

USCGC Frederick Hatch Supports Partners in Micronesia, Republic of Palau Under Operation Rematau



U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, March 14, 2024

SANTA RITA, Guam – The crew of the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143) completed a significant operational patrol under Operation Rematau from Feb. 15 to March 4, 2024, reinforcing the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in the Pacific region.

“Frederick Hatch marked an important milestone in the U.S. Coast Guard’s relationship with our friends in Palau by pioneering the use of the recently signed enhanced bilateral agreement, and we look forward to deepening our ties with Palau’s Marine Law division going forward. The cutter’s first-ever visit to Tinian and participation in Yap Day were both very enjoyable ways to learn about the cultures of our neighboring islands while reflecting our commitment to communities across the Pacific,” said Lt. Patrick Dreiss, commanding officer of USCGC Frederick Hatch.

The Frederick Hatch crew proudly represented the U.S. Coast Guard at the annual Pika Fest Celebration on Tinian, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and Yap Day in Colonia, Yap State, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Supporting local needs, they transported 1,500 lbs. of non-perishable food, 1,200 lbs. of water, and essential supplies, including fishing gear and tools, to Ulithi Atoll, FSM, during a state-declared emergency drought. The crew renewed the meaningful connection with the local community, engaging in direct support and sharing in the generosity and warmth of the island’s residents.

“The opportunity to contribute to the enduring partnership between the Ulithi community and the U.S. Coast Guard, rooted in World War II and grown throughout decades of collaboration, was a special experience for myself and the crew. Thank you to the local non-profit organizations we worked alongside, as the experience of supporting and visiting the people of Ulithi is one of the highlights of my career,” said Dreiss.

Further showcasing the spirit of cooperation and support, the Hatch’s crew organized a donation drive prior to sailing, collecting 40 bags of school supplies and clothing from the U.S. Coast Guard community in Guam and collaborated with the

Ayuda Foundation and the Ulithi-based One People One Reef research foundation to facilitate these critical donations to the island.

“Today exemplifies the spirit of teamwork and camaraderie that we hold dear here in Ulithi. It warms our hearts to hear that your short visit to our island was enjoyable, and we’re delighted that you appreciated the coconuts, bananas, and flowers. Knowing that the bananas are adorning your ship’s canopy, and the flowers are being proudly worn by your crew fills us with immense joy,” said Ulithi Mayor John Rulmal.

Yap Day, observed annually on March 1, is a significant cultural and legal holiday in Yap State, one of the four states of the FSM. Established in 1968 and renamed in 1979, it celebrates Yapese culture, highlighting traditional skills and competitions, such as tattooing, fresh produce contests, and traditional games. The U.S. Coast Guard regularly attends, and the 2024 celebration was particularly special as Petty Officer 2nd Class Eugene Haliushlius, a native of Yap currently stationed in Guam, returned home aboard Frederick Hatch for the first time in years to participate, further symbolizing the deep connections between the U.S. Coast Guard and the Pacific communities served.

“Returning to Yap, I’m reminded of the values instilled in me: respect, humility, and the identity of being an islander. Coming from a family of navigators, we believe in the power of knowing your waypoints, a principle that guides us to success. Inspired by my brother Ken Raigeluw, who is also serving and driven by our service’s unique opportunities and missions, this journey not only contributes to our collective mission but also my personal growth and family legacy,” said Haliushlius.

The Frederick Hatch crew responded to a request from the government of Yap State for a U.S. Coast Guard presence near

Ngulu Atoll to deter illegal sea cucumber poaching, demonstrating a commitment to protecting the region's marine resources and aiding partners. This patrol also marked the first-ever boarding under the Palau enhanced bilateral agreement, signed in August 2023, authorizing U.S. Coast Guard boarding officers to conduct boardings in Palau's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on the country's behalf without a Palauan officer present. While the crew found everything compliant with international and Palauan requirements, the action set a precedent for further regional maritime law enforcement cooperation. It reinforces the trust and confidence of partners in the U.S. Coast Guard's role to ensure compliance with fishing regulations within partner EEZs.

