

Center for Maritime Strategy: Looking to History to Help Face the Threats Ahead



Cmdr. Robert J. Briggs and Cmdr. Richard D. Slye monitor the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning from the pilothouse of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Mustin in April. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Arthur Rosen*

The Navy League's Center for Maritime Strategy set sail on a following sea of supportive calls, emails, and letters. The urgent cause of our nation's maritime power resonates from commercial districts to the cargo terminals. With our ideal location inside the capital beltway, we will gather a coalition of maritime-minded business leaders, think tanks, concerned citizens and congressional leadership to drive the sea changes our maritime future needs.

Accordingly, I spent the first week in full “startup” mode, launching the office off the blocks while interviewing CMS candidates, fielding phone calls and taking CMS’s message on the road. I had the pleasure of introducing our mission and vision on two popular podcasts hosted by [Francis Rose of Fedscoop](#) and [Walker Mills of Sea Control](#) (affiliated with the Center for International Maritime Security, or CIMSEC). Both interviews will give you an idea of where we want to take CMS in the months and years to come

Meanwhile, over the Thanksgiving break, I had some time to reflect on the past and the future as CMS endeavors to become a strong advocate of America’s maritime power. In fact, just last month, I keynoted at Deep Blue 2021, a Canadian maritime conference. In preparing for my remarks, I harkened back to an assignment I undertook in the Pentagon in 1997 – a reflection indicative of the predictive errors that led how our maritime project decayed to its current state.

As a member of the staff of Dr. Paris Genalis, director of naval warfare in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology (USD A&T), I served as a government adviser for the Defense Science Board Task Force on Submarines. The DSB’s team of talented, bi-partisan scientists, industrialists, civilian policy makers and uniformed services representatives chartered to decide the direction the nation would take in our next generation of submarines.

The task force first needed a vision of the future resolving what capabilities our next generation submarine required. Over its first few months, the task force embarked on a mini futures study to predict the security environment in the maritime domain in 2020 and beyond. It’s worthwhile to examine some of their conclusions, assess the accuracy of their predictions and then assess how we have done as a nation in responding to future threats.

The task force began with a prediction of the type of battlefield trends the military would face in 2020 and beyond. They envisioned:

- Multiple, simultaneous and shifting geographic foci
- Greater requirements for stealth, agility and self defense
- Proliferation of technology in sensing, guidance and targeting significantly increasing weapons effectiveness for all parties
- More effective coordination of sensors and shooters over longer ranges would allow smaller forces to conduct precision strike from greater distances
- Mission diversity would increase, requiring a greater variety of warfighter skills and tradecraft
- Reduced decision cycle would decrease warning time, intensifying the need for rapid response capabilities.

Twenty three years ago, the task force's future military trend predictions were spot on. We are deterring and defending against multiple adversaries on multiple axes in complex competitions which threaten to explode into conflicts fought over extreme standoff ranges. Agile hypersonic weapons and stealthy, long-range and accurate weapons in the hypersonic family of missiles slash commanders' available warning time and necessitate the evolution from simple Aegis-like decision systems to artificial intelligence assistance to the warfighter's decision cycle.

The nature of the battlefield determined, the task force imagined the Navy's role in 2020. A quick review of the U.S. Navy's latest maritime strategy paper, "Advantage at Sea," reveals the DSB's assessment of the Navy's mission priorities in 2020 and beyond was remarkably similar. You can read them at this [link to "Advantage at Sea."](#)

Unfortunately, like many other future studies of the same era, the DSB's geopolitical analysis of the "World from DoD's

Perspective – in the next 10 to 20, then 50 years” fell lethally short – wrong by either misestimation or misplaced optimism.

In 1998, the DSB predicted America would face “no plausible strategic competitor” in 10 to 20 years, beset instead by an increasing number of diffuse regional threats. This was dead wrong, even though the signs were predicted. The DSB noted the one-sided superiority of U.S. weapons systems will be reduced, that traditional alliances will become weaker and American overseas basing would decrease with more restrictions or national caveats on their use. DSB understood and reported technology diffusion would make our deterrence more challenging, especially as regional conflicts drew focus – all devastatingly true. Despite these trends, looking to the future from the heights of American power, we couldn’t conceive of a strategic adversary emerging before 2050.

