

# Coast Guard Interdiction Leads to the Apprehension of 3 Wanted U.S. Citizens



SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser interdicted an unlawful migration voyage in the Mona Passage, Friday.

Following the interdiction, Dominican Republic Navy authorities detained three U.S. citizens, who reportedly are affiliated with a criminal gang and wanted in connection with a July 2020 shooting at a residential community in Puerto Rico

in which four people were killed.

The suspects are currently under the custody of the Dominican Republic 'Dirección Nacional de Control de Drogas (DNCD) (United States Marshals Service Dominican Republic Foreign Field Office Fugitive Investigative Unit). United States Marshals Service Puerto Rico Fugitive Task Force for the District of Puerto Rico are coordinating the deportation of the three suspects.

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan received notification Friday morning from the aircrew of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations multi-role enforcement aircraft, reporting the sighting of a suspected migrant vessel, approximately 55 nautical miles northwest of Puerto Rico. Watchstanders diverted the Coast Guard Cutter Winslow Griesser to interdict the suspect vessel. Once on scene, cutter Winslow Griesser's crew deployed their over-the-horizon small boat and stopped the 20-foot go-fast vessel that was carrying eight people and multiple cockfighting roosters. The migrants claimed to have departed from Dominican Republic on a voyage to Puerto Rico, however, they experienced engine malfunctions which forced them to return to Dominican Republic before being interdicted.

Working in coordination with the Dominican Republic Navy, cutter Winslow Griesser's crew took the migrant vessel in tow and rendezvoused with a Dominican Republic Navy vessel, who embarked and received custody of the migrants.

Further investigation efforts by Dominican Republic Navy and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) revealed three of the alleged migrants were U.S. citizens with active U.S. warrants.

"Our strong partnerships and daily collaboration between all federal partner agencies involved in this case as well as Dominican Republic Navy and Dominican law enforcement

authorities resulted in the safe repatriation of five migrants and the apprehension of three wanted U.S. citizens,” said Lt. Vincente Garcia, Coast Guard liaison to the Dominican Republic. “These efforts are instrumental to achieving regional stability and safeguarding our nation’s southernmost maritime border from dangers and threats associated with unlawful migration and other prevalent illicit maritime activity.”

Migrants who are interdicted at sea or apprehended ashore will not be allowed to stay in the United States or a U.S. territory. Furthermore, anyone who arrives unlawfully may be declared ineligible for legal immigration parole options and be repatriated to their country of origin or returned to the country from where the voyage departed from.

The Coast Guard, along with its [Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast](#) partners, maintains a continual presence with air, land, and sea assets in the Florida Straits, the Windward Passage, the Mona Passage, and the Caribbean Sea. The HSTF-SE combined, multi-layered approach is designed to protect the safety of life at sea while preventing unlawful maritime entry to the United States and its territories.

Since Oct. 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, the Coast Guard has carried out 28 unlawful irregular migration voyage interdictions in the Mona Passage and waters near Puerto Rico. Interdicted during this period, are 932 non-U.S. citizens including 890 Dominicans, and 41 Haitians and one Venezuelan.

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# Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Participates in Western Pacific Naval Symposium



QINGDAO, China (April 21, 2024) Adm. Stephen Koehler, left, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, meets with Adm. Hu Zhongming, right, commander of the People's Liberation Army Navy, at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao, China, April 21, 2024. Koehler met with Hu to discuss the increasing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo)

3 April 2024

From U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesperson Navy Commander Hayley Sims provided the following readout: U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Stephen Koehler participated in the 19th Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), which was hosted this year in Qingdao,

People's Republic of China from 21-23 April.

WPNS is a multi-lateral organization with a history dating back to 1987. It includes 23 member and seven observer nations with maritime safety equities throughout the Western Pacific. Responsibility to host WPNS activities, including working groups and symposiums, is rotated annually among member countries on a volunteer basis. WPNS provides naval leaders the opportunity to discuss maritime matters of mutual interest while also giving the United States, allies, and partners an opportunity to underscore the importance of safe and responsible operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Discussions during this year's symposium included maritime issues, areas for cooperation, and military-to-military communication.

