unmanned Exercise in Gulf of Aqaba



Vessels from the Israeli Navy and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command operate in the Gulf of Aqaba with two unmanned surface vessels, a Devil Ray T-38, top, and Saildrone Explorer, bottom, during exercise Digital Shield, Sept. 21. *U.S. NAVY MANAMA, Bahrain* – Forces from Israel and the U.S. completed a four-day exercise in the Gulf of Aqaba on Sept. 22, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs said.

The exercise, called Digital Shield, was a bilateral training event between U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Israeli naval forces that focused on enhancing maritime awareness using unmanned systems and artificial intelligence in support of vessel boarding operations.

U.S. participants included members of NAVCENT's unmanned systems and artificial intelligence task force, Task Force 59, and the U.S. Coast Guard. A Devil Ray T-38 and Saildrone

Explorer unmanned surface vessel also participated.

“Integrating unmanned systems with our partners advances our integration efforts,” said Lt. Cmdr. William Ricketts from Task Force 59. “Ultimately, we are strengthening ties and innovating new capabilities with regional partners to enhance maritime security.”

NAVCENT established Task Force 59 in September 2021 to integrate new unmanned systems and artificial intelligence into U.S. naval operations across the Middle East. Since its launch, the task force has operated a suite of new unmanned systems based at operational hubs in Bahrain and Aqaba, Jordan.

The task force partners with industry and international forces for operational evaluation and employment. The Middle East region’s unique geography, climate and strategic importance offer an ideal environment for unmanned innovation.

NAVCENT is headquartered in Manama, Bahrain, and includes maritime forces operating in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal and Bab al-Mandeb.

UNITAS Concludes After Successful Exercise



Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet, Rear Adm. Jim Aiken, congratulates participants for their performance at the UNITAS LXIII Closing Ceremony in Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 22. *U.S. NAVY / Cmdr. Myers Vasquez*

RIO DE JANEIRO – UNITAS LXIII (63), the world’s longest-running multinational maritime exercise concluded with a closing ceremony in Rio De Janeiro on Sept. 22, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command / U.S. 4th Fleet said in a release.

UNITAS, Latin for “unity,” was conceived in 1959, first executed in 1960 and held every year since. This year marked the 63rd iteration of the world’s longest-running annual multinational maritime exercise.

This year’s exercise was hosted by the Brazilian navy and included 19 warships/vessels, one submarine and 21 aircraft that conducted scenario-driven joint and combined operations and training in and off the coast of Rio De Janeiro. The exercise coincided with Brazil’s bicentennial, a historical

milestone commemorating 200 years of the country's independence and the birth of their navy.

"It is exciting to see 19 nations from across Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa participating in UNITAS," said Rear Adm. Jim Aiken, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. "This exercise is a demonstration of not only our commitment to the region, but also the strong relationships forged between our nations. The Western Hemisphere is our shared home and exercises like UNITAS reinforce our permanent geographical and cultural ties, connecting us to our shared history and our shared future."

Navy and marine forces from Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, South Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, Uruguay and the United States participated in the exercise.

While the overarching goal was to develop and test command and control of forces at-sea, training in this exercise addressed the spectrum of maritime operations. Specifically, there were scenarios addressing electronic warfare, anti-air warfare and air defense, anti-surface warfare, live fire, maritime interdiction, littoral operations and amphibious operations.

"One of the main benefits of UNITAS is the ability of all participating nations to train together, and exchange ideas and tactics," said Capt. Meger Chappell, deputy commander, Destroyer Squadron 40, and deputy commander, UNITAS Task Group 138.20. "Over the course of the exercise I saw firsthand how the participating nations came together as a multinational task force to meet all objectives. Together we have strengthened our maritime partnerships, enhanced our proficiency and improved our collaboration and interoperability."

The exercise progressed in phases, beginning in port with sporting events and community relations projects to build relations between partner nations.

The at-sea phase included a multi-threat, multi-day scenario that allowed participants to work together, further increasing preparedness for real-world crises that would require a multinational force response effort. Events included: surface tactical maneuvers, illegal drug trafficking training, live-fire exercises, anti-submarine warfare exercises, air defense exercises and maritime interdiction operations.

The amphibious phase included U.S. Marines with partner nations taking positions at areas along the coast to train in support of greater naval operations. This phase also consisted of landing from naval vessels.

