

# Navy to complete rapid delivery of new counter-UAS system to Ukraine



[Release from Naval Air Systems Command](#)

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Dec 6, 2023

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md.—The Navy will complete the delivery of a new Counter-Unmanned Air System (UAS) weapon system to Ukraine this month as part of the Department of Defense aid package.

Last year, the contingency operations team for the Direct and Time Sensitive Strike program office (PMA-242) began working an urgent requirement to deliver rocket-launching platforms, known as Vehicle Agnostic Modular Palletized ISR Rocket Equipment (VAMPIRE) systems, to support wartime efforts in Ukraine.

VAMPIRE is a compact, palletized rocket-launching platform that consists of a sensor ball and four-shot Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) launchers designed to mount to any truck with a flatbed. The U.S. Navy and Army have traditionally fought against air-to-ground targets. With VAMPIRE, the laser-guided rocket can defend against unmanned aerial threats.

“We delivered the first four systems in only six months by leveraging an innovative contracting strategy and working diligently to keep pace with the system’s rapid development,” said Cmdr. Kevin Raspet, PMA-242 foreign military sales deputy program manager.

PMA-242’s Contingency Operations Case Manager Robert Galan said the team had placed a heavy emphasis on speed to the warfighter and was able to explore several contracting authorities to streamline the process and focus on building and delivering an operationally effective system.

In coming weeks, the PMA-242 CO team also plans to deliver the first ever APKWS with proximity fuze warheads, a key enabling technology for the C-UAS mission, Galan said. The proximity fuze incorporates an RF sensor that enables APKWS to target Group 2 and Group 3 UAVs.

“Early reports indicate the weapon system is having an

immediate impact in the ongoing Ukrainian wartime effort,” said Capt. Alex Dutko, PMA-242 program manager. “This activity is another example of our team responding to urgent requirements with unprecedented speed and agility.”

PMA-242 will deliver 14 VAMPIRE systems to Ukraine’s ground forces for targeting and neutralizing UAVs and defending against ground threats.

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## **U.S. Navy to start recovery operations for downed Army Blackhawk**

[Release from U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs](#)

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From U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs

MEDITERRANEAN SEA – The U.S. Navy contracted the multi-purpose support vessel, NG Worker, for search and recovery operations of an Army Blackhawk aircraft that crashed into the Mediterranean Sea, Nov. 10. The aircraft was conducting routine training when the crash occurred.

The NG Worker, equipped with the U.S. Navy Supervisor of Salvage and Diving team, is set to depart to the crash location from Augusta Bay, Sicily, in the coming days.

Once on station, salvage experts will deploy a shallow water intermediate search system (SWISS) and towed pinger locator (TPL) to search for the aircraft. The SWISS is a towed side-scan-sonar (SSS) and the TPL is used to locate emergency

relocation pingers on downed military and commercial aircraft. The TPL will use passive sensors to “listen” for the aircraft pinger’s frequency.

Recovery of the aircraft will take place using the Deep Drone remote operated vehicle (ROV). Deep Drone is a 4,100 pound ROV designed to meet the Navy’s mid-water salvage requirements to a maximum depth of 8,000 feet. Every effort will be made to recover the aircraft and the fallen Soldiers.

NG Worker is a 288-foot offshore supply vessel that is outfitted with advanced, state-of-the-art underwater survey and positioning equipment.

Assigned to U.S. Army Special Operations Command the Blackhawk was carrying five special operations aviation Soldiers when it crashed. All Soldiers on board were killed.

The cause of the crash is under investigation. For information regarding the incident, contact the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Public Affairs office at 910-432-6005, or by email at [PAO-USASOC@socom.mil](mailto:PAO-USASOC@socom.mil).

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (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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## **Coast Guard to SLEP, Expand**

# MH-60T Helicopter Fleet as Sikorsky Delivers First New Airframe



Sikorsky delivered the first of 45 new airframes to the Coast Guard for the service-life extension of the service's MH-60T helicopter fleet.