While at the symposium, Koehler met bilaterally with heads of Navy from Australia, Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, France, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Vietnam to discuss the importance of continued multi-lateral exercises and combined operations that enhance interoperability and boost deterrence in support of a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Consistent with standard practice at WPNS, Koehler also met with host-nation representatives from the People's Liberation Army Navy to discuss the importance of maintaining open lines of communication, operational safety, and regional security concerns.

Admiral Koehler is traveling throughout the region after assuming command of U.S. Pacific Fleet earlier this month. He first made stops to Japan and Republic of Korea where he met with senior officials to discuss the increasing security challenge in the Indo-Pacific and the importance of trilateral cooperation between Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United States to demonstrate the strength and resolve against those

who challenge regional stability.

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# USCG Commissions Newest National Security Cutter Named for first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard



U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area, April 20, 2024

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Coast Guard welcomed its newest cutter into the fleet, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Calhoun (WMSL 759), Saturday, during a commissioning ceremony at Coast

Guard Base Charleston, presided over by Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Linda Fagan.

Calhoun is the 10th Legend-class national security cutter (NSC) to join the Coast Guard and is the fourth NSC to be homeported in North Charleston alongside Coast Guard Cutters Hamilton (WMSL 753), James (WMSL 754) and Stone (WMSL 758).

Calhoun's namesake comes from the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Charles L. Calhoun. Calhoun led a distinguished career, serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II prior to enlisting in the Coast Guard in 1946. Calhoun's Coast Guard career was marked by over 170 months of sea service, including service in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Calhoun became the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard on Aug. 27, 1969, and was a champion for the service's enlisted personnel and is responsible for bridging the gap between the command and enlisted workforce. The commissioning ceremony's date of April 20 is in honor of Calhoun's birthday.

"I'm honored to share the job title, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, with Charles Calhoun," said Heath Jones, 14th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard. "His efforts as a voice for the enlisted workforce created significant, lasting culture change within the Coast Guard. His dedication to people, the most precious resource we have, and the challenges he faced paved the way for the talent transformation work we're doing today."

Construction of Calhoun began in 2019 and the cutter was officially delivered to the Coast Guard in October 2023 from Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. After deploying in support of oil spill response and counter migration, Calhoun arrived at its homeport in North Charleston on Dec. 3, 2023. The commissioning of Calhoun officially places the cutter in service for the Coast Guard and marks the most significant milestone of the cutter's life to date.

“What a monumental day for this crew, our service, and the legacy of Master Chief Calhoun,” said Capt. Timothy Sommella, commanding officer of Calhoun. “Now that Calhoun has entered active service, we are ready to serve alongside our fellow cutters and interagency partners in protecting the American people from threats here at home and abroad. The crew has worked tirelessly to see this day and is very proud.”

The 418-foot, Legend-class national security cutters are equipped with state-of-the-art command and control equipment, the ability to launch and house multiple small boats and aircraft, and an advanced engineering plant capable of reaching speeds of roughly 30 mph, making them the most versatile cutters in the Coast Guard fleet. The cutter’s primary missions will include counterdrug operations, migrant interdiction, living marine resources and defense readiness in support of Coast Guard operations throughout the world.

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## **SECDEF Announces Flag Officer Nominations**

April 19, 2024

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced on April 19 that the president has made the following nominations:

Navy Vice Adm. Michael E. Boyle for reappointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as deputy chief of naval operations for Operations, Plans, and Strategy, N3/N5, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

Boyle is currently serving as commander, Third Fleet, San Diego, California.

Navy Rear Adm. Dion D. English for appointment to the grade of vice admiral, with assignment as director for Logistics, J-4, Joint Staff, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. English is currently serving as director, Supply, Ordnance and Logistics Operations Division, N4L, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

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## **Sub USS New Hampshire Conducts Brief Stop off Coast of Iceland**

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

April 20, 2024

COAST OF ICELAND – The Virginia-class nuclear-powered fast attack submarine USS New Hampshire (SSN 778) conducted a brief stop for personnel and supplies off of the coast of Iceland, April 18, 2024.

