

USS Delbert D. Black Returns To Homeport Following A Surge Deployment



[By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jimmy Ivy](#)

20 February 2024

NAVAL STATION MAYPORT, Fla. – USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119) returned to its homeport of Naval Station Mayport, February 18, 2024, following a near 3-month surge deployment.

The ship deployed Dec. 1 to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe area of operations as part of deterrence efforts in the region following the outbreak of conflict in Israel.

Deploying with Mayport sister ship USS The Sullivans (DDG 68), Delbert D. Black demonstrated the operational practicality of relieving carrier strike group warships while on station. Upon

entering the Mediterranean Sea, Delbert D. Black and The Sullivans relieved USS McFaul (DDG 74) and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) and joined the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group. Drawing on crew proficiency and lessons from a Pre-Deployment Emergent Integrated Training event, Delbert D. Black was immediately capable of performing escort, screening, and warfare commander functions expected of Carrier Strike Group units.

“The seamless integration of Delbert D. Black into ongoing operations established proof of concept for sustained and continuous combat operations at sea, which enhancing the surface Navy’s ability to fight and win,” said Cmdr. Adam Stein, commanding officer of Delbert D. Black.

Following the departure of Gerald R. Ford, Delbert D. Black continued presence operations in the Mediterranean Sea, enabling options and flexibility to operational commanders in theatre. Delbert D. Black went on to integrate operations with elements of Standing NATO Maritime Group Two, conduct joint training evolutions with the Italian Navy, and provide ballistic missile defense to the European continent.

“For many Delbert D. Black Trailblazers, departing for a surge deployment can be jarring, but I quickly learned how resilient the Sailors of this command were,” said Master Chief Keona Johnson, Command Master Chief (CMC) of Delbert D. Black. “We were ready for anything on this deployment, but still maintained high morale while answering our nations call. This crew was able to maximize qualifications and become stronger warfighters. I am a proud CMC because of this team and look forward to sailing safe again with all of my Sailors!”

During the 79 days underway, the ship’s crew conducted seven underway replenishments, logged more than 180 flight hours, sailed more than 21,000 nautical miles, and safely transferred 1.2 million gallons of fuel with zero mishaps. The crew operated at sea for a continuous period of 46 days through the

holidays. Delbert D. Black's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) team hosted multiple events to help the crew keep their spirits up while away from their families.

"With the surge deployment, the crew spent the holidays at sea, but that did not stop the holiday spirit," said Ens. Rachel Anthony, Delbert D. Black's MWR Fun Boss. "While underway the crew enjoyed 20 MWR events, which included redecorating the main deck in holiday decorations, a lip sync battle and some delicious grilled cheese made by the command triad."

USS Delbert D. Black commenced their trans-Atlantic voyage the beginning of February to return to Mayport, coming home to a warm reception by friends and family on the pier.

"I was fortunate to return home from deployment on my birthday this year and was greeted by my family," said Damage Controlman 1st Class Tyler Pascale. "Seeing the birthday signs and welcome home signs along with my nephews smiles makes it all worth it."

Delbert D. Black is an Arleigh Burke-Class destroyer named for the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON), the Navy's most senior enlisted rank. MCPON Black is known as a trailblazer for his initiatives that improved quality of life for the Navy's junior ranks, and established the importance and value of having an empowered enlisted force in the Navy.

USS John L. Canley

Commissioning Recognizes Legacy of Vietnam Veterans and Medal of Honor Recipient



NAVAL BASE CORONADO (Feb. 17, 2024) – The crew of the expeditionary sea base USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) mans the ship during its commissioning ceremony on Naval Base Coronado Feb. 17, 2024. The ship is named for Medal of Honor recipient John Lee Canley, a retired Marine Corps Sergeant Major and Vietnam war veteran. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Claire M. DuBois)

From Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

CORONADO, CALIFORNIA (Feb. 17, 2024) – Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB) USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) commissioned at Naval Air Station North Island in Coronado, California, Feb. 17.