CNO Meets with Chief of Royal Australian Navy; Discusses Increased Operations and Partnership



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday hosted the new head of the Royal Australian Navy, Vice Adm. Mark Hammond, at the Pentagon on Sept. 22. *U.S. NAVY / Chief Mass Communication Specialist Amanda Gray*

WASHINGTON (NNS) – Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday hosted the Royal Australian Navy's Chief of Navy Vice Adm. Mark Hammond at the Pentagon on Sept. 22, Gilday's press office announced.

During the visit, the two leaders focused on interoperability and their ongoing work to expand and strengthen maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.

"Our partnership with Australia is rooted in our shared common values and friendship," said Gilday. "Our history and like-minded goals allow us to work seamlessly together across a range of military operations to keep the seas open and free."

Gilday and Hammond discussed progress of the trilateral security partnership signed in September 2021, known as AUKUS – referencing Australia, the United Kingdom, and United States

– which was implemented to develop and provide joint advanced military capabilities to promote security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Since the announcement, each of the participating countries have reaffirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, and more broadly to an international system that respects human rights, the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of disputes free from coercion.

“We are excited for the future and are honored to work with the Royal Australian Navy day-in and day-out, committed to a warfighting force capable of assurance, deterrence, and the high-end fight,” said Gilday.

The U.S. and Australian navies share mutual interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and adherence to the rules-based international order.

The two navies conduct frequent cooperative deployments, and regularly operate together during flagship theater exercises like Pacific Partnership, Rim of the Pacific and Australian-led Kakadu.

This was Gilday’s first in-person meeting with Hammond, who assumed command of the Royal Australian Navy in June 2022.

Coast Guard Cutter Midgett visited Chennai, India during Western Pacific Patrol 2022



A search and rescue helicopter from the Indian Coast Guard hovers above the waters off Chennai, India, while U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) transits in the background during a joint exercise on Sept. 19. The drills allow both countries to observe how each other respond during a variety of scenarios. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer Steve Strohmaier*

CHENNAI, India – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Midgett (WMSL 757) departed Chennai, India, on Sept. 19 following the crew's third international port call during their months-long Western Pacific deployment to the region, Coast Guard Pacific Area announced Sept. 21.

Midgett's crew conducted bilateral in-port exchanges sharing expertise and best practices in Coast Guard missions with the Indian Coast Guard while in Chennai, building upon the strong partnership between the two nations.

The Midgett visited with the U.S. Consul General of Chennai, Judith Ravin, the Indian coast guard East Region Chief of Staff, Satish Kumar, the Indian coast guard District 5

commodore and other local dignitaries while the Midgett was in Chennai.

Midgett's crew conducted bi-lateral underway joint exercises with the Indian Coast Guard just off the coast of Chennai, and these drills consisted of a search and rescue exercise, boarding of a target vessel, firefighting capabilities, and formation maneuvering.

"The U.S. Coast Guard has a longstanding commitment to our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific," said U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Willie Carmichael, commanding officer of the Midgett. "We spent the past four days with our Indian Coast Guard partners working to advance our capabilities and interoperability through meaningful human interactions with our likeminded partners who share similar values and a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Midgett is operating in support of United States Indo-Pacific Command, which oversees military operations in the region.

Operating under the tactical control of Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, the cutter's crew plans to engage in professional and subject matter expert exchanges with regional partners and allies and will patrol and operate as directed during their Western Pacific deployment.

The Coast Guard provides expertise within the mission sets of search and rescue; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; maritime environmental response; maritime security; maritime domain awareness; aviation operations; interoperability; and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The U.S. Coast Guard has a 150-year enduring role in the Indo-Pacific. The service's ongoing deployment of resources to the region directly supports U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives in the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the National Security Strategy.

Since 2019, the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750), Stratton (WMSL 751), Waesche (WMSL 751) and Munro (WMSL 755) have deployed to the Western Pacific.

Commissioned in 2019, Midgett is one of two Coast Guard legend-class national security cutters homeported in Honolulu.

Cutter Legare Returns from Three-Month Counter Narcotics Deployment



A USCGC Legare (WMEC 912) crew member reunites with his family at the pier in Portsmouth, Va., Sept. 21. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 2nd Class Brandon Hillard*

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The crew of USCGC Legare (WMEC 912) returned to their homeport Sept. 21, after an 11-week counter narcotics deployment that included key partner nation engagements and

search and rescue operations throughout the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

Legare patrolled more than 15,000 nautical miles in support of Joint Interagency Task Force South and the 7th and 11th Coast Guard Districts, working in conjunction with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and federal agents from throughout the U.S., the Royal Netherlands Navy, and partner nation coast guards in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

During the patrol, Legare successfully interdicted four smuggling vessels, including one specially designed low-profile craft, and seized more than 7,000 pounds of illicit narcotics, valued at approximately \$67 million. The crew also offloaded approximately 24,700 pounds of cocaine and 3,892 pounds of marijuana, worth an estimated \$475 million, at Base Miami Beach on Sept. 15.