This is the second time a U.S. Navy submarine has conducted a brief stop in Iceland since the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the United States that U.S. Navy submarines were allowed to make short visits in Iceland to receive supplies and personnel. The first U.S. Navy submarine to visit Iceland was the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS San Juan in April 2023.

“It is an honor to be back in Iceland to conduct a brief stop for personnel and supplies, and we thank our Icelandic Allies

for their continued support as we operate in the region in support of our NATO Allies and partners,"said Capt. Benjamin Selph, commodore, Task Force 69. "Stops like this are visible demonstration of the strength of the U.S.-Icelandic relationship and our commitment to promoting security and stability in the region."

As founding members of NATO, Iceland and the U.S. share a long history of cooperation as we work towards mutual goals of safety and security in the region. Now in its 75th year, the NATO Alliance is a testament to the power of collective defense and the strength of solid relationships between Allied and partner nations.

In addition to allowing U.S. Navy submarines to conduct brief stops for personnel and supplies, Iceland also provides host country support to U.S. and Allied maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft (MPRA) from Keflavik Air Base.

For more than 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) has forged strategic relationships with allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAVAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAVAF, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.

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# U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton Returns Home Following 111-day Alaskan Deployment



U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, April 22, 2024

ALAMEDA, Calif. – U.S. Coast Guard Coast Guard Cutter Stratton (WMSL 752) and crew returned to home port in Alameda, Monday, following a 111-day deployment to the Bering Sea in support of search and rescue capabilities and protecting the United States' northern-most borders.

Stratton and crew departed Alameda January 2, and while deployed, Coast Guard's Seventeenth District maintained operational control. Congress mandates a continuous presence

for search and rescue capabilities in the Bering Sea, and Stratton and crew operated in the harsh environment for 72 days. Stratton was at the forefront of maritime safety and security. The cutter's presence in the region ensured rapid response to emergencies, safeguarding the lives of Alaskan fishermen.

While deployed in the Alaskan region, Stratton regularly worked with Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak's MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters and aircrews. Stratton completed 363 helicopter landings with Jayhawk crews to conduct training and to enhance the organization's collective search and rescue capabilities. Helicopter training included shipboard landings, on-deck fueling, and in-flight refueling, in which the cutter passes a fuel hose to the helicopter while it remains airborne.

One of Stratton's primary missions this patrol was fisheries law enforcement in the Bering Sea. Stratton's law enforcement teams conducted 18 boardings, in key fishing spots such as Slime Bank, Dutch Harbor, and St. Paul Island. Stratton queried 98 fishing vessels, obtaining critical information to ensure commercial vessels were legally operating in the region. Additionally, Stratton's boarding team detained an individual aboard a fishing vessel, who was wanted for an active arrest warrant. The individual was transported to local authorities in Dutch Harbor, Alaska.

Stratton's law enforcement efforts played a vital role in ensuring the safe operation of Alaskan fishing vessels by enforcing safety regulations and NOAA fisheries regulations. NOAA oversees the management of commercial and recreational fisheries within U.S. waters, aiming to safeguard and promote sustainable fish populations. Alaska's fisheries are some of the nation's largest providers of seafood and are a critical component of the U.S. economy. Alaska's seafood industry averages \$5.6 billion in total annual economic activity. The Coast Guard's efforts in ensuring safe fishing practices are essential to support this vital industry.

“I’m extremely proud of this crew and all they have accomplished. Their expertise and commitment enabled our successful operations” said Capt. Brian Krautler, commanding officer of Stratton. “The Bering Sea is notorious for its harsh conditions, and our presence ensures rapid response to emergencies, safeguarding lives at sea.”