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By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va.—The U.S. Coast Guard has confirmed plans to expand its MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter fleet and make it the standard service-wide helicopter. The service life-extension of the current MH-60T fleet is being highlighted as Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, delivers the first of 45 replacement MH-60T airframes to the Coast Guard.

Sikorsky on Nov. 30, 2023, delivered the first new “hull,” as the airframe is called, which consists of the nose, cabin, and aft transition structure, combined as a single assembly, Sikorsky said in a release. Upon delivery, the new hull will be used to rebuild an older MH-60T with new and updated

components by the Coast Guard's Aviation Logistics Center (ALC) in Elizabeth City, North Carolina starting in December 2023.

The Coast Guard's MH-60T fleet, the first of which originally began service as an HH-60J in 1990, is approaching the end of its service life of 20,000 hours per aircraft, with a current average of 16,000 flight hours per aircraft.

During the SLEP of 45 MH-60Ts, "the Coast Guard ALC will remove all dynamic (moving) components, digital cockpit, mission systems, and engines, then rebuild each aircraft around an all-new airframe," Sikorsky said, noting that the company's Troy, Alabama, facility is the site of the hull manufacture.

Sikorsky President Paul Lemmo told reporters at a Nov. 30 teleconference that the new hulls would be identical to those in the HH-60Js delivered between 1990 and 1996, but also would receive an anti-corrosion sealant in the joints.

The Coast Guard awarded Sikorsky a \$374 million contract to deliver all 45 MH-60T airframes to the ALC at a rate of 12 per year through 2027. Full-rate production will begin with fabrication of the fourth hull. The MH-60Ts going through SLEP will retain their Coast Guard serial numbers.

Rear Adm. Michael Campbell, Coast Guard director of Acquisition Programs and program executive officer, also speaking at the teleconference, said that the Jayhawk fleet went through an earlier SLEP during which the airframe life was extended from 10,000 to 20,000 flight hours. He said that without the SLEP the MH-60T fleet would have to be grounded by 2028. With the current SLEP, the MH-60T fleet would serve into the late 2040s.

The first MH-60T with the new hull is expected to fly in June at the ALC.

The Jayhawks are put through overhaul every four years, with six in overhaul at any given time.

The Coast Guard currently operates 48 MH-60Ts, three of which will not receive the new hulls under this program because they were re-built with ex-U.S. Navy SH-60F or HH-60H helicopters. Some of the 45 Jayhawks receiving the new hulls also are ex-U.S. Navy H-60s that were re-built as Jayhawks.

According to the Coast Guard, the H-60 Jayhawk medium range recovery helicopter fleet has saved more than 11,900 lives during more than 48,300 search and rescue missions since 1990, accumulating more than 730,430 flight hours," Sikorsky said in the release.

Campbell said the Coast Guard plans to increase the size of its Jayhawk fleet because of the capabilities of its national security cutters and forthcoming offshore patrol cutters and polar security cutters to hangar H-60 helicopters. The rotors and tail rotor boom of the MH-60T can be manually folded, but the rotors of the Navy H-60s have the capability to be electrically folded. The Coast Guard plans to install the electrical fold capability beginning in 2024.

The Coast Guard also plans to replace its fleet of 98 MH-65 Dolphin helicopters with MH-60Ts.

"The Coast Guard is moving forward with plans to transition the service's rotary wing fleet to a standardized, single-platform fleet of MH-60Ts," said Loretta Haring, Office of Strategic Planning and Communication (CG-925) Acquisition Directorate, in an email to reporters. "The Service plans to operate 127 airframes nationwide and intends to source the additional MH-60T hulls (termed "fleet growth") through a combination of both newly manufactured hulls and Navy conversion hulls. The number of each to be used has not yet been determined. The initial phase of fleet growth likely will be 36 hulls."

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# Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association and CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation become Navy Seabee Foundation



Release from the Navy Seabee Foundation

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On December 2, 2023, the boards of the Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association and the CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation signed an agreement to merge the two organizations and become the Navy Seabee Foundation. The agreement will take effect on December 31, 2023. This was the culmination of nearly two years of research, discussion and negotiations.