The patrol also emphasized the need for continued vigilance in the Western Pacific. Not for the first time, the Frederick Hatch crew identified areas of concern for illegal fishing activities and non-compliance with maritime regulations wherein fishing vessels were observed not transmitting on AIS or VMS near the Palau EEZ border with the high seas.

"These efforts not only affirm our dedication to preserving the region's marine biodiversity but also reinforce the strong and enduring partnerships we have, particularly in support of our Compact of Free Association partners addressing shared security challenges and advancing mutual interests in the Blue Pacific," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam. "Our partnership with local non-profits and the community in Guam exemplifies a holistic approach to strengthening the fabric of trust and mutual respect we've built over decades with Pacific Island communities and beyond as we face future challenges and opportunities together."

About Operation Rematau

Operation Rematau is how U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam supports the overarching Coast Guard

endeavor Operation Blue Pacific to promote security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania. Rematau means people of the deep sea. It reinforces the U.S. commitment to working together to advance Pacific regionalism based on the Blue Pacific narrative. This action supports U.S. national security objectives, bolstering regional maritime good governance and security.

About USCGC Frederick Hatch

The Frederick Hatch is the 43rd 154-foot Sentinel-class fast response cutter named for a surfman and lighthouse keeper who was a two-time Gold Life Saving Medal recipient. Designed for many missions, including search and rescue, national defense, and maritime law enforcement, the Frederick Hatch crew plays a significant role in safeguarding national interests and preserving good maritime governance.

March 13 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 13, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 2:00 a.m. and 4:50 p.m. (Sanaa time) on March 13, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired one anti-ship ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen into the Gulf of Aden. The missile did not impact any vessels and there were no injuries or damage reported.

United States Central Command then successfully engaged and destroyed four unmanned aerial systems (UAVs) and one surface-to-air missile in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make

international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

The Correspondent and the Colonel: Pearl Harbor and 9/11 Link Defender and Daughter



Charles Compton at Coastal Air Patrol Base 1 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. *Compton family*

Charles Compton was like many a Chicago teenager who learned to fly in the late 1930s and impressed a lovely girl or two along the way on airborne dates. One beauty would become his

wife.

"It was a lot of fun years. But then it all changed," Compton said in 2011 when he was promoted to the rank of colonel by the Civil Air Patrol to honor his life of service.

Dec. 7, 1941

"I was out practicing touch and goes, and I landed. Somebody came out and said, "all aircraft are grounded," he said. No one knew what was coming next.

Sept. 11, 2001

ABC News White House Correspondent Ann Compton started a routine day with a chore made easier by a run of the mill story. She was the pool reporter responsible for doing all the fact gathering for other broadcast news media outlets as President George Bush listened as Florida grade schoolers read for him. As a parent it was a lot of fun to witness. But then it all changed.

Compton watched the President's face as White House Chief of Staff Andy Card whispered in his ear, "A second plane hit the second tower. America is under attack."

"The Pearl Harbor moment was immediate," Compton said. "As we were taking off, the Pentagon was hit."

For the next 10 hours, the network TV reporter was one of the few on Air Force One as the presidential aircraft and its fighter escorts headed for cross-country protection, soaring above a nation of planes quickly descending and landing as fast as they could, wherever they could. All aircraft were grounded, and no one knew what was coming next.

August 1943

A little plane flew through the mist of a New Jersey morning off New York Harbor and pulled into a tight circle to sweep

low, glancing for U-boats ravaging shipping just outside major harbors and along the coast. Charlie Compton was in his own plane, wearing a makeshift Army Air Corps uniform of the Civil Air Patrol. The CAP was organized formally six days before Pearl Harbor. America wasn't ready to defend itself on the home shores due to limited military planes and pilots.