Commissioned in 2012, Stratton is one of four Coast Guard legend-class national security cutters homeported in Alameda, California. National Security Cutters are 418-feet long, 54-feet wide, and have a 4,600 long-ton displacement. They have a top speed in excess of 28 knots, a range of 12,000 nautical miles, and can hold a crew of up to 170. National Security Cutters routinely conduct operations throughout the Pacific, where their unmatched combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

The namesake of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton is Capt. Dorothy Stratton, who led the service’s all-female reserve force during World War II. Stratton was the first female commissioned officer in the Coast Guard and commanded more than 10,000 personnel. The ship’s motto is “We can’t afford not to.”

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**New T-54A arrives at NAS  
Corpus Christi to replace  
aging T-44C**



Photo By [Ensign Alan Wang](#) | A T-54A multi-engine aircraft sits on the flight line of Naval Air Station (NAS) Corpus Christi,

April 18. The arrival of the T-54A heralds a new generation of Naval Aviators who will use the trainer to earn their wings of gold as they prepare to fly such aircraft as the P-8A Poseidon, E-2D Hawkeye and C-130 Hercules. The T-54A replaces the T-44C Pegasus, an aircraft that has been in naval service since 1977.

From [Chief of Naval Air Training](#), Apr. 18, 2024

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Two T-54A multi-engine aircraft landed aboard Naval Air Station (NAS) Corpus Christi, April 18. The arrival of the T-54A heralds a new generation of Naval Aviators who will use the trainer to earn their wings of gold as they prepare to fly such aircraft as the P-8A Poseidon, E-2D Hawkeye and C-130 Hercules. The T-54A replaces the T-44C Pegasus, an aircraft that has been in naval service since 1977.

The Navy awarded a contract to Textron in early 2023 to acquire up to 64 King Air 260 aircraft that will be designated as T-54A in the Navy's training fleet. T-44C Pegasus is the Navy's designation for the aging fleet of Beechcraft King Air 90 aircraft. The T-44C has successfully served generations of Naval Aviators after continuously supporting Training Air Wing (TAW) 4 efforts to routinely exceed Naval Aviator production requirements each year. Most recently, TAW-4 effectively employed the T-44C in achieving 110% of fiscal year 2023 requirements for Naval Aviator production. But as aviation and maritime warfare continue to evolve, the T-54A has arrived to better help Student Naval Aviators prepare for the future.

Capt. Michael Albus, commander TAW-4, will oversee the introduction of the T-54A into the Navy's two premier multi-engine training squadrons, Training Squadron (VT) 31 and VT-35.

"We produce the best multi-engine pilots in the world," said Albus. "The T-54A will be the training aircraft to carry that

legacy into the future. With its ProLine Fusion avionics suite, combined with increased range, speed, and altitude, the T-54A will ensure that our aviators are well-prepared to operate complex fleet aircraft, and are ready for tomorrow's challenges in a multi-domain environment."

The arrival of the first multi-engine training system (METS) replacement in over 45 years is not just historic for TAW-4, but for the entire naval air training enterprise. This aircraft is the first of the Chief of Naval Air Training's (CNATRA) entire fleet of over 650 aircraft to include a glossy grey paint scheme. This paint scheme, which was announced alongside a "Midway" blue paint coat for CNATRA's T-6B Texan II aircraft, is an effort to reconnect students and instructors with the fleet. The glossy grey color of the T-54A reflects similar paint coats of the P-8A Poseidon and E-2D Hawkeye.

"The T-44C Pegasus trained generations of Naval Aviators seeking to fly multi-engine platforms. So the arrival of the T-54A is a truly historic moment that signifies the Navy's commitment to training our future pilots," said Albus. "Many will quickly notice that the new aircraft is not painted orange and white like the previous 70 years of naval air training.

The new grey paint scheme is designed to bolster pride not only in our students but in our instructors."

Two crews ferried the aircraft back to NAS Corpus Christi after the Navy took possession of the aircraft days earlier in Wichita, Kansas. Cmdr. Kerry Bistline, TAW-4's officer in charge of METS fixed wing training, was the flight leader for both crews.