The purpose of the Navy Seabee Foundation is the preservation and protection of the history and heritage of the U.S. Navy

Seabees and the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps; the awarding of scholarships to deserving family members of Seabees, CEC Officers, and all who served with the Naval Construction force; supporting the U.S. Navy Seabee Museum, monuments, memorials, and other heritage sites dedicated to the U.S. Navy Seabees; and supporting current and former members of the Seabee/CEC Community and their families.

The board of directors of the Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association and the board of trustees of the CEC/Seabee Historical Foundation will merge to lead the Navy Seabee Foundation. RADM Kevin Slates, CEC, USN, Ret., and RDML Lou Cariello, CEC, USN, Ret., will serve as chair and vice chair respectively and the new position of Vice Chair, Senior Enlisted Leader will be filled by CMDCM Doug Heiner, USN, Ret. Dan Miller, currently Executive Director of both organizations will continue as Executive Director. The Navy Seabee Foundation will be headquartered in Springfield, Virginia and have an office at the Seabee Heritage Center in Gulfport Mississippi.

*From Kevin Slates, "I am thrilled about the combination of the Seabee Historical Foundation and the Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association into a single Seabee nonprofit, and the opportunities it will bring to allow us to better support Seabees and their families. It's long overdue and a huge milestone for all Seabees (past, present, and future)."*

*From Lou Cariello, "This is a watershed moment in the history of non-profit organizations serving Navy Seabees. The merger of the Seabee Historical Foundation with the former Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association (now Navy Seabee Foundation) represents a golden opportunity to further unify all former and current Seabees and enhance the pride that we have, and future generations will have, for our wonderful Seabee community."*

*From Doug Heiner "This merger is very exciting because we are*

*streamlining our operations to expand our capabilities and strengthens our commitment to serving Seabees and their families now and into the future.”*

*From Dan Miller, “I look forward to continuing the events and activities around the country that bring Seabees and Seabee supporters together. I’m so excited to see what the future holds for the Navy Seabee Foundation.”*

For additional information contact Dan Miller at danmiller@seabee.org or 859-327-1830.

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## **Sri Lanka Joins Combined Maritime Forces in Middle East as 39th Member**



[Release from Combined Maritime Forces Public Affairs](#)

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December 05, 2023

MANAMA, Bahrain – Combined Maritime Forces welcomed Sri Lanka, Nov. 20th, as the 39th member of the world’s largest maritime security partnership.

“We are excited to have Sri Lanka as part of CMF,” said Vice

Adm. Brad Cooper, CMF commander. “We welcome them into a growing international naval coalition in the Middle East, which protects some of the world’s most important waterways.”

In accepting the invitation to join CMF, the country’s naval commander, Vice Adm. Priyantha Perera, said Sri Lanka “is eager to collaborate with the CMF and other partner nations in joint exercises, patrols and operations...to uphold the principles of the CMF and contribute to its success.”

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.

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## **Navy Announces Completion of P-8A Poseidon Salvage Operation**



[Release from Commander, 3rd Fleet Public Affairs](#)

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KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii – The Navy completed salvage operations of the P-8A Poseidon in Kaneohe Bay on Dec. 3, the on-scene commander told reporters Dec. 4.

“The aircraft is out of the bay, and the salvage operation is complete,” said Rear Adm. Kevin P. Lenox, who is also commander of Carrier Strike Group 3. “The team worked smoothly through the weekend under ideal conditions and everything happened according to the plan.”

After staging all of the required equipment on Thursday, Nov. 30, and Friday, Dec. 1, Navy Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) 1, working alongside local and off-island specialists, and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Supervisor of Salvage (SUPSALV) arrived before sunrise on Saturday, Dec. 2, to begin inflating the salvage roller bags used to extract the aircraft from the water. Under the close observation of divers, the

aircraft was lifted higher in the water and off any coral by 8:30 a.m. The aircraft was rotated and floated into position next to the runway by 10:30 a.m.

“The team spent a lot of time using bags of different sizes – inflating and deflating – to make small adjustments to the aircraft,” said Lenox. “Sometimes it took an hour to get everything right just to move the aircraft five feet.”