Right after Pearl Harbor, Compton tried to get into the fight and fly with the Army and Navy but was denied by both for having only one kidney. He eventually found his way to the first coastal patrol base of the Civil Air Patrol in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

The Axis Powers were more than ready. An east coast oceanfront of sunbathers and ship traffic quickly became a kill zone of merchant convoys being attacked within sight of shore. The bodies of merchantman washed ashore as ships carrying vital supplies and war materiel to Europe were sometimes sunk amid the explosions and towering flames of torpedoed tankers.

The Germans called it "the happy time." But the little yellow planes kept coming.

One of them would be Compton and a fellow pilot hunting for submarines one day, escorting a convoy the next. Through the Army and then Navy, the escorts began to make a difference.

The goal wasn't necessarily to sink subs but to drive them away, like a border collie does predators of the sheep. And in short order, the sheep were no longer going to the slaughter and the hunter became the harried.

The network of coastal patrol bases stretched from Maine to Mexico.

For some time now the CAP planes had been armed with an assortment of bombs, singly and in pairs.

"In mid-May 1942, senior Army and Navy leaders authorized the

arming of CAP coastal patrol aircraft," according to Frank Blazich Jr., the military history curator at the National Museum of American History. "Depending on capacity, aircraft typically carried one to three 100-pound AN-M30 general purpose demolition bombs; larger aircraft carried either the AN-M57 250-pound demolition bomb, or one 325-pound Mk 17 depth bomb."

The nascent Battle of the Atlantic wasn't meant to be won by attrition as much as by harrassing the German subs into diving to avoid being attacked from the air. Every dive to avoid being spotted or attacked meant less time to charge their batteries on the surface.

"We were all out there pretty gung-ho and looking for a fight," Compton said, but that made the Army weaponers cautious as to when the CAP planes would be armed. "We could tell what kind of day it was going to be if we saw the Army ordnance trailers out there arming the aircraft," he said.

No bomb loading meant the focus was to be on escort and observation, reporting back to female CAP radio operators.

"And then we would generally fly three-hour missions, by escorting the tankers and the colliers and the cargo ships, up and down the coast ... and then hand off to other sections," he said.

But often there was no one to hand off the overwatch duties to, because the imperiled convoys were making a beeline to Europe. They were on their own, escorted by a handful of navy ships from the U.S., Canada and Great Britain.

"We did fly low enough to give them a wave. And when we saw them off and dipped our wing, and saw them heading east into harm's way while we were able to go back to our safe haven. We thought a lot about those brave souls, some that didn't make it," Compton reflected during his promotion ceremony.

Even today, his daughter Ann speaks passionately about her father's feelings of the time.

"That's a long trek for a merchant ship," she says, recalling how this part of his service laid heavy on his heart then, and on hers today. "The pain he felt that they were sailing into harm's way and he could no longer protect them – he took that very hard."

Blazich wrote that "on July 19, 1942, German Admiral Karl Doenitz, commander of all German U-boats, withdrew his last submarines operating off the East Coast after increasing losses and reduced success against merchant traffic."

The former national historian of the Civil Air Patrol, Blazich said "the CAP coastal patrol operation ceased on August 31, 1943, in accordance with an Army agreement to transfer all anti-submarine operations to the Navy." His definitive and painstakingly researched book, "An Honorable Place in American Air Power" (2020 Air University Press, Maxwell AFB Florida) tells the full tale, as does this fact sheet:

The CAP reported the following to the U.S. military regarding the 18 months of coastal patrol operations:

- 57 attacks on enemy submarines
- 82 bombs dropped against submarines
- 173 radio reports of submarine positions
- 17 floating mines reported
- 36 dead bodies reported
- 91 vessels in distress reported
- 363 survivors in distress reported
- 836 irregularities noted

- 1,036 special investigations at sea or along the coast
- 5,684 convoy missions as escorts for Navy ships
- 86,685 total missions flown
- 244,600 total flight hours logged
- Over 24 million total miles flown
- 26 fatalities, 7 serious injuries, 90 aircraft lost.