The first of its name, ESB 6 honors United States Marine Corps

Sgt. Maj. John L. Canley, Ret., who was awarded the Medal of Honor 50 years after his actions during the Battle of Hue City. Canley served as Company Gunnery Sergeant, Company A, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division (Alpha/1/1) in the Republic of Vietnam from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6, 1968. Sgt. Maj. Canley passed away in Bend, Oregon on May 11, 2022.

During the ceremony guest speaker, Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy reflected on the importance of what matters to the future. "As the world's problems grow increasingly more complex and stability more uncertain, we need to tap into America's most precious resource—its people—to solve the issues of the future. Because better technology and more ships will go to waste without the courageous Americans who will answer the call to service to their country."

In office when Canley received the Medal of Honor, General Joseph P. Dunford, Jr., 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps began by honoring Medal of Honor recipients Colonel Robert J. Modrzejewski, USMC (Ret.) and Colonel Jay R. Vargas, USMC (Ret.), seated in the front row.

"In our initial engagement, I was struck by Sgt. Maj. Canley's sincerity, and his humility. In time, I gained an appreciation for his commitment to service, and his character as well," Dunford recalled. "In addition to being understated, Sgt. Maj. Canley was uncomfortable in being singled out for his actions in Vietnam. He was also offended by the lack of recognition Vietnam veterans received when they returned home."

"In addition to recognizing Sgt. Maj. Canley's heroism, I'd like to recognize the broader legacy of John Canley and his fellow Vietnam veterans," said the former Commandant. "Our Vietnam veterans have left us a very proud and rich legacy."

Sergeant Major Carlos Ruiz, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, focused on the totality of Canley's service, in and out of uniform, and what it means. "Sgt. Maj. Canley earned this honor over seven days, but he had 15 years of building Marines. Of making warriors. Getting them ready for the fight. On the back end of the seven days, he spent another decade, plus, continuing to serve in uniform."

Ruiz relayed how Canley influenced Marines today. While those seven days helped to name the ship, it's the 30 years that brought this group together. "He showed us how to show courage. How to do the right thing. He would walk with such calmness to pull his Marines out of danger. Those who were wounded; to get them out."

"There's this generation that keeps building on each other," he continued. "They do some of the very similar things that John Canley did. And that's care for each other. Not that long ago, you saw Marines being exactly like John Canley taught them to do. Standing on a wall looking through a sea of people, trying to find anyone else that they could save."

Ship's sponsor Ms. Patricia A. Sargent and Sgt. Maj. Canley's daughter said, "To be able to give the order to bring this ship to life, I need to give you some information in regards to my father. My father understood that greatness is not achieved by the individual; it is achieved by the courageous acts of the many. The Marines of Alpha Company 1/1 are an example of that in what they achieved in the Battle of Hue City. In that battle, my father earned their Medal of Honor, which now resides on the USS John L. Canley."

"This ship will achieve greatness, but it will only do that by the courageous actions of the many," said Sargent. "It is in honor of my father, my family, members of the 1/1, and the great people of the United States that I give the command:

Officers and Crew of the USS John L. Canley, man our ship and bring her to life!"

Capt. Thomas Mays, the commanding officer, thanked Alpha/1/1, Sgt. Maj. Canley's unit at Hue City, for keeping the gunny's legacy alive, and working to see that he received the recognition this nation owed him. He also thanked Sargent and maid of honor, granddaughter, Viktoria Sargent for the esteem and care they have given the Sailors before having a "personal conversation" with the crews – gold, blue, and civilian mariners.

"Our vessel's footprint upon the seas is not the extent of her reach, nor the measure of her impact upon this world," he said. "The length, breadth, and endurance of that impact rests solely with you and I, with how we back one another, with how we handle our charge to care for this vessel, and with how we approach our sacred duty to defend these United States.

