

Commandant: Many Unvaccinated Marines Swayed by Disinformation



Marines and Sailors continue to receive the COVID-19 vaccine on Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, March 25, 2021. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Rachelanne Woodward*

WASHINGTON – Because the U.S. Marine Corps is the nation's ready force, the commandant says he is concerned that "disinformation" has made thousands of Marines reluctant to get a mandatory vaccination against coronavirus.

With a Nov. 28 deadline looming for all active duty Marines to be fully vaccinated, an estimated 13,000 still have not gotten the first shot to counter COVID-19.

"I'm concerned about it because every Marine has to be ready to deploy," Gen. David Berger said Nov. 4 at the in-person 2021 Aspen Security Forum. "We are the ready force. We have to

be ready to go.”

Berger said he could not say exactly why so many Marines haven’t rolled up their sleeves yet. Some have submitted requests for a religious or medical waiver.

“Those are being answered quickly. Within a week, they’ll get an answer back.” However, “Very few have been granted,” he said.

“The ones who flat out refuse? You’d have to ask each individual Marine their reasons why. I think we’re challenged by disinformation,” which Berger said raises questions “about how did this vaccine get approved? Is it safe? Is it ethical?

“All that swirls around on the internet and they read all that. They see all that,” Berger said. But Marines are trained and “taught that your unit is more important than you are.”

Berger is also concerned that 56% of Marines in the Ready Reserve have not been vaccinated. They have until Dec. 28 to do so. Berger said it is difficult to track vaccination rates among reservists because they are spread across the country in local units.

“We are one Marine Corps, active duty and Reserve, so it is important for them to get vaccinated as well,” he said.

Marine Corps Headquarters issued guidance Oct. 23 stating Marines who are not fully vaccinated by the deadline, without an approved administrative, medical or religious exemption, will be subject, pending appeal, to administrative separation from the Corps.

“A Marine who has not been fully vaccinated is not considered worldwide deployable and shall be assigned or reassigned, locally, to billets which account for health risks to the unvaccinated Marine and those working in proximity to the Marine,” according to the guidance. While their cases are

under appeal, Marines who refuse vaccination, could also be barred from re-enlistment, promotion or holding a command.

“The approach we took is: Take all the ambiguity out of it. It’s black and white from the secretary of defense. We need to protect ourselves,” Berger said, explaining the hardline approach. “We wrote that instruction to make it clear all the way down. There is no gray area. You must get vaccinated.”

He noted that Marine recruits already get 12 other vaccinations just to get through boot camp. Berger said he didn’t think the Marines will be losing thousands of Marines after Nov. 28 because of the mandatory vaccination order.

The number of vaccine refusals is changing every day, Berger said.

“Partly because we have a younger force and they wait to see how leaders do. And when the leaders do, they get in line quickly. I think it’s really hard to predict, because it’s not a straight line between now and the end of November.”

USS Connecticut Leadership Relieved by Fleet Commander



The Seawolf-class fast-attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) departs Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton for deployment, May 27. *U.S. NAVY / Lt. Mack Jamieson*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The leadership of the Seawolf-class attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) has been relieved and replaced by an interim leadership team, the Navy said Nov. 4.

The USS Connecticut grounded an uncharted seamount on the afternoon of Oct. 2 while submerged in the South China Sea, while operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region. There were no life-threatening injuries. The submarine made a transit to the naval base in Apra Harbor, Guam, for an assessment of the damage.

“Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, relieved Cmdr. Cameron Aljilani as commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Cashin as executive officer, and Master Chief Sonar Technician Cory Rodgers as chief of the boat,” the release said.

Loss of confidence in the leadership team was the reason the

Navy cited in the release.

“Thomas determined sound judgement, prudent decision-making and adherence to required procedures in navigation planning, watch team execution and risk management could have prevented the incident,” the Navy said.

Capt. John Witte will assume duties as interim commanding officer, Cmdr. Joe Sammur will assume duties as interim executive officer and Command Master Chief Paul Walters will assume duties as interim chief of the boat, the Navy said.

The Navy said the Connecticut is undergoing damage assessment in Guam and will be repaired at Bremerton, Washington.

In January 2005, the Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS San Francisco (SSN 711) struck a sea mount while submerged southeast of Guam. The submarine’s bow sonar dome was crushed, but the pressure hull was not compromised. Dozens of crewmen were injured, and one later died of injuries. The submarine was repaired and returned to fleet service in 2009 with the bow from the ex-USS Honolulu installed.

The Connecticut, commissioned in 2005, is the second of the three-boat Seawolf class.