While the DBS was dead wrong in its prediction of “no plausible strategic competitor” by 2020, the DSB was far from alone in banking on continued American global hegemony for another half century. Our inability as a nation to predict these threats 20 years ago suppressed our ability to act. America singularly focused on its fight against violent extremism across the Middle East and Africa to the exclusion of all else, assuming our competitive advantage would last. As we lay entrenched, other’s stole a march on us, filling the vacuums we left and grasping at the mantles we let droop.

So where do we go from here? Our strategic competitor out-paced our predictions by 30 years; and 20 years of counter-insurgency stymied our recognition and reaction. More than our future investments, our investment now must bias toward sea, air, space and the enabling signals domains. According to the Congressional Research Service, China will increase its fleet to 425 ships by 2030, with six carriers by the mid 2030s. The U.S. Navy will globally disperse only 300-305 ships, while the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) sits en masse on the

WESTPAC doorstep. Even if estimations of the PLAN threat are overwrought, which they are not, a recapitalization of the fleet and bets on commercial maritime power still provide guaranteed economic improvement and a mobile deterrent hedge against any forward threat against American national interests.

Efforts like the \$25 billion Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan must be accelerated to improve the maritime industrial base over a decade, not two. We need the capability and capacity to build, modernize and repair our ships now. Doing anything less will leave our Sailors and national security within a lethal margin for potential defeat from which there will be no second chances.

Let's act now and restore the great reserve of sea power our nation needs, sooner than later!

The DSB Report summary was [published online in 1998](#) by the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC).

DOT, MARAD Release Assessment of US Merchant Marine Academy



Midshipmen and plebe candidates stand in formation at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point in 2018. The Plebe candidates are congressionally nominated and are starting indoctrination, a rigorous, 20-day regimen of academic, military, and physical training. *U.S. NAVY*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Maritime Administration (MARAD) released Nov. 24 a new report titled, “Organizational Assessment of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy: A Path Forward” and an accompanying implementation plan prepared by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA).

“USMMA students are remarkable leaders committed to serving the nation and supporting positive change,” said Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley. “They deserve a modern, safe, and inclusive learning environment where they have the training and resources that will prepare them to succeed in the U.S. merchant marine and in our armed forces. We acknowledge, and have been working to address, the many

urgent issues raised by NAPA's report and to put USMMA on a path to modernization."

NAPA's assessment affirms that USMMA faces "longstanding systemic issues" across almost all areas of its operations, including educational programs; facilities maintenance and capital management; sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response, including during the Sea Year; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and internal and external governance.

The assessment further warns that, "Because of the magnitude and fundamental nature of the challenges USMMA faces, the greatest risk to USMMA's future is doing nothing to significantly address its challenges and the causes of those challenges."

NAPA's report also makes clear that these challenges have worsened over many years and that under-resourcing – particularly unmet personnel needs – makes many of these challenges more difficult to resolve.

The Way Forward

Since the start of the new administration, USDOT and MARAD leaders have been focused on the most urgent issues facing the USMMA. USDOT and MARAD will establish a task force, as recommended by the NAPA report, to develop recommendations that help chart the Academy's future.

USDOT and MARAD also have numerous efforts underway to address challenges identified in the NAPA report. For example, USDOT and MARAD have announced a temporary pause in Sea Year training and are developing new requirements for commercial vessels that carry cadets to protect the safety, security, and well-being of cadets.

In alignment with the reports' recommendation that USMMA should engage a facility executive to direct and coordinate

maintenance and capital efforts, USDOT has detailed a senior federal official to direct ongoing efforts to address the Academy's maintenance backlog and lead capital efforts.

In addition, leadership is working to finalize and implement a campus-wide maintenance contract.

Consistent with the NAPA recommendation that USMMA accelerate investments in information technology, the USDOT Office of Chief Information Officer will work to identify options to upgrade information technology systems.

USDOT and MARAD remain committed to ensuring training and resources are available to graduate licensed merchant marine officers who can meet the national security, economic, and transportation needs of the nation. The recommendations provided by NAPA will assist the administration in supporting a campus where midshipmen learn to become exemplary leaders in a safe, secure, and modern environment.

For more information, the assessment and implementation plan are available for [download](#).

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy was founded in 1956 with a mission to educate and graduate leaders to serve the national security, marine transportation, and economic needs of the United States as licensed merchant marine officers and commissioned officers in the Armed Forces. USMMA provides students with a degree and credentials that allow them to embark on a career in public service.