"Her spirit lived upon this earth for 83 years before her first plank was laid, imbued with honor, courage, and selfless sacrifice by her namesake. But the lifeblood that pumps through her veins, that makes her move, that faces down the threats our nation is confronted by, that lifeblood is you."

Four of USS John L. Canley's crewmembers later reenlisted aboard the new warship.

Mr. David Carver, President of General Dynamics NASSCO reminded everyone of ESB 6's "remarkable capabilities that will allow our servicemen and women to carry out a wide variety of missions, including mine counter measures, counter piracy operations, maritime security operations, humanitarian aid, disaster relief missions, special operations, and Marine Corps crisis response.

"The ship is designed to support nearly every rotary wing

aircraft in the DoD inventory,” he continued, “as well as allied aircraft, all while serving off the fleet’s third largest flight deck. Canley has substantial residual space, weight, and power to accommodate a wide range of current and future, manned and unmanned, surface, aerial, and undersea systems across multiple warfighting functions. This is a massive, capable, flexible warship that gives fleet commanders decision space they need throughout their operating theaters.”

The mission of CNSP is to man, train, and equip the Surface Force to provide fleet commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.

SCHIEBEL WINS CAMCOPTER S-300 CONTRACT FOR SOUTH KOREAN NAVY



Vienna, 20 February 2024 – Schiebel, together with Korean based defence solutions companies Hanwha Systems and UI Helicopter, has been awarded a contract by the Defence Acquisition Programme Administration (DAPA) for the development and delivery of the Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) CAMCOPTER S-300 Unmanned Air System (UAS), to be operated by the South Korean MOD.

The contract was signed with Hanwha Systems for the supply of the S-300 for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) missions for the South Korean Navy and Marine Corps.

The South Korean Navy has been a Schiebel customer for over 10 years, regularly carrying out maritime ISR operations with its CAMCOPTER S-100 UAS fleet. The changing geo-political situation and North Korean threat call for an expansion of their UAS fleet, adding larger and heavier UAS with greater capability.

“We are extremely excited that the South Korean Navy and Marine Corps is building on its extensive experience and success with the S-100 by awarding Hanwha the contract for Schiebel’s new long-endurance, heavy-lift-capable UAS. The S-300 marks a major milestone in the company’s history,” said Hans Georg Schiebel, Chairman of the Schiebel Group.

The STANAG-compliant and fully certifiable S-300 has an endurance of up to 24 hours and operates at an altitude of up to 21,000 feet, offering a persistent loiter capability for ISTAR operations. The heavy-lift UAS carries payloads of up to 250 kg, making it an ideal cargo delivery solution over long distances in complex and high altitude terrain. The versatility and flexibility of the S-300 also allows for the release of payloads such as dropping multiple sonar-buoys for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) operations.

To ensure maximum mission versatility and cost effectiveness, the heavy-lift-capable S-300 can be controlled by the same proven Ground Control Station used by the CAMCOPTER S-100. Schiebel’s ‘system of systems’ approach ensures the interoperability of its unmanned fleet for many years to come building on its experience derived from over 20 years of building a robust and proven VTOL core system.

Schiebel recently announced the expansion of its Abu Dhabi facility extensively increasing its global footprint for the CAMCOPTER S-300. However, the new platform’s open architecture will also ensure it will be able to meet countries’ sovereignty and offset requirements.

New Dry Dock Project at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard Reaches Early Milestone



Caption: PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – Contractors work on the construction of Dry Dock 5 at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Dec. 18, 2023. Dragados/Hawaiian Dredging/Orion JV (DHO JV), under contract with Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, is conducting major in-water construction for a new dry dock at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF). The \$3.4-billion graving dock project, the first new dry dock in Pearl Harbor since 1943, will support PHNSY & IMF's ability to continue maintaining and modernizing the U.S. Navy's nuclear-powered submarines into the future. U.S. Navy photo by Joel Onemu

From Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard Public Affairs, Feb. 16, 2024

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii – Dragados/Hawaiian Dredging/Orion JV

(DHO JV), under contract with Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC), has begun major in-water construction for a new dry dock at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PHNSY & IMF).