The cost of freedom was paid for with the blood and sweat of brave civilian volunteers whose limitations for military service were transcended to remarkable service to the country.

Colonel Charles Compton lived on to have a family that included two boys and the reporter girl who would be an eyewitness to the next time the improbable happened, America caught unaware and under siege. His daughter Ann reports his final years, including his 104th in 2020, were marked by birthday tributes by the cadets he cared so much about, and cared for him in turn. His legacy and theirs lives on in the Evanston, Illinois, squadron that bears his name.

A larger family exists today in the 60,000 adult and cadet volunteers of the Civil Air Patrol, whose core missions of emergency services, aerospace education and youth program continue to serve America in "defending the skies of the homeland," including security exercises with intercepting Air Force and Air Guard jets, drug interdiction maneuvers with homeland security aircraft, along with humanitarian disaster relief and search and rescue missions saving dozens of lives each year with the world's largest fleet of single-engine airplanes.



Colonel Compton (far left) with sons and daughter Ann Compton at Naval Air Station Glenview, Illinois. *Compton family*
Sept. 12, 2001

As yet another small plane of the Civil Air Patrol took off from New Jersey, the situation was that all planes were grounded and no one knew what would happen next.

Like so many before, it rose over the New York and New Jersey shores, yet this time it did not swoop low over the coastline or sweep past the harbor and out to the shipping lanes.

Instead of turning back to the harbor of New York City it headed up above Manhattan, the sole civilian plane in the skies of all America, swooping low to begin its circling run through the mist and around smoke rising over the wreckage of the twin towers of the World Trade Center.

New Yorkers below were still in a state of shock. Their only sense of security that remained came from the swift arrival of Navy fighters from the aircraft carriers George Washington and

John F. Kennedy the day before. Those F/A-18 Hornets joined Air Force and Air National Guard interceptors in an ongoing aerial combat aircraft patrol. An obvious deterrent to terrorism, but more importantly a visual representation of protection from above.

The little red, white and blue aircraft circling the towers was doing a familiar role in a new way. Beneath its red tail marked USAF AUX and bearing the crest of the Civil Air Patrol, Lt. Col. Jacques Heinrich and his mission crew digitally photo-mapped the wreckage, to show the paths to save and the ways to recover.

The vital images from that CAP colonel were authorized by, and delivered to, President Bush at the White House as Ann Compton continued her journalistic vigil, an echo of the living example father set, protecting the sea lanes and the sea services with no pay or fanfare six decades before.

Jim McClure is a life member of the Navy League of the United States and a frequent contributor to Seapower. This story originally appeared in the February-March issue of Seapower magazine.

**Navy Awards Bell Textron
Contract for 12 AH-1Z
Helicopters for Nigeria**



KOREA STRAIT (March 29, 2023) An AH-1Z Viper helicopter takes off from the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), March 29, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Chad J. Pulliam)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The government of Nigeria is slated to receive 12 AH-1Z Viper helicopter gunships, becoming the third foreign customer for the Viper.

In a March 12 contract announcement, the Naval Air Systems Command awarded to Bell Textron of Fort Worth, Texas, a \$455 million “firm-fixed-price, undefinitized contract for the production and delivery of 12 AH-1Z helicopters for the government of Nigeria, as well as provides associated engineering, program management and logistics support, and non-recurring engineering for obsolescence.”

Deliveries to the Nigerian government are expected to be complete by July 2028.

Bell built 189 AH-1Zs for the U.S. Marine Corps and 12 for

Bahrain, and is building four for the Czech Republic, along with eight UH-1Y Venom utility helicopters. The Czech Republic also is receiving free of charge six AH-1Zs and two UH-1Ys that formerly were part of the U.S. Marine Corps' inventory.

French Air Force crew trains at U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point



U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, March 11, 2024

HONOLULU – A crew from the French Air Force arrived at Air Station Barbers Point on March 4, 2024, for a week-long subject matter exchange with U.S. Coast Guard aircrews.