The NAPA assessment was directed by the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act to provide an analysis of the operations of the USMMA and offer modernization recommendations for implementation consideration.

Think Tank: USAF MQ-9 Reaper Drones Could Assist Arctic, Maritime and Littoral Operations



The Marine Corps' first MQ-9A at an undisclosed location in the Central Command area of responsibility. The MQ-9A completed 10,000 flight hours in support of Marine Corps Forces, Central Command operations on March 31, 2021. *U.S. MARINE CORPS*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Air Force wants to retire its MQ-9 Reapers by 2035 but an aerospace think tank says the drone

fleet should be retained and modernized for new missions already challenging the sea services, such as maintaining domain awareness in the Arctic.

Facing severe future budget constraints while trying to fund modernization programs like the B-21 long range strike bomber, Air Force planners are considering retiring legacy aircraft they believe cannot survive in a high-end fight, like General Atomics Aeronautical Systems' intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and targeting drone.

While armed with Hellfire missiles, as well as ISR sensors and cameras, the RQ-9 has no defensive measures, except a counter-jamming pod, to keep it safe in contested airspace.

Rather than send its entire 280-Reaper fleet to the boneyard by 2035, the Air Force should upgrade it for a list of new missions such as air and missile defense, and communications relays, the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies recommends in a paper, "Reimagining the MQ-9 Reaper," by retired Air Force Major Gen. Lawrence Stutzriem.

"Reaper is more relevant today than most of the other aircraft that are in development or on the ramp," Stutzriem, the institute's director of research, told a livestreamed audience at the paper's Nov. 19 virtual rollout. "And there's a broad range of existing and new requirements that it could be used to fill in the future."

The Navy and Coast Guard are focusing on the Arctic region as a contested area fraught with extreme weather conditions, immense distances and limited infrastructure – there is no port for deep water vessels within 1,000 miles of Alaska's Arctic coast. Coast Guard officials have said communications are sketchy or nonexistent in the latitudes above 72 degrees north, and the Navy has no ice-hardened ships. The Coast Guard has just one heavy ice breaker, and new ones authorized by Congress won't be ready for several years.

Meanwhile, Russia has built or reopened several military bases on islands along its Arctic coastline. Both Russia and China have built new fleets of ice breakers, some of them nuclear powered. Russia's new Ivan Papanin-class multirole, icebreaking patrol vessels can be equipped with cruise missiles.

Recent technological enhancements to the MQ-9 "make it an attractive option for improving Arctic domain awareness," Stutzriem's paper says. General Atomics has tested an extended-wing variant of the Reaper that increases the drone's endurance from 27 to over 40 hours. That would be a significant step for conducting ISR in the vast Arctic region. The MQ-9B SkyGuardian variant features an electro-expulsive de-icing system and an anti-ice heated engine inlet, important qualities for Arctic operations.

The MQ-9 can contribute to emerging high end missions as the U.S. military shifts to a mobile, widely dispersed force in the Indo-Pacific region to counter and deter adversaries, said Bryan Clark of the Hudson Institute, one of three other think tank analysts at the roll out who supported the continuing need for the MQ-9. To impose deterrence by detection, "I think the MQ-9 could contribute there quite a bit," since it has targeting as well as ISR capabilities, Clark said. The Marine Corps has acquired three Reapers after three years of testing and planning with leased aircraft to see how they will fit into the commandant's force design of small units, widely dispersed and armed with long-range fires to control access to sea lanes.

With a targeting mechanism for counter maritime operations, "they've got the whole kill chain with missiles ashore, with the naval strike missile, that will allow them to close that kill chain and actually achieve some of that deterrent effect that detection might provide," Clark said.

Navy Awards Austal Service Contract for Westpac LCSs



Royal Malaysian Navy Sailors play music as the U.S. Navy Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Tulsa (LCS 16) arrives at Lumut, Malaysia, following Maritime Training Activity (MTA) Malaysia 2021. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Devin M. Langer*

Mobile, Ala. – Austal USA has received a contract from the U.S. Navy to provide services and support for littoral combat ships (LCS) deployed to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, the company said in a Nov. 24 release.

This is the third major U.S. Navy service contract for Austal USA following the company's significant investment in its service business and service centers in Mobile, Alabama, San

Diego and Singapore over the last four years.

The \$72.5 million single award, indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract provides for emergent repair and continuous maintenance for littoral combat ships deployed to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean and the countries and ports therein. If all options are exercised, the contract will be for five years and bring the total value to \$215.8 million.