Dry Dock 5 construction commenced after a traditional Hawaiian blessing ceremony on Aug. 19, 2023, and the project has reached the milestone of starting the installation of foundational piles that will essentially anchor the new graving dock.

The Navy will commemorate this significant, early-phase construction milestone at the Dry Dock 5 Anchoring Ceremony scheduled for Feb. 24, 2024, at 10 a.m. at PHNSY.

U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono, Adm. Samuel Paparo, Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and Gerry Majkut, president of Hawaiian Dredging Construction Company, Inc., are scheduled to speak at the ceremony.

“This milestone is a testament to the hard work various organizations have put into the project and a reminder of the steadfast commitment to our community here in Hawai’i,” said Capt. Richard Jones, PHNSY & IMF commander.

The \$3.4-billion graving dock project will support PHNSY’s ability to continue maintaining and modernizing the U.S. Navy’s nuclear-powered submarines into the future. It will include the necessary support facilities and the new dry dock will have a 150-year service life. Dry Dock 5 will replace Dry Dock 3, one of four existing dry docks at PHNSY & IMF. Dry Dock 3 is the smallest dry dock and is incapable of docking the current Virginia-class of Navy submarines. The last dry dock to be constructed in Pearl Harbor was in 1943.

To oversee the project, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) commissioned its newest command, Officer in Charge of Construction, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard (OICC PHNSY) in March 2023. OICC PHNSY provides robust quality

assurance, contract administration, and command-level accountability for construction of DD5 and the broader once-in-a-generation recapitalization of PHNSY under the Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP).

"Setting the conditions for full-scale construction on a project of this magnitude took a robust team of professionals in both government and industry," said OICC PHNSY Commanding Officer Capt. Stephen Padhi. "Logistics, permits, monitoring, site preparation, work planning and controls had to set the stage for production for the next four years. As major activities are underway, we look forward to confidently meeting our targets for schedule, quality, safety, cost, and ethics."

Leading the construction is contractor DH0 JV. "We're extremely excited to work on a project of this scale with the U.S. Navy," said Gerry Majkut, president of Hawaiian Dredging Construction Company, Inc. "Not many companies get the chance to be part of a major project like this, so having the opportunity to build this dry dock is extremely rewarding."

Over the course of construction, which is scheduled to finish in 2027, DH0 JV expects to draw from many local and small businesses in Hawaii to support the project, in close coordination with local unions. Overall, the project is expected to provide approximately 2,500 jobs locally.

Navy to Commission Future Expeditionary Sea Base USS

John L. Canley



FEB. 16, 2024

The Navy will commission the future USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) as the newest Expeditionary Sea Base ship (ESB) during a 10:00 a.m. PST ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 17, in Coronado, California.

The commissioning ceremony's principal address will be delivered by the Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy. Remarks will also be provided by General Joseph P. Dunford, Jr., 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps; Sergeant Major Carlos Ruiz, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; and Mr. David Carver, President of General Dynamics NASSCO. The ship's sponsor is Patricia Sargent, Sgt. Maj. Canley's daughter.

Built by General Dynamics NASSCO, currently there are six delivered ships across two variants: Expeditionary Transfer

Dock (ESD) and Expeditionary Sea Base. The future USS John L. Canley (ESB 6) is a highly flexible platform used across various military operations. When commissioned, the ship will be employed as a mobile sea-based asset. It will be a part of the critical access infrastructure supporting the deployment of forces, equipment, supplies, and warfighting capability.

The first of its name, the ship honors United States Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. John L. Canley, Ret., who was awarded the Medal of Honor 50 years after his actions during the Battle of Hue City. Canley served as Company Gunnery Sergeant, Company A, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division in the Republic of Vietnam from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6, 1968. Sgt. Maj. Canley passed away in Bend, Oregon May 11, 2022.