The seven-member team, comprised of three pilots and four crew

members, is stationed in French Polynesia, Tahiti, and flies a CN235 Casa aircraft; during their visit, they participated in various activities designed to enhance their aviation proficiency and build professional relationships with their Coast Guard counterparts.

On March 6, Commander Victor Yaguchi of Air Station Barbers Point provided the French aircrew with an in-depth briefing on Coast Guard aircraft missions. This included an overview of Air Station Barbers Point airframes, capabilities, and mission sets. The briefing served as a foundation for the crew's training experiences throughout the week.

"This visit is a valuable opportunity to collaborate with our French allies and share best practices in aviation operations," said Captain Maurice Murphy, Commanding Officer of Air Station Barbers Point. "The partnerships in the Pacific are invaluable, we work closely with our French Allies and Joint Rescue Coordination Center Tahiti to rescue mariners at sea."

The French crew utilized the air station as their base of operations for the week and conducted flights throughout the Hawaiian Island chain. This exposure to a complex and busy airspace allowed them to refine their communication procedures and flight skills. They specifically focused on:

Air-to-Air and Air-to-Ground Communications: The crew honed their ability to communicate effectively in a congested airspace, a skillset critical for safe operations.

U.S. Flight Rules: The training familiarized the crew with U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, ensuring smooth integration into the local airspace.

Coast Guard Search and Rescue Operations: The crew gained insight into the Coast Guard's B-0 SAR response procedures, a vital capability for ensuring maritime safety in the vast Pacific Ocean.

The Hawaiian Islands provide the closest and busiest airspace to French Polynesia, making Air Station Barbers Point an ideal training location. This reinvigorated exchange program is expected to occur several annually, fostering continued collaboration and professional development between the U.S. Coast Guard and the French Air Force.

Upon arrival, the ASBP staff warmly welcomed the French crew and presented them with traditional kukui nut leis, symbolizing protection and peace. This gesture reflects the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect that underpins this exchange program.

March 12 Red Sea Update

USCENTCOM, March 12, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – Between 2:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. (Sanaa time) on March 12, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists fired one close-range ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon in the Red Sea. The missile did not impact the vessel and there were no injuries or damage reported.

United States Central Command and a coalition vessel successfully engaged and destroyed two unmanned aerial systems (UAS) launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen.

It was determined these weapons presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships. These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. Navy and merchant vessels.

F-35 Program Achieves Milestone C and Full-Rate Production

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MARCH 12, 2024

Earlier today, the Milestone Decision Authority, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Dr. William A. LaPlante, approved the Milestone C / Full-Rate Production (MSC/FRP) of the F-35 Lightning II aircraft with the signing of an Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM) after a meeting with the Defense Acquisition Board (DAB).

The F-35 achieved this milestone after considering the results from the F-35 Combined Initial Operational Test and Evaluation and Live Fire Test and Evaluation Report, System Development and Demonstration exit criteria, statutory/regulatory documentation compliance, future production strategy, and draft acquisition program baseline details. Proceeding to MSC/FRP requires control of the manufacturing process, acceptable performance and reliability, and the establishment of adequate sustainment and support systems.

The DAB, which met on March 7, 2024, was chaired by Dr. LaPlante, and is the department's senior-level forum for critical decisions concerning acquisition programs at the Department of Defense.

"This is a major achievement for the F-35 Program," LaPlante said. "This decision—backed by my colleagues in the Department—highlights to the Services, F-35 Cooperative Program Partners, and Foreign Military Sales customers that the F-35 is stable and agile, and that all statutory and

regulatory requirements have been appropriately addressed. The F-35 Program is the premier system that drives interoperability with our allies and partners while contributing to the integrated deterrence component of our National Defense Strategy.”

With this milestone, the program is now well positioned to efficiently produce and deliver the next generation of aircraft to meet the evolving needs of our services, partners, and FMS customers.