This award, which supports Navy requirements within the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, complements recent awards for littoral combat ship repair and maintenance on the east and west coasts, the Sustainment Execution-East and Sustainment Execution-West contracts. In addition to the three major contract awards, Austal USA recently announced the approval of a lease for a waterfront repair and maintenance facility in San Diego. This provides Austal the capability to support both variants of the littoral combat ship globally.

“We’ve made it clear to our customer that we are committed to the continued service and support of the LCS throughout its lifecycle,” Austal USA President Rusty Murdaugh said. “We’ve demonstrated this commitment through our continued investment in our people, processes, and facilities – and our customer has responded with confidence.”

Currently, the U.S. Navy has multiple Independence-variant LCS deployed to the Western Pacific. This contract positions Austal USA to be the prime contractor for all continuous and emergent maintenance on the LCS as they transit and operate in the region.

In 2017, Austal USA established a service center in Singapore adjacent to the Changi Naval Base to support deployed LCS and Austal-built Expeditionary Fast Transports. Over the last four years, Austal USA’s service and support business has grown in

size and scope with continued investment from the company.

In 2018, the company expanded its presence in San Diego adding more engineering and technical expertise to support the continued delivery of the LCS homeported in San Diego.

In September 2020, Austal USA purchased additional waterfront, facilities, and equipment along the Gulf Coast in Mobile, Alabama. The new Austal USA West Campus Ship Repair facility includes 15 acres of waterfront property; a pierfront capable of mooring vessels up to 1,000 feet; a 20,000-ton Panamax-class floating dry dock; 300,000 square feet of outside fabrication space; and 100,000 square feet of covered repair facilities.

DoD Concludes 2021 Global Posture Review



Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III is piped ashore after visiting USS Sentry (MCM 3) in Bahrain, Nov. 21. Secretary Austin was traveling in the Gulf region to deliver remarks at the annual International Institute for Strategic Studies Manama Dialogue and met with senior government officials to affirm the strength of defense partnership and discuss joint priorities in the Middle East. *DOD / Chad J. McNeeley*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Following several months of analysis and close coordination across the U.S. government, the Department of Defense released the results of the Global Posture Review (GPR) Nov. 29.

The conclusion of the review comes at a key inflection point following the end of operations in Afghanistan and ongoing development of the National Defense Strategy. Nested within the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, the GPR assessed DoD's posture across major regions outside the United States and developed near-term posture adjustments, posture planning guidance and analysis on long-term strategic issues.

Through these assessments, the GPR will help strengthen posture decision-making processes, improve DoD's global response capability, and inform the draft of the next National Defense Strategy.

In the Indo-Pacific, the review directs additional cooperation with allies and partners to advance initiatives that contribute to regional stability and deter potential Chinese military aggression and threats from North Korea. These initiatives include seeking greater regional access for military partnership activities; enhancing infrastructure in Australia and the Pacific Islands; and planning rotational aircraft deployments in Australia, as announced in September. The GPR also informed Secretary Lloyd Austin's approval of the permanent stationing of a previously rotational attack helicopter squadron and artillery division headquarters in the Republic of Korea, announced earlier this year.

In Europe, the GPR strengthens the U.S. combat-credible deterrent against Russian aggression and enables NATO forces to operate more effectively. Based on an initial GPR assessments and a recommendation from Austin, in February 2021 President Biden rescinded the 25,000 active-duty force cap in Germany established by the previous administration.

Additionally, Austin announced in April DoD would permanently station an Army Multi-Domain Task Force and a Theater Fires Command, a total of 500 Army personnel, in Germany.

In the Middle East, the GPR assessed the department's approach toward Iran and the evolving counterterrorism requirements following the end of DoD operations in Afghanistan. In Iraq and Syria, DoD posture will continue to support the defeat ISIS campaign and building the capacity of partner forces. Looking ahead, the review directs DoD to conduct additional analysis on enduring posture requirements in the Middle East.

In Africa, analysis from the review is supporting several ongoing interagency reviews to ensure DoD has an appropriately scoped posture to monitor threats from regional violent extremist organizations, support our diplomatic activities and enable our allies and partners.

Finally, in Central and South America and the Caribbean, the GPR reviewed the role of DoD posture in support of national security objectives, including humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and counter-narcotics missions. DoD posture will continue to support U.S. government efforts on the range of transnational challenges and partnership activities in the region.