ESB 6 joins the USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3), USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4), USS Miguel Keith (ESB 5) which support a variety of maritime-based missions, including Special Operations Forces (SOF) and Airborne Mine Counter Measures (AMCM). ESBs have a four-spot flight deck, mission deck, and hangar, designed around four core capabilities: aviation facilities, berthing, equipment staging support, and command and control assets. Follow-on ships Robert E. Simanek (ESB 7) and Hector A. Cafferata Jr. (ESB 8) are under construction. The commissioning of ESBs provides combatant commanders greater operational flexibility to employ this platform in accordance with the laws of armed conflict.

The ceremony will be live streamed at <https://www.dvidshub.net/webcast/33415>. The link becomes active approximately ten minutes prior to the event at 09:50 a.m. PST.

Three-Star Command Lands in Norway for Exercise Nordic Response 24



By II MEF Communication Strategy and Operations, Feb. 15. 2024

On February 12th, the vanguard of the U.S. Marine Corps, II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) command element arrived at Bardufoss Air Station, Norway, to participate in NATO's exercise Nordic Response 24. As the Land Component Command headquarters for the exercise, II MEF's command element will synchronize operations between the U.S. Marine Air-Ground Task Force, Norwegian Army units and a combined Swedish and Finnish Brigade under a NATO Joint Task Force.

We're looking forward to exercising with our Norwegian hosts, NATO allies and partners," remarked II MEF commanding general Lt. Gen. David A. Ottignon. "There's no place like the Nordic countries to sharpen our warfighting skills."

Nordic Response 24 is part of the much larger NATO exercise Steadfast Defender 2024, which is expected to involve approximately 90,000 troops across Europe. According to U.S. Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander and U.S. Europe Command commander, the exercise "will demonstrate our unity, our strength, and our determination to protect each other."

II MEF's strategic deployment more than 6,500 kilometers from its home base in the United States demonstrates the reach and mobility of American forces available to defend NATO's northern flank, if called upon.

"Nothing is easy when you're operating in several feet of snow, at negative 40 degrees Fahrenheit, surrounded by 5,000-foot mountain peaks," Ottignon said. "But being a Marine isn't about doing what's easy. It's about being the best and being prepared for the challenges of the future. This exercise in this environment is designed to do just that by building on the grit, skills, and determination within every Marine so they can operate in any climate and place."

Around 2,500 U.S. Marines will join the exercise alongside NATO allies and Sweden. The goal is to strengthen coordination across air, ground, maritime and other domains into a unified fighting force ready to respond to any threat.

From January to March 2024, the U.S. Marines and their Norwegian counterparts will work hand-in-hand with NATO allies to hone tactics and procedures for winter warfare. Beyond tactical objectives, the exercise signals the steadfast solidarity allies share in defending collective security.

"Norway is special to us. Our countries have been working together for more than a century. II MEF has trained side-by-side, strengthening bonds and operating as one cohesive team in Norway during the last decade of Cold Response exercises," added Ottignon. "The Arctic is a fluid strategic place. It's

important for our allies to know that we're here today and we'll be here when needed to respond swiftly to any threat."

[B-roll](#), [imagery](#), and [news stories](#) of II MEF Marines preparing for exercise Nordic Response 24 can be found hyperlinked.

CENTCOM Intercepts Iranian Weapons Shipment Intended for Houthis



Military-grade weapons and other lethal supplies are stacked on the deck of a vessel seized by the U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class fast-response cutter USCGC Clarence Suthpin Jr. (WPC 1147) in the Arabian Sea, Jan. 28. Clarence Suthpin Jr. operates in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations to help ensure maritime security and stability in the Middle East region. **(Photo by U.S Coast Guard)**

By U.S. Central Command Public Affairs | February 15, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – A U.S. Coast Guard cutter, forward deployed to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility, seized advanced conventional weapons and other lethal aid originating in Iran and bound to Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen from a vessel in the Arabian Sea on Jan. 28.