“I am very proud of our team, and this is a huge accomplishment!” said Lt. Gen. Mike Schmidt, Director and Program Executive Officer, F-35 Joint Program Office. “The F-35 enterprise has made significant improvements over the last decade, and we will always be driven to continuously improve sustainability, interoperability, and lethality so warfighters have the capability needed to fight and win when called to do so. Moreover, the Program and our great people can now focus on the future of the F-35 instead of the past.”

In September 2023, a key gateway for MS C/FRP was achieved when F-35 Runs for Score in the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) and initial trial validation were completed.

“DOT&E conducted analysis of the results from Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E) and Live Fire Test and Evaluation and delivered a comprehensive, combined report as required by statute to inform the Milestone C / Full Rate Production decision. DOT&E also provided a separate annex that assessed post-IOT&E Block 4 operational testing of the 30P06 and 30P07 software.” said Dr. Raymond D. O’Toole, Jr., Acting Director, Operational Test & Evaluation. “The Program is working to address DOT&E’s findings and recommendations contained in the report. One of DOT&E’s concerns is to continue to improve test infrastructure for support development and to ensure readiness to test of the upcoming Block 4 capabilities. This includes timely deliveries of the

next iterations of F-35-In-A-Box for integration into the JSE.”

Achieving MSC/FRP is important to the program, and it helps to validate the aircraft’s capabilities for present and future partners of the F-35 enterprise.

To date, over 990 F-35 aircraft have been delivered to the U.S. Services, F-35 Cooperative Program Partners, and Foreign Military Sales customers.

The F-35 offers multi-mission capability, including strategic attack, suppression/destruction of enemy air defenses (SEAD/DEAD), offensive/defensive counter air, anti-surface warfare, strike coordination and reconnaissance, and close air support. It brings stealth, sensor fusion, and interoperability to enable access in contested environments and enhances situational awareness.

Specialized Army Unit Underway to Support Humanitarian Aid Delivery to Gaza



March 12, 2024 | By Joseph Clark

The specialized Army unit tasked with establishing a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to deliver critical humanitarian assistance has wasted no time in making the complex operation a reality.

The first of several watercraft used to construct the pier and manned by troops from the 7th Transportation Brigade began the weeklong transit from the unit's homeport in Virginia to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility less than two days after President Joe Biden called on the military to conduct the emergency operation during his State of the Union Address.

Today, four more Army vessels set sail from Joint Base Langley-Eustis to join the operation: USAVs Monterrey, Matamoros, SP4 James A. Loux and Wilson Wharf.

The brigade, a component of the XVIII Airborne Corps, is the Army's premier watercraft unit specializing in Joint Logistics

Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS.

JLOTS systems can jointly employ Army and Navy logistics assets to deliver critical supplies to troops or civilians in austere environments anywhere in the world.

“This is Army watercraft’s moment, and we’re up for it,” said Army Col. Samuel S. Miller, the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) commander.

“The U.S. and the world will see our humanitarian capability on display and in action forward,” he said. “The 7th TB(X) is highly trained, mobile, versatile and capable to operate in these types of environments.”

Delivering the capability involves the complex choreography of logistics support and landing craft vessels that carry the equipment used to construct an approximately 1,800-foot causeway comprised of modular sections linked together known as a Trident Pier.

Once in theater, the unit will begin construction of the causeway off the coast of Gaza enabling the flow of critical aid from the sea to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict. The capability is expected to be operational in approximately 60 days.

Deploying on short notice anywhere throughout the globe is par for course for the units that comprise the XVIII Airborne Corps, said Army Brig. Gen. John B. Hinson, the corps’ assistant commanding general for support.

“We are the contingency corps for the Army,” Hinson said. “We have units, divisions, brigade combat teams, separate brigades, that can deploy anywhere in the world for any type of contingency operation in 18 hours.

“The 7th TB(X) is one of these units that falls in that category where all of their units are very deployable for an

immediate response force for different types of contingencies all around the world," he said.

Once operational, the pier will be capable of delivering up to 2,000,000 humanitarian aid meals per day.

Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder previewed the capability Friday during a briefing at the Pentagon following Biden's State of the Union Address.

"This is part of a full-court press by the United States to not only focus on working on opening up and expanding routes via land, which are the optimal way to get aid into Gaza but also by conducting air drops," Ryder said.

The U.S. has conducted several humanitarian assistance airdrops into Gaza alongside the Royal Jordanian Air Force. The combined operations have delivered hundreds of thousands of badly needed meals to civilians.

Biden said more aid is needed.

Ryder stressed that the JLOTS capability enables the U.S. to continue delivering aid without putting boots on the ground in Gaza.

"We'll be working with partners in the region to be on the receiving end of , but at no time will we require U.S. forces to actually go on the ground," he said. "Our role will be essentially to provide the service of getting to the causeway, at which point it will then be distributed."

Miller said the unit's extensive training in environments throughout the world has prepared its soldiers to accomplish the mission in Gaza.

JLOTS was last used operationally to deliver humanitarian assistance following the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010.

Soldiers from the 7th TB(X) train extensively in deploying the capability around the globe, including off the coast of Australia last summer in support of Exercise Talisman Sabre, a large-scale joint defense exercise between Australia and the United States.

[Experience: Talisman Sabre](#)

“We understand the importance of this mission, and the interests of the world in this regard,” Miller said. “When it may seem, at times, we have the weight of the world on our shoulders, we will forge across the water to deliver humanitarian assistance.”

That same determination was echoed throughout the ranks.

“We like what we do,” said Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Benjamin Tate, the chief engineer on one of the vessels that set sail for Gaza today.

“We’re extremely proud that we get to participate in humanitarian relief,” Tate said. “Me personally, if my family was in that situation, I’d want somebody to be willing to help. So, when we were told that was the task, our guys are ramping the boat up and getting ready.”

Navy 2025 Budget Requests Only 6 Battle Force Ships



NAVAL STATION NORFOLK – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Washington (SSN 787) prepares to moor pierside during the boat's homecoming at Naval Station Norfolk, Dec. 15, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Cameron Stoner)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy's fiscal 2025 budget request proposes only six battle force ships, which, combined with planned ship retirements, would reduce the size of the battle force from 296 ships to 287 ships.

The Navy's proposed \$257.6 billion budget – which officials said prioritizes readiness over procurement, would include \$32.4 billion for ship construction. Those funds would procure one Block VI Virginia-class attack submarine (SSN), two Flight III Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, one Constellation-class guided-missile frigate, one Flight II San Antonio-class amphibious platform dock ship (LPD), and one medium landing ship.

The proposal for only one Virginia-class SSN, rather than two, was made out of concern for the submarine industrial base, which currently is delivering only 1.3 hulls instead of the desired two SSNs per year. The gap is designed to help realign the investments in the submarine industrial base. Under the Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP), the Navy expects to return to the procurement rate of two SSNs per year in fiscal 2026. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven, speaking to reporters March 11 at the budget roll-out, said advance procurement for the SSNs is proceeding to “set up the program for long-term success.”

The ship construction budget also includes continued incremental funding for two aircraft carriers and second Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine, the refueling and comprehensive overhaul of a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, the service-life extension of three air cushion landing craft, and the purchase of two used commercial ships for use as sealift ships.

The procurement of the San Antonio-class LPD would mark a reversal from the 2024 plan to end procurement of the class. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven, speaking to reporters March 11 at the budget roll-out, said the Navy is intent on growing the large- and medium amphibious warfare ship fleet to a minimum of 31 ships.

The FYDP features the procurement start in fiscal 2027 of a new class of ship, the light replenishment oiler (T-AOL).

Raven said the Navy currently has 88 ships under contract, with 66 of those under construction.

Planned ship retirements include two Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers (Shiloh and Lake Erie); two Independence-class littoral combat ships (Jackson and Montgomery), one Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship (Germantown); one Montford Point-class expeditionary transfer dock ship (John Glenn) and the four oldest Spearhead-class expeditionary fast

transports (Spearhead, Choctaw County, Millinocket, and Fall River).