The Department conducted the GPR with participation from Office of the Secretary of Defense components, the military departments, the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, the National Security Council staff, the U.S. State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, along with close consultation with dozens of allies and partners worldwide.

USS The Sullivans Completes Historic Deployment



The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returns from a seven-month world deployment with the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group, Nov. 24. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Austin G. Collins*

MAYPORT, Fla. – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returned to Naval Station Mayport, Nov. 24, marking the end of a seven-month world tour deployment to the U.S. 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th Fleet areas of operations as part of the U.K. Carrier Strike Group 2021 (CSG 21) and Operation Fortis, the U.S. 2nd Fleet said Nov. 24.

CSG 21 was led by aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08) on her first deployment and was comprised of multi-national forces, including The Sullivans, U.S. Marine Corps Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211 and The Netherlands frigate HNLMS

Evertsen (F805).

U.S. Navy Cmdr. James Diefenderfer Jr., commanding officer of The Sullivans, regards the integrated deployment as a step forward for the long-standing maritime alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom.

“The Sullivans was fortunate to complete a seven-month deployment with a United Kingdom carrier, marking the culmination of a decade-long bilateral carrier coordination effort,” Diefenderfer said. “The Sullivans’ crew proved again and again they have the grit and professionalism it takes to represent the U.S. Navy and the memory of the Sullivan brothers while deployed.”

The crew navigated over 50,000 nautical miles through four U.S. fleets, transiting the Strait of Gibraltar, Suez Canal, Bab-el Mandeb, Strait of Malacca and across the equator. The Sullivans also conducted 29 underway replenishments and 18 sea and anchor details during port visits to Portsmouth, England; Gaeta, Italy; Limassol, Cyprus; Guam; Yokosuka, Japan; Souda Bay, Greece; Toulon, France; and Rota, Spain.

The Sullivans, the only U.S. surface ship in CSG 21, supported U.S. 2nd, 5th, 6th and 7th Fleet commanders across 20 warfare areas ranging from surface to ballistic missile and air defense.

While operating with CSG 21 in Operation Fortis, The Sullivans was tasked to escort HMS Queen Elizabeth around the world, providing multi-threat defense. Operation Fortis was executed in six phases across four different areas of operations, demonstrating interoperability with more than 15 different allied and partner nations. The Sullivans also provided layered defense and command and control for the entire carrier strike group in support of air defense missions to ensure stability and security across the globe.

“USS The Sullivans has been an integral part of the U.K. CSG for over a year,” said Royal Navy Cmdr. Steven Moorhouse, commander, CSG 21. “It was a pleasure working with The Sullivans, and I thank each and every member of the ship’s company for their loyalty, professionalism and great humour along our journey. The ship’s motto says it all: ‘We stick together.’”

CSG 21 spent nearly half of the seven-month deployment in the U.S 6th Fleet area of operations, participating in four major multinational exercises, including Steadfast Defender and Strike Warrior 2021.

After departing U.S. 6th Fleet, CSG 21 transited to the Indian Ocean where they participated in the Indian Navy Exercise Konkan. The crew trained to aggressively advance surface, anti-submarine and anti-air warfare tactics while strengthening interoperability with their foreign partners.

The strike group then entered U.S. 7th Fleet and began a string of exercises in the Indo-Pacific, demonstrating seamless interoperability with allies and partners. Exercise Noble Union, conducted in the Pacific Ocean, fully integrated CSG 21 and Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 7 and marked the beginning of a three-month tactical training with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). The strike group also trained with Republic of Korea’s Surface Forces on communication, search and rescue, replenishment capabilities, and cross-deck aviation evolutions.

CSG 21 met the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group (CSG 5), the Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group (CSG 1) and the JMSDF Carrier Strike Group to conduct quad carrier operations. Squadrons from different air wings operated in concert with the 17-ship force, representing six participating nations and demonstrating a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

After concluding operations in U.S. 7th Fleet, The Sullivans and CSG 21 re-entered the Indian Ocean to participate in the Maritime Partnership Exercise in the Bay of Bengal with Australia, India, Japan and CSG 1.

The Sullivans detached from CSG 21 in the Indian Ocean and sailed independently through U.S. 5th Fleet, after a farewell visit from Cdre. Moorhouse and U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Simon Doran, U.S. Senior National Representative to the United Kingdom's CSG.