Once on land, the salvage crew reinforced the bags and wheels, locked down the gears on the pulling machines, and placed absorbent material between the aircraft and the bay as a precaution. They continued pulling the aircraft on bags up the ramp to a flat area on the runway. The team then lowered the plane onto jacks, swapped out all six tires, inspected the landing gear – assessed it as sound, and then towed the aircraft to the washrack for a freshwater rinse.

“I again want to thank Marine Corps Base Hawaii (MCBH), Navy Supervisor of Salvage, SMIT Salvage, and Center Lift for their safe and professional execution of the salvage operation,” said Lenox.

Additionally, Dec. 3, divers from the Hawaii Dept. of Land and Natural Resources Division of Aquatic Resources conducted a preliminary dive to observe the site, and plan to continue their underwater assessment Dec. 4.

“Yesterday, we were able to get into the water with our federal partners for about two and a half hours,” said Kim Fuller, aquatic biologist with the Hawaii Dept. of Land and Natural Resources’ Division of Aquatic Resources, during the Dec. 4 joint press conference. “We were able to delineate the majority of what we believe is the primary impact of the airplane. Our assessment was just preliminary, so right now we’re just working to understand the extent of the damage and spatial delineation of the impact.”

The Navy and Marine Corps remain committed to working with

appropriate local and federal authorities to ensure the correct actions are taken to understand, measure, and mitigate any impacts to the local habitat.

“We will continue the work that needs to be done to characterize the state of the coral and damage that was done in the area,” said Col. Jeremy Beaven, commanding officer, MCBH. “In my role as the commanding officer, I have oversight responsibilities and obligations that I take on willingly. And, I will certainly be working with our state partners and agencies, again, in deference to their expertise.”

The aircraft is in a parking spot where it will be available for the investigating teams and where Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing Ten will begin the reclamation and repair process.

“The Navy is conducting a thorough investigation of the mishap to determine the cause and prevent similar mishaps in the future,” said Lenox.

The P-8A crew, assigned to Whidbey Island, Washington-based Patrol Squadron (VP) 4 “Skinny Dragons,” was on a detachment in support of maritime homeland defense when the aircraft overshot the runway and ended up in Kaneohe Bay Nov. 20. There were nine crewmembers on board – three pilots and six crewmembers (two officer and four enlisted). All crewmembers safely evacuated the aircraft and no injuries were reported. The incident is under investigation.

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**U.S. Coast Guard Cutter**

# Tahoma and crew return to homeport following 65-day patrol in the Florida Straits



[Release from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area](#)

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Dec. 5, 2023

NEWPORT, R.I. – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma (WMEC 908) and crew returned to their homeport in Newport on Tuesday, after a 65-day patrol in the Florida Straits.

Tahoma deployed in support of Homeland Security Task Force – Southeast and Operation Vigilant Sentry within the Coast Guard Seventh District’s area of responsibility. During the patrol, Tahoma’s crew conducted maritime safety and security missions while working with other Coast Guard cutters to detect, deter, and intercept unsafe and illegal maritime migration ventures

bound for the United States.

During the patrol, Tahoma contributed to the care and repatriation of 82 migrants. Tahoma interdicted six vessels bound for the United States. Tahoma also responded to a search and rescue case, assisting a Cuban mariner who had become lost at sea.

“It was an honor to serve as Commander, Command Task Unit 44.7.9 in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry,” said Cmdr. Piero Pecora, commanding officer of Tahoma. “The homeland security task force continues to provide cooperative capability to effectively integrate forces from across the spectrum of DHS, state, and local force providers towards the enduring mission of securing our Southern Maritime Border while safeguarding life at sea.”