Rep. Rob Wittman, R- Virginia, a member of the Seapower subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, criticized the ship construction plan as too little.

“The president is once again proposing to shrink the Navy by reducing the Navy force structure from 296 ships in FY24 to just 287 in FY25. By only building six ships, President Biden is also threatening to devastate our naval fleet and the Hampton Roads industrial base by slowing aircraft carrier construction and failing to meet the two Virginia-class submarines per year cadence required to support the AUKUS security pact,” Wittman said in a March 11 statement.

U.S. Army Assault Helicopters Conduct Deck Landings on USNS DAHL

[By Grady T. Fontana](#)

11 March 2024

JINHAЕ, South Korea – Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade (2-2 CAB) conducted deck landings with U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters on prepositioning ship USNS Dahl (T-AKR 312), March 7.

Six aircraft crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB practiced single-spot deck landings onboard USNS Dahl, about

five miles off the coast of Jinhae, South Korea, to certify air crew members and pilots in landing on a ship.

The DLQs were conducted through coordination between Military Sealift Command Office-Korea, USNS Dahl, and crews from Assault Helicopter Battalion 2-2 CAB to qualify or reset their crew on single-spot DLQ currency.

The training environment was also an opportunity for Army aircrews to ensure maritime air movement capability and readiness.

As a secondary training objective, MSCO-K and USNS Dahl aimed to further develop interoperability and joint relationship with 2-2 CAB during ship flight operations.

This training event for the Army also proved to be equally valuable to the crew of USNS Dahl. While mariners' conduct regular training on ship flight operations, the training environment is usually limited to classroom or computer simulations, which can sometimes not accurately reflect the challenges the crew may face at sea.

In preparation for the event, Dahl conducted a complete inventory and inspection of all flight deck equipment that included testing of all flight deck systems. In addition, Dahl conducted simulated flight deck operations, helicopter crash and fire drills in the days before the operation.

"All flight deck operations are inherently dangerous but DLQs add the wild card of potentially novice crews who are not familiar with either the vessel or ship flight operations in general," said contracted mariner Capt. Deatra Thompson, ship's master, USNS Dahl. "Additionally, unlike many USNS vessels, Dahl does not conduct flight operations often and many of the crew, while having received training and simulated operation, some have never been involved in real-life flight

operations.”

To reduce danger, Dahl requested that the aircraft’s crew chief depart during the train-the-trainer initial landings to provide hands-on instruction to the Dahl Chock and Chain teams to ensure they were familiar with the methods and placement of the fastening equipment.

The event was executed safely and without incident and resulted in six single-spot deck-landing qualified crews across 2-2 CAB.

“This event demonstrated effective joint coordination and was a great chance for MSCO-K and USNS Dahl to support a valuable training opportunity for our U.S. Army partners stationed here in Korea,” said Cmdr. Patrick J. Moore, commanding officer, MSCO-K. “Overall, there was great collaboration between MSCO-K, USNS Dahl, and the soldiers of 2-2 CAB.”

Maritime prepositioning ship USNS Dahl is a Watson-class large, medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ship and is part of Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3.

Commander, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron 3 supports warfighters from all the U.S. Armed Forces by prepositioning Military Sealift Command ships throughout the Indo-Pacific Region, ensuring Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps vehicles, heavy equipment, personnel and supplies are strategically positioned to support the full range of military operations.

Commander, Military Sealift Command Far East ensures approximately 50 ships in the Indo-Pacific Region, are manned, trained and equipped to deliver essential supplies, fuel, cargo, and equipment to warfighters, both at sea and on shore.

Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, MSC exists to support the joint warfighter across the full spectrum of military operations, with a workforce that includes approximately 6,000 Civil Service Mariners and 1,100 contract mariners, supported by 1,500 shore staff and 1,400 active duty and Reserve military personnel.