**AeroVironment Awarded \$20.3M
SOCOM Contract for
Switchblade Missiles**



A Switchblade 600 tactical missile system. *AEROVIRONMENT*
ARLINGTON, Va., Nov. 4, 2021 – AeroVironment Inc. was awarded a firm-fixed-price contract Sept. 28 by the U.S. Special Operations Command for \$20.3 million for the procurement of Switchblade 600 tactical missile systems. Delivery is scheduled to be completed by January 2023.

“Switchblade 600 is an all-in-one, man-portable tactical missile that provides warfighters with the capability to fly, track and engage non-line-of-sight targets and light-armored vehicles with precision lethal effects,” said Brett Hush, vice president and product line general manager for tactical missile systems. “The tube-launched Switchblade 600 can be easily transported for deployment from fixed and mobile platforms in any environment, providing operators with superior force overmatch and minimizing exposure to direct and indirect enemy fires.”

Switchblade 600 is equipped with a high-performance electro-optical, gimballed sensor suite, precision flight control and more than 40 minutes of flight time to deliver unprecedented

tactical reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition. Its anti-armor warhead enables engagement and prosecution of hardened static and moving light armored vehicles from multiple angles without external ISR or fires assets. Switchblade 600's patented wave-off and recommit capability allows operators to abort the mission at any time and then re-engage either the same or other targets multiple times based on operator command, resulting in minimal to no collateral damage.

Ingalls Shipbuilding Successfully Completes Builder's Trials for LPD Fort Lauderdale



Huntington Ingalls Industries has announced that its Ingalls Shipbuilding division recently completed the first round of sea trials for San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28). *HUNTINGTON INGALLS INDUSTRIES* PASCAGOULA, Miss. – Huntington Ingalls Industries' Ingalls Shipbuilding division recently completed the first round of sea trials for San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), the company said Nov. 2.

"Shipbuilding is about teamwork. Our shipbuilders work as a team with our Navy partners to make these ships ready to join the fleet," said Steve Sloan, Ingalls' LPD program manager. "The success we achieved this week will propel us into a strong finish as we prepare for acceptance trials later this year. We are proud of the work our shipbuilders have accomplished so far and look forward to finishing strong."

LPD 28 is named Fort Lauderdale to honor the Florida city's historic ties to the U.S. Navy, which date back to the 1830s and include an important naval training center during World War II.

Ingalls has delivered 11 San Antonio-class ships to the Navy and has three more under construction including Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28), Richard M. McCool Jr. (LPD 29) and Harrisburg (LPD 30). Ingalls was awarded a \$1.5 billion contract for the construction of LPD 31 in 2020.

The San Antonio-class is the latest addition to the Navy's 21st-century amphibious assault force. The 684-foot-long, 105-foot-wide ships are used to embark and land Marines, their equipment and supplies ashore via air cushion or conventional landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles, augmented by helicopters or vertical takeoff and landing aircraft such as the MV-22 Osprey. The ships support a Marine Air Ground Task Force across the spectrum of operations, conducting amphibious and expeditionary missions of sea control and power projection to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions throughout the first half of the 21st century.

SOCOM Commander: Navy SEALs to Focus on Strategic Reconnaissance, Working with Partners



A U.S. Navy SEAL throws an M18 colored smoke grenade during a sweep of a training compound during Sentry Rescue IV, a joint command initiative to develop tactics, techniques and procedures for personnel recovery scenarios, Arkansas, Aug. 26, 2021. *U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD / Tech. Sgt. Brigitte Waltermire*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of the nation's special operations forces said the Navy's SEALs will have an important role in the future in enabling commanders to understand the enemy's capabilities and intentions.

The SEALs, along with the special operations forces of the other U.S. military services, have had a super-sized role in the Southwest Asian wars since 9-11, serving at the forefront of U.S. and coalition forces in the low-intensity conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other locations.

With U.S. focus on deterring a future conflict with China and shifting the focus to high-end operations, the 70-000-strong special operations forces (SOF) also are shifting focus.

Speaking to the Military Reporters and Editors at a symposium

in Arlington, Army Gen. Richard D. Clarke, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, said the S0F are “more integrated than ever before,” including with inter-agency partners.

Clarke said he sees Navy SEALs as ‘working with partners, able to train, and also to conduct another key mission or activity, which is strategic reconnaissance. They can get in places that no one else can get they can be in the littorals – in subsea/subsurface domain – and are critical.”

Clarke said S0F are more than just a direct-action raid force, but the force will still maintain that capability, one which “we have honed to an exquisite degree.”