"This is a culminating moment for me as a TAW-4 flight instructor. Being able to see this program grow from the acquisition phase to delivery is a highlight for my 27-year

career. It's been a long process to ensure that the METS team got this right. I look forward to seeing this trainer fly in the local Corpus Christi area for many years to come."

Other crew members included Lt. Mike Stengel, Naval Aviator and instructor pilot who volunteered to help ferry the aircraft back home on its maiden voyage as an official naval aircraft.

"The T-54A will be a great addition to the TAW-4 family. This aircraft will lead the way for the next generation of multi-engine aviators. It has been a very rewarding and humbling experience to be a part of the METS team and it will be one of the highlights of my career."

As more T-54A aircraft arrive, the T-44C Pegasus will slowly begin to phase out. Combined with the gradual repaint of T-6B Texan II aircraft, less and less orange-and-white aircraft will appear in the South Texas sky. Increasing numbers of new students in the advanced stage of training for multi-engine platforms will immediately begin to train in the T-54A as other students and instructors lead the T-44C to sundown.

CNATRA trains, mentors, and delivers the highest quality Naval Aviators who prevail in competition, crisis, and conflict. Headquartered at NAS Corpus Christi, CNATRA comprises five training air wings in Florida, Mississippi, and Texas, which are home to 17 training squadrons. In addition, CNATRA oversees the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels and the training curriculum for all fleet replacement squadrons.

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# AV'S Switchblade 300 Selected for U.S. Marine Corps' Organic Precision Fires-Light Program



The Switchblade 300 Block 20 system is battle-proven and production-ready to support Marine Infantry. *AeroVironment*

ARLINGTON, Virginia – AeroVironment was selected by the U.S. Marine Corps for the first phase of the Organic Precision Fires-Light (OPF-L) program of record. AV's Switchblade 300 Block 20 loitering munition system (LMS) will provide the Marine Corps with organic, anti-armor/anti-personnel, precision fires capability at the tactical level. AV was awarded an initial order of \$8.9M on a contract with a maximum potential value of \$249M.

AV's Switchblade 300 Block 20 supports the OPF-L program's request for an individually operated, man-portable loitering munition with a lightweight, precision-guided capability against beyond-line-of-sight adversaries. Switchblade 300

will ensure that Marines are properly equipped and sustained with a lethal, reliable, organic capability for rapid target engagement while minimizing collateral damage and exposure to threat weapon systems.

“AV offers a battle-proven and production-ready system to support OPF-L to meet the Marine Corps’ requirements,” said AV’s Senior Vice President of LMS, Brett Hush. “Our mature and trusted manufacturing capability combined with world-class training and support will ensure Marine Infantry is adequately prepared for the fight.”

AV’s Switchblade 300 has been deployed in support of urgent operational needs to combat theaters since 2012. Switchblade 300 Block 20 is the next generation of the system that capitalizes on over a decade of user assessments, combat deployments, and lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine, including operating in contested environment operations.

The Switchblade Block 20 system significantly expands on the currently fielded Switchblade 300 capabilities, including armor penetrating capability through an Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) warhead, increased target attack angle, and significantly greater battery life, flight endurance, and radio link range.

“With over 6,000 Switchblade loitering missiles tested, produced, and fielded, AV is in a unique position to offer revolutionary organic precision fire capabilities to the USMC, leveraging the proven reliability, producibility and supportability of current Switchblade programs,” continued Hush.

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# Finland Joins Combined Maritime Forces in Middle East as 43rd Member

The logo for SEAPOWER, with "SEA" in blue and "POWER" in red, in a bold, sans-serif font.

The Official Publication of the Navy League of the United States

By Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs | April 19, 2024

MANAMA, Bahrain – Combined Maritime Forces welcomed Finland as the 43rd member of the world’s largest maritime security partnership, April 17.

“It is a pleasure to officially welcome Finland to the Combined Maritime Forces,” said Vice Adm. George Wikoff, CMF commander. “The Finns bring to the largest international naval coalition a long history of maritime professionalism. They will enhance our already impressive partnership here in the Middle East.”