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

Tahoma is a 270-foot, Famous-class medium endurance cutter. The cutter’s primary missions are counter-drug operations, migrant interdiction, enforcement of federal fishery laws, and search and rescue in support of U.S. Coast Guard operations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

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

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# Houthi Attacks on Commercial Shipping in International Water Continue



Release from U.S. Central Command

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USCENTCOM

Dec. 3, 2023

Release Number 20231203-01

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOUTHERN RED SEA – Today, there were four attacks against

three separate commercial vessels operating in international waters in the southern Red Sea. These three vessels are connected to 14 separate nations. The Arleigh-Burke Class destroyer USS CARNEY responded to the distress calls from the ships and provided assistance.

At approximately 9:15 a.m. Sanaa time, the CARNEY detected an anti-ship ballistic missile attack fired from Houthi controlled areas of Yemen toward the M/V UNITY EXPLORER, impacting in the vicinity of the vessel. UNITY EXPLORER is a Bahamas flagged, U.K. owned and operated, bulk cargo ship crewed by sailors from two nations. The CARNEY was conducting a patrol in the Red Sea and detected the attack on the UNITY EXPLORER.

At approximately 12 p.m., and while in international waters, CARNEY engaged and shot down a UAV launched from Houthi controlled areas in Yemen. The drone was headed toward CARNEY although its specific target is not clear. We cannot assess at this time whether the Carney was a target of the UAVs. There was no damage to the U.S. vessel or injuries to personnel.

In a separate attack at approximately 12:35 p.m., UNITY EXPLORER reported they were struck by a missile fired from Houthi controlled areas in Yemen. CARNEY responded to the distress call. While assisting with the damage assessment, CARNEY detected another inbound UAV, destroying the drone with no damage or injuries on the CARNEY or UNITY EXPLORER. UNITY EXPLORER reports minor damage from the missile strike.

At approximately 3:30 p.m. the M/V NUMBER 9 was struck by a missile fired from Houthi controlled areas in Yemen while operating international shipping lanes in the Red Sea. The Panamanian flagged, Bermuda and U.K. owned and operated, bulk carrier reported damage and no casualties.

At approximately 4:30 p.m., the M/V SOPHIE II, sent a distress call stating they were struck by a missile. CARNEY again

responded to the distress call and reported no significant damage. While en route to render support, CARNEY shot down a UAV headed in its direction. SOPHIE II is a Panamanian flagged bulk carrier, crewed by sailors from eight countries.

These attacks represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security. They have jeopardized the lives of international crews representing multiple countries around the world. We also have every reason to believe that these attacks, while launched by the Houthis in Yemen, are fully enabled by Iran. The United States will consider all appropriate responses in full coordination with its international allies and partners.

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## **Navy Reserve Launches Mobilization and Deployment Support Command (MDSC)**



## [Release from Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command Public Affairs](#)

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Dec. 1, 2023

By Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command Public Affairs

Mobilization and Deployment Support Command (MDSC) officially launched during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Naval Station Norfolk, December 1, 2023.

MDSC reflects the Navy Reserve's rapid alignment with the concept of Adaptive Mobilization, a process intended to improve warfighter readiness by enabling the Navy to respond with speed, agility and quantity of personnel in support of large-scale contingencies and to improve processes and procedures that will ensure effective mass mobilization capability.

“MDSC is being established to provide oversight of all Reserve Component (RC) mobilizations and Active Component (AC) Individual Augmentee (IA) mobilizations,” said Rear Admiral Michael J Steffen, Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command. “This is a wholesale re-imagining of the legacy, centralized mobilization process and is the realization of the Reserve’s shift from operational support through a centralized center of excellence to strategic reserve via adaptive, distributed mobilizations.”

The establishment of MDSC coincides with the disestablishment of Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC), which transferred to Navy Reserve Forces Command (CNRFC) in January 2022.

MDSC will retain the Mobilization Center of Excellence role to train, oversee and execute the Navy’s mobilization processes and continue to deploy steady-state IA Sailors across the globe, while adjusting processes and procedures to encompass the Navy’s focus on Adaptive Mobilization in support of large-scale contingencies and mass mobilization requirements.

According to Steffen, MDSC will continue to set the standard across all Distributed Activation processing sites to provide deployment ready and mission capable warfighters to effectively implement the strategic, operational and tactical objectives of the Navy.