The Sullivans participated in one final exercise with the Tunisian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea, the first time conducting high-level integrated operations together.

"The crew worked extremely hard over the last year and a half preparing for and executing a deployment as dynamic as this one," Diefenderfer said. "I am grateful for the love and sacrifice that the Sailors and their families displayed through a global pandemic leading into a deployment. The crew came together to accomplish every operational tasking as a team."

Austal Contracts with SSAB for Steel for Navy T-ATS Construction



An artist's conception of a Towing, Salvage and Rescue ship.
AUSTAL USA

Mobile, Ala. – Following Austal USA's award from the U.S. Navy to build steel-hulled Towing, Salvage and Rescue ships (T-ATS), Austal USA has contracted with local Alabama steel provider SSAB to provide steel for the new Navy ships, Austal said Nov. 29. The supplier partnership directly supports hundreds of jobs in the greater Mobile area from both Austal and SSAB.

Austal will source various strength and sized steel plating from SSAB capable of being cut, shaped, welded and fitted, resulting in the construction of valuable support ships and potential combat ships for our U.S. military.

"SSAB not only provides us with quality steel, but also great flexibility due to its location adjacent to us here in Mobile, Alabama," Austal USA President Rusty Murdaugh said. "The ability to work quickly and in-person with them on current and future steel requirements by the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard is an asset to Austal that will support our business and economic growth in our community."

“Austal USA is a respected and valued partner to SSAB Americas,” SSAB Americas Senior Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer Jeff Moskaluk said. “Our participation in such an important and vital project, that will strengthen both the economic and national security of our country, makes this partnership even more meaningful. We are proud to work closely with Austal USA and demonstrate the service, quality and value that is delivered from an interconnected and local supply chain here in Alabama.”

Austal USA broke ground on a new steel manufacturing line in March 2020 to meet the steel-ship demand signal of the U.S. government. The new line will be operational in April with Austal poised to start construction on the recently award U.S. Navy T-ATS program. Austal’s state-of-the-art steel production line will support future steel programs for the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard.

USCGC Hamilton Returns Home after 72-day Patrol, Drug Offload



Two Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton(WMSL 753) small boats repatriates Haitian migrants on the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Sept. 18. The Cutter Hamilton repatriated 199 migrants during its 72-day patrol. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753) crew returned home Nov. 24 to Charleston after completing a 72-day patrol throughout the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The crew offloaded 26,250 pounds (11,907 kilograms) of cocaine and 3,700 pounds of marijuana worth \$504 million Monday at Port Everglades.

Hamilton's crew interdicted five drug-laden vessels while patrolling the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Hamilton's law enforcement team detained all 14 suspects, stopped 199 Haitian migrants, and rescued two people.

Hamilton's crew, along with an aviation detachment from the Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron,

began the deployment in early September anticipating a counter-narcotics patrol in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

With changes in the Haitian political climate, Hamilton's crew transitioned to alien migration interdiction operations in the Windward Pass. Hamilton's crew focused on dangerous maritime migration voyages, then interdicting 199 Haitian migrants. They also managed tactical control of seven U.S. Coast Guard cutters, which reduced Haitian migration by 93% with no loss of life.

"We are thrilled to be back in the low country in time for the holidays. The past 72 days have taken us from deterring illegal migration off Haiti to combatting drug trafficking organizations in the Eastern Pacific," said Capt. Matthew Brown, commanding officer of Hamilton. "Every day brought new challenges but also new opportunities for this crew to come together and solve complex problems. The product of their hard work was the successful deterrence of unsafe migrant ventures from the claw of Haiti and the seizure of nearly 12 tons of illegal drugs destined for North America."

Hamilton is one of three 418-foot national security cutters homeported in Charleston under U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command with two more anticipated by 2025. With its robust command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment, they are the most technologically advanced ship in the U.S. Coast Guard's fleet. These crews regularly work cooperatively under U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area, district commanders and combatant commands.

NSCs are a worldwide deployable asset that supports the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense and national objectives through drug interdiction, migrant interdiction, national defense, SAR, fisheries enforcement and national intelligence collection.

U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area command, based in Portsmouth, Virginia, oversees all U.S. Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. Also, they allocate ships to deploy to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to combat transnational organized crime and illicit maritime activity.