CMF is comprised of a headquarters staff and five combined task forces focusing on defeating terrorism, preventing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation, and promoting a safe maritime environment. The naval partnership upholds the international rules-based order by supporting security and

stability across 3.2 million square miles of water encompassing some of the world's most important shipping lanes.

With 43 nations, CMF is the largest naval partnership in the world. Task forces include CTF 150, focused on maritime security in the Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea and eastern Gulf of Aden; CTF 151, which leads regional anti-piracy efforts; CTF 152, dedicated to maritime security in the Arabian Gulf; CTF 153, responsible for maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb, and western Gulf of Aden; and CTF 154, established in May to enhance maritime security training throughout the region.

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## **Australian Sailors Graduate Sub Officer Course: Next, Assignment to U.S. Nuclear Attack Submarines**



### *U.S. Navy*

By U.S. Naval Submarine School Public Affairs and AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Office

GROTON, Connecticut – In a first for the U.S. Navy and Royal Australian Navy, three RAN officers graduated from the U.S. Navy's Submarine Officer Basic Course (SOBC) on April 18, 2024, at the Naval Submarine School in Groton, Connecticut.

The RAN officers' graduation represents a significant step toward realizing Pillar 1 of the trilateral AUKUS partnership, a strategic endeavor aimed at strengthening the security and defense capabilities of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Pillar 1 aims to create a sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine fleet for the Royal Australian Navy.

"Collectively, we would like to thank our instructors here in Groton and also in Goose Creek, South Carolina, for getting us to this point," said Lieutenant William Hall. Hall, Lieutenant Commander James Heydon and Lieutenant Commander Adam Klyne are

the first RAN officers to complete Naval Nuclear Power School and Nuclear Power Training Unit, located in South Carolina, and now SOBC. “Now, we’re looking to join our boats and continuing our careers as part of Australia’s conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine force.”

The Submarine Officer Basic Course is the last step in the U.S. Navy’s 15-month nuclear submarine training pipeline before assignment to the fleet. The three RAN officer graduates will be assigned to Virginia-class attack submarines based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Upon assignment, the graduates serve as division officers, leading a team of highly trained enlisted submariners. In this capacity, they will be tested and qualified on the ship’s systems and in various warfighting and leadership roles.

“Over the last two months, these three officers have trained alongside our Sailors, learning the fundamentals of operating and tactically employing SSNs,” said Naval Submarine School Commanding Officer Captain Matthew Fanning. “At SOBC, they applied both their previous experience and the new skills they developed through our nuclear training schools, to learn how we operate the ocean’s apex predator, the nuclear-powered attack submarine.”

“These officers are the future leaders of Australia’s sovereign conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine fleet,” said the U.S. Navy’s AUKUS Integration and Acquisition Program Manager Rear Admiral Lincoln Reifsteck. “Their time in Groton bridged the operational gap between the Collins-class SSKs and the Virginia-class SSN. These tours on U.S. Virginia-class submarines are the key professional development step toward earning the privilege to become submarine executive officers and the first commanding officers of Australian SSNs.”

Nearly 100 RAN officers and enlisted personnel will enter the

submarine and Naval Nuclear Propulsion training pipelines in 2024.

“These three officers are trailblazers for the Royal Australian Navy,” said Rear Admiral Matt Buckley, Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability within the Australia Submarine Agency. They are not only the first Australians to be fully trained within the U.S. system but will also gain real-world experience aboard Virginia-class SSNs, which will be foundational to Australia’s ability to sovereignly operate, maintain, and steward these world-class platforms.”

AUKUS is a strategic partnership that will promote a safe, free, and open Indo-Pacific, enhance national security, and uplift the three industrial bases. AUKUS Pillar 1 is delivering a conventionally armed SSN capability to the Royal Australian Navy by the early 2030s. The AUKUS I&A Program Office is responsible for executing the trilateral partnership to deliver conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarines to the RAN at the earliest possible date while setting the highest nuclear stewardship standards and continuing to maintain the highest nonproliferation standard.