The offloaded drugs were interdicted in the international waters of the Caribbean Sea and the Eastern Pacific Ocean by crews from His Netherlands Majesty's Ship HNLMS Groningen (P843) of the Royal Netherlands Navy and embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 101; U.S. Navy ship USS Billings (LCS 15) and embarked USCG LEDET 401; and Coast Guard Cutter James (WMSL 754) and Legare (WMEC 912).

Legare also conducted an engagement with the Belize Coast Guard, strengthening an important partnership in joint efforts to combat transnational criminal organizations at-sea and enhance maritime security within the Americas.

"Legare's crew has worked tirelessly for nearly three months, and as a result significantly fewer drugs will make it to American streets. I am inspired by the way the crew respects and takes care of each other while executing these incredibly dangerous operations. I am honored to have the opportunity to sail alongside them," said Cmdr. Jeremy Greenwood, commanding

officer of Legare.

Legare is a 270-foot Famous-class medium endurance cutter stationed in Portsmouth, Virginia.

USS Higgins Conducts Operations with Royal Canadian Navy in South China Sea



The Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS Vancouver (FFH 331) cruises behind U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76) while conducting integrated operations in the South China Sea, Sept. 19. *U.S.*

NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Donovan K. Patubo

SOUTH CHINA SEA – Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS Vancouver (FFH 331) concluded exercises in the South China Sea with Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76) Sept. 18, Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15 Public Affairs announced Sept. 21.

Vancouver and Higgins conducted bilateral surface action group operations demonstrating interoperability in the execution of joint exercises in the South China Sea and highlighted the U.S. Navy's support to Canada's Indo-Pacific deployment and their presence and role in the Western Pacific.

"Working with USS Higgins in the South China Sea has been an incredible opportunity for HMCS Vancouver," said Cmdr. Kevin Whiteside, HMCS Vancouver commanding officer. "The two teams seamlessly integrated, conducting a variety of training exercises together. As part of our deployment on Operation PROJECTION, Team Vancouver has been delivering robust capabilities, working with our partner navies since we departed home in June. It was awesome working with the Higgins team, demonstrating our commitment to promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific region."

The bilateral training between U.S and Canadian maritime forces served to strengthen skills in maritime operations, anti-submarine warfare operations, air warfare operations and maneuvering.

"It has been an honor to sail alongside HMCS Vancouver for the past few weeks," said Cmdr. Joseph McGettigan, Higgins commanding officer. "Operating with our closest allies and partners in the South China Sea provides us an opportunity to deepen our relationships as well as improve our capabilities as a combined force. Gaining familiarity with these waters and each other, provides us a greater ability to assure the stability of the region and demonstrates our shared commitment

to a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

Higgins is assigned to Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron 15, the Navy’s largest forward-deployed DESRON and the U.S. 7th fleet’s principal surface force.

UK Royal Navy Acquires Latest Generation REMUS 100 UUVs



MCLEAN, Va. – HII announced Sept. 21 the delivery of three REMUS 100s unmanned underwater vehicles to the United Kingdom’s Royal Navy. The new systems bring enhanced endurance and the latest generation of sensors and payloads, allowing for increased data quality and mission efficiency.

“We’re proud to continue our longstanding partnership with the U.K. Royal Navy,” said Duane Fotheringham, president of the Unmanned Systems business group at HII’s Mission Technologies

division. "Our newest REMUS 100s will bolster their existing fleet with increased capability for the U.K.'s subsea autonomous operations."

With these new systems, the U.K.'s Ministry of Defence has acquired a mix of REMUS 100s and REMUS 600s used for mine countermeasure operations over the last 20 years. The Ministry of Defence's first two REMUS 100s, acquired in 2002, are still in operation today.

"On behalf of the frontline users, I'm delighted to accept into service this refresh of REMUS 100," said Cmdr. Rory Armstrong, mine warfare lead at the U.K. Navy Command Headquarters. "Our use of the REMUS family of vehicles over the last two decades has paved the way for a future mine countermeasures capability with autonomy at its core. These vehicles represent an exciting evolution of our existing small autonomous underwater vehicle fleet and will make a valued contribution to the Royal Navy as a force for good both in home waters and on an expeditionary basis."

HII has sold more than 600 UUVs to 30 countries worldwide, including 14 NATO member countries like the U.K.