The U.S. Coast Guard Sentinel-class fast-response cutter USCGC Clarence Sutphin Jr. (WPC 1147), assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, located the vessel and boarded it in the Arabian Sea. The boarding team discovered over 200 packages that contained medium-range ballistic missile components, explosives, unmanned underwater/surface vehicle (UUV/USV) components, military-grade communication and network equipment, anti-tank guided missile launcher assemblies, and other military components.

The direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of such aid violates U.N. Security Council Resolution 2216 (as extended and renewed by resolutions 2675 and 2707).

“This is yet another example of Iran’s malign activity in the region, ” said Gen. Michael Erik Kurilla, CENTCOM commander. “Their continued supply of advanced conventional weapons to the Houthis is in direct violation of international law and continues to undermine the safety of international shipping and the free flow of commerce.”

CENTCOM is committed to working with our allies and partners to counter the flow of Iranian lethal aid in the region by all lawful means including U.S. and U.N. sanctions and through interdictions.

WEST 2024: Naval Special Warfare a Force Multiplier for Fleet, Prioritizing Reintegration with Joint Force



Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC), answers questions during the WEST 2024 convention held at the San Diego Convention Center. *U.S. Navy | Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kyle Fiori*
[By MC1 Felicito Rustique, Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs](#)

SAN DIEGO – Rear Adm. Keith Davids, commander, Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC), attended and participated in AFCEA-USNI WEST (WEST) 2024 conference, Feb. 13-15.

WEST, the premier naval conference and exposition on the West Coast, brings military and industry leaders together to discuss new technologies and capabilities. The theme of the 34th iteration of the event was, "Are Acquisition and Readiness on Pace to Meet Global Security Demands?"

Davids participated in a panel discussion alongside six leaders from sea service warfare communities to discuss acquisition and readiness and address the question, "What Changes are Community Leaders Making to Meet Global Security Demands?"

"Over the past two decades, the focus of Naval Special Warfare (NSW) has been primarily on counterterrorism," said Davids. "Now, we are prioritizing integration with the Fleet and Joint Force. We can operate forward in contested areas that enhances warfighting lethality in unique ways. "

Davids emphasized that conventional response methods have grown ineffective in addressing contemporary conflicts and diverse threats across the globe. To counter the instability and distinct challenges to U.S. warfare capabilities, Davids called on industry to support NSW's value proposition.

"We're interested in leveraging our maritime access and placement to deliver asymmetric effects for the Fleet. Therefore, we need industry's help to enhance our stealth, precision, scale, and decision advantage," said Davids. "We are eager to collaborate with many of you on new ideas and concepts."

Joining Davids on the panel was Rear Adm. Brad Andros, commander, Navy Expeditionary Command, Lt. Gen. Karsten Heckl, commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Vice Adm. Brendan McLane, commander, Naval Surface Forces,

Vice Adm. Daniel Cheever, commander, Naval Air Forces and Elizabeth Nashold, deputy commander, Naval Information Forces. Retired Vice Adm. Peter H. Daly, former CEO and Publisher, U.S. Naval Institute, moderated the discussion.

AFCEA, which stands for the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association, and the U.S. Naval Institute (USNI), sponsor WEST each year. The conference is organized into a main program and three engagement theaters – Marine, General, and Information Warfare.

Along with exhibits, keynote speakers and panel discussions, WEST also gives attendees a chance to hear from the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandants of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, the Sea Service Chiefs, and various industry leaders.

WEST 2024 also featured a Department of the Navy (DON) Information Technology (IT) conference, an Innovation Showcase, and awards announcements recognizing individual and group winners in categories such as Emerging Leaders, a USNI essay contest, and women's appreciation.

Naval Special Warfare is the nation's elite maritime special operations force, uniquely positioned to extend the Fleet's reach and gain and maintain access for the Joint Force in competition and conflict.