“With the drawdown in missions supporting the Global War on Terror, the return of strategic competition and the new reality of multi-domain warfare, MDSC’s new mission and capabilities now align to the Navy’s focus in decentralizing the mobilization processing from a singular center at MDSC to the regional REDCOMs and other strategic locations,” said Steffen. “Our Reserve Force is laser-focused on warfighting readiness and our swift transformation will further sharpen our focus on one thing, and one thing only... our ability to

fight and win.”

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# USS RAMAGE RETURNS TO HOMEPORT FOLLOWING 6TH FLEET DEPLOYMENT



[Release from Carrier Strike Group 12 Public Affairs](#)

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[By Carrier Strike Group 12 Public Affairs](#)

04 December 2023

NORFOLK, Va. – The Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Ramage (DDG 61) – part of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12, Gerald R. Ford CSG returns to Norfolk, VA after a 7-month deployment to the US Naval Forces Europe area of operations, Dec. 03, 2023.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group remains on deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of the Pentagon's response to the Oct. 7th Hamas attacks on the Gaza strip. While abroad, the USS Ramage served as an air defense unit for the strike group off the coast of Israel, and closely monitored Russian Federation Navy units for signs of aggression.

A recent contract for the maintenance of Ramage was awarded to BAE systems in Jacksonville. The crew's early return to Norfolk provides an opportunity to prepare for an imminent homeport change to Mayport, Florida.

"I'm looking forward to Florida. It feels closer to home than any place I could be stationed," says Fire Controlman Third Class Tyler Allen Wade Dickey from Refugio, Texas. "This crew is the best team I've ever been a part of. There's isn't anything we can't accomplish together."

In 214 days, the crew of the Ramage accomplished 40 replenishments at sea, logged over 400 helicopter landings, sailed over 50,000 miles, and prepared over 190,000 meals.

While deployed with Carrier Strike Group 12, the Ramage crew conducted maritime security operations and engaged with allied and partner nations. In May, the crew of the Ramage was able to quickly replace critical acoustic equipment and celebrate the Battle of the Atlantic 80th Anniversary in Liverpool, UK. In June, members of the Ramage crew volunteered to clear debris from a public park and planted 100 decorative plants around the municipality of Bar, Montenegro. The July visit to Durres, Albania allowed Ramage leadership to meet with local

senior security officials. During the August port visit to Limassol, Cyprus the support of local contractors allowed the crew to complete an intensive week of scheduled upkeep.

The Gerald R. Ford CSG remains flexible to conduct operations wherever needed. In September, Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Ramage (DDG 61) and Ford-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) shared a port visit in Trieste, Italy prior to conducting dual-carrier operations with ITS Cavour (CVH 550) and Italy's 2nd Naval Division.

"Throughout our deployment, we've conducted joint operations with the British, Spanish, Italian, French, Hellenic, and Turkish Navies." says Cmdr. Tim Yuhas, commanding officer of the USS Ramage. "These strong strategic relationships between the U.S. and our allies maintains our superior readiness and are critical to our ability to respond to any contingency in the Mediterranean."

Strengthening partnerships during the deployment to the Naval Forces Europe area of operations builds enduring relationships and emphasizes our shared commitment to promoting safety and stability within the region, while seeking opportunities to enhance our interoperability as NATO allies.

CSG-12, Gerald R. Ford CSG, is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa area of operations, employed by U.S. Sixth Fleet to defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group is comprised of its flagship and namesake, the Ford-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78), Carrier Air Wing Eight (CVW-8), Destroyer Squadron Two (DESRON-2), the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG-60), and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Ramage (DDG 61), USS McFaul (DDG 74), and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116).

The squadrons of CVW-8 embarked aboard Gerald R. Ford are the

“Tridents” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, the “Spartans” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 70, the “Bear Aces” of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 124, the “Ragin’ Bulls” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 37, the “Blacklions” of VFA-213, the “Golden Warriors” of VFA-87, the “Tomcatters” of VFA-31, the “Gray Wolves” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 142, and the “Rawhides” of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40.

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.