Coast Guard Rescues 27 Migrants Stranded on Monito Island, Puerto Rico



The Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless rescues 27 stranded migrants from Monito Island, Puerto Rico Nov. 27, 2021. The rescued

migrants, 25 Haitian and two others of undetermined nationality, reportedly were traveling with 10 other Haitian migrants, who were also rescued by the cutter Dauntless from a disabled migrant vessel near Monito Island Nov. 24, 2021. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless rescued 27 migrants Nov. 27 after the migrants abandoned a disabled vessel Wednesday and ended up stranded on Monito Island, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The rescued migrants, 25 Haitian and two others of undetermined nationality, reportedly were traveling with 10 other Haitian migrants who were rescued by the Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless Wednesday from a disabled makeshift vessel near Monito Island.

Coast Guard rescue crews ended the search for possible migrants in the water Friday afternoon, after confirming the migrants who abandoned the disabled vessel had safely reached Monito Island.

“This case was a very close call, and I commend the efforts of our partner agencies and all Coast Guard units and personnel who helped save 37 lives from a disabled migrant vessel and from the harsh and dangerous environment of Monito Island, preventing what could have been a major loss of life,” said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response. “To anyone considering taking part in one of these voyages we urge them to not take to the sea, you are putting your life and the life of others at risk. If caught, you are also risking prosecution for migrating illegally to the United States. Migrants, who are interdicted at sea and not prosecuted, will be returned to the country they departed from.”

During search efforts Thursday, the crew of a Coast Guard MH-60T Jayhawk helicopter from Air Station Borinquen observed there were more than 20 people stranded on Monito Island.

The crew of the cutter Dauntless combined efforts with a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry aircraft, U.S. Border Patrol agents and a Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit Friday to deliver food, water and a hand-held radio to the stranded migrants. Shortly thereafter, the crew of the cutter Dauntless established successful radio communications with the migrants on Monito Island who confirmed, along with statements received from survivors of the disabled migrant vessel, that all the passengers from the illegal voyage were accounted for and safe.

The following morning, the Dauntless crew used the cutter's Over the Horizon boats to rescue the stranded migrants from Monito Island, while a Coast Guard helicopter flew rescue support on scene. During the rescue, the Coast Guard boat crews recovered several migrants from the water who jumped from the bottom of the cliff, including a pregnant woman.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention. Throughout rescue efforts, Coast Guard crewmembers were equipped with personal protective equipment to minimize potential exposure to any possible case of COVID-19.

The 27 rescued migrants were transported to Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, where they were received by awaiting Border Patrol Agents and Emergency Medical Service personnel.

The Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Pensacola, Florida.

Coast Guard Crews Interdict 4 Smugglers, Seize \$12M in Cocaine



Station San Juan boat crews offloaded approximately 400 kilograms in seized cocaine and transferred custody of four suspected smugglers to federal agents Nov. 24, following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel near Dorado, Puerto Rico. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Ricardo Castrodad*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – A Station San Juan boat crew offloaded approximately 400 kilograms in seized cocaine and transferred custody of four suspected smugglers to federal agents Nov. 24, following the interdiction of a go-fast vessel near Dorado, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The apprehended smugglers are Dominican Republic nationals who

are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico on drug smuggling criminal charges of Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance Aboard a Vessel Subject to the Jurisdiction of the United States. The charges carry a minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life. The Transnational Organized Crime Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jordan Martin from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico is leading the prosecution for this case. The seized cocaine has an estimated wholesale value of approximately \$12 million.

During a routine patrol of Puerto Rico's northern coast, the aircrew of a Customs and Border Protection multirole enforcement aircraft detected a suspicious go-fast vessel, approximately 24 nautical miles north of Dorado, Puerto Rico.

Coast Guard watchstanders at Sector San Juan directed the launch of a Station San Juan 33-foot Special Purpose Craft—Law Enforcement to interdict the suspect vessel. Once on scene and while in pursuit, the Coast Guard crew compelled the go-fast vessel to stop. Following the interdiction, the Coast Guard crew seized 16 bales of cocaine and apprehended the four suspected smugglers.

"This successful interdiction is a result of the professionalism, close coordination and swift response displayed by the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection surface, air, and watchstander crews involved in this case," said Cmdr. Beau Powers, Sector San Juan chief of response. "These professionals respond and work daily to maximize our interagency capabilities and resources to stop drug smuggling vessels at sea. Together, along with the rest of our local and federal law enforcement partners, we seek to safeguard the nation's maritime border and protect the people of Puerto Rico from this threat."