AeroVironment's Puma 3 AE Now

Offers Extended Endurance of up to 3 Hours



A new optional battery extends the range of AeroVironment's Puma 3 AE UAS. *AeroVironment*

ARLINGTON, Virginia – AeroVironment's PS2500 battery is now approved for use in the Puma 3 AE unmanned aircraft system (UAS). The optional PS2500 battery allows operators to achieve extended endurance of up to three hours of flight time. The increased endurance provides operators with greater mission flexibility and time on station across land and maritime operations.

"The new PS2500 battery offers both new and current Puma customers the opportunity to dramatically expand the duration of their operations, enabling more ground covered in a single flight," said Brad Truesdell, AeroVironment's vice president and general manager of small UAS (SUAS). "Adding longer endurance capabilities to Puma's existing flexible launch options and modularity makes it a truly unparalleled asset for various types of operations."

Puma customers can now choose between the standard smart

battery with two and a half hours of endurance, or the PS2500 battery with three hours of endurance. The high-energy-density lithium-ion PS2500 battery pack features an improved capacity of 24.5Ah (amp-hours) while retaining the size and form factor needed to be seamlessly integrated into Puma 3 AE's existing battery bay and is also interoperable with Puma LE as a Line Replaceable Unit (LRU).

U.S. 7th Fleet Holds Change of Command, Welcomes New Commander



By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, Feb. 15, 2024

YOKOSUKA, Japan – U.S. 7th Fleet held a change of command

ceremony Feb. 15 at the Fleet Activities Yokosuka Theater.

Vice Adm. Fred W. Kacher relieved Vice Adm. Karl O. Thomas as the 54th commander of the world's largest forward-deployed naval force, U.S. 7th Fleet.

"To the men and women of 7th Fleet, it has been my sincere honor to lead this forward deployed team as you demonstrated daily how professional navies operate to secure the maritime commons and uphold the rules based international order," said Thomas. "To my counterparts in our ally and partner nations throughout the region, your professionalism and friendship has been the greatest reward as we operated as one seamless team. I remain inspired by your commitment to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Prior to commanding 7th Fleet, Thomas served as the assistant deputy chief of naval operations, plans, and strategy, a role Kacher also held. Thomas began his career as an E-2C Hawkeye aviator, and he commanded a carrier airborne early warning squadron, two aircraft carriers and the forward-deployed Carrier Strike Group in Japan. His follow-on assignment will be the deputy chief of naval operations for information warfare.

During the ceremony, Thomas emphasized the critical importance of his close relationships with fleet commander counterparts throughout the Indo-Pacific. Throughout his tenure, Thomas led numerous advanced dual-carrier operations, multilateral events, critical freedom of navigation operations, and Taiwan Straits transits, among other high-visibility exercises and operations with allies and partners from across the Indo-Pacific.

Vice Adm. Blake Converse, deputy commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, spoke highly of Thomas's visionary leadership and the importance of the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific.

“Our national command authority continues to recognize that this is the most important and consequential theater that we operate our forces in,” said Converse. “As such, we have grave responsibilities to deter aggression, to protect the international rules-based order, and to ensure freedom of navigation.”

Kacher began his career as a surface warfare officer aboard cruisers and destroyers. He was the first commanding officer of the Arleigh Buke class guided-missile destroyer USS Stockdale (DDG 106), and went on to serve as the commodore of Destroyer Squadron Seven, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group Seven; executive officer to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Commander, U.S. European Command; and chief of staff to Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. He most recently served as the acting Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy.

“I could not be more humbled to lead the U.S. 7th Fleet,” said Kacher. “I am honored to re-join our forward deployed men and women as we operate combat credible naval forces in one of the most complex maritime regions in the world, and I look forward to engaging with our allied and partner navies in our shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed numbered fleet and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

For more news from Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, visit <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/>.