The commander said the S0F benefits from working closely with the general-purpose forces and that his command will look for every opportunity to leverage high-end training for its forces.

Submarine USS Connecticut Grounded on Uncharted Seamount, 7th Fleet Says



The Seawolf-class fast-attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) departs Puget Sound Naval Shipyard for sea trials following a maintenance availability in this 2016 photograph. *U.S. NAVY / Thiep Van Nguyen II*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The nuclear-powered attack submarine USS Connecticut (SSN 22) “grounded an uncharted seamount,” 7th Fleet Public Affairs said in a Nov. 1 statement.

The Connecticut’s incident occurred on the afternoon of Oct. 2 while submerged in the South China Sea, while operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region. There were no life-threatening injuries. The submarine made a transit to the naval base in Apra Harbor, Guam, for an assessment of the damage.

“The submarine remains in a safe and stable condition,” the Navy said at the time. “USS Connecticut’s nuclear propulsion plant and spaces were not affected and remain fully operational.”

“The command investigation for USS Connecticut (SSN 22) has

been submitted to Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet for review and endorsement,” the Navy said in the Nov. 1 statement. “Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet will determine whether follow-on actions – including accountability – are appropriate.”

In January 2005, the Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS San Francisco (SSN 711) struck a sea mount while submerged southeast of Guam. The submarine’s bow sonar dome was crushed, but the pressure hull was not compromised. Dozens of crewmen were injured, and one later died of injuries. The submarine was repaired and returned to fleet service in 2009 with the bow from the ex-USS Honolulu installed.

The Connecticut, commissioned in 2005, is the second boat of the three-boat Seawolf class.

Editor’s note: The original version of this article incorrectly described the Connecticut as having a 100-foot extension section for enhanced payloads. That submarine is the USS Jimmy Carter.

**Adm. Christopher Grady
Nominated for Vice Chairman
of JCS**



Adm. Christopher W. Grady, appointed as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Command. *U.S. NAVY*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III announced Nov. 2 the president has nominated Navy Adm. Christopher W. Grady for reappointment to the rank of admiral, and assignment as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

Washington, D.C.

If confirmed, Grady, a surface warfare officer currently serving as commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia, would be the first Navy officer to serve as vice chief since Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr. retired in 2015.

As commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Grady is responsible for training, certifying and providing "combat-ready Navy forces to combatant commanders that are capable of conducting prompt, sustained naval, joint and combined operations in support of U.S. national interests," according to the command's mission statement. The command also supports U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Element North American Aerospace Defense Command, and U.S. Strategic Command.

Below are excerpts from Grady's official biography:

Adm. Christopher W. Grady is a native of Newport, Rhode Island. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and was commissioned an ensign through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps program. Grady is a distinguished graduate of Georgetown University where he earned a Master of Arts in National Security Studies while concurrently participating as a fellow in Foreign Service at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. He is also a distinguished graduate of the National War College earning a Master of Science in National Security Affairs.

He assumed command of U.S. Fleet Forces Command/U.S. Naval Forces Northern Command on May 4, 2018, and assumed duties of commander, U.S. Naval Forces Strategic Command and U.S. Strategic Command Joint Force Maritime Component Commander on Feb. 1, 2019.

In his most recent assignment, he was the commander, U.S. 6th Fleet and the commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, while simultaneously serving as the deputy commander,

U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa.

At sea, Grady's initial tour was aboard USS Moosbrugger (DD 980) as combat information center officer and antisubmarine warfare officer. As a department head, he served as weapons control officer and combat systems officer in USS Princeton (CG 59). He was commanding officer of Mine Countermeasures Rotational Crew Echo in USS Chief (MCM 14) and deployed to the Arabian Gulf in command of USS Ardent (MCM 12). Grady then commanded USS Cole (DDG 67), deploying as part of NATO's Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean. As commander, Destroyer Squadron 22, he deployed to the Arabian Gulf as sea combat commander for the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Ashore, Grady first served on the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then as naval aide to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). He also served on the staff of the CNO as the assistant branch head, Europe and Eurasia Politico-Military Affairs Branch (OPNAV N524). He then served as executive assistant to the Navy's Chief of Legislative Affairs. Next, he served as the deputy executive secretary of the National Security Council in the White House. He then went on to serve as the executive assistant to the CNO.

Additional flag assignments include director of the Maritime Operations Center (N2/3/5/7), Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet; Commander, Carrier Strike Group One/Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group, where he deployed for nearly 10 months to the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf conducting combat operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve; and Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic.

AeroVironment Demonstrates Switchblade Loitering Missile Integration for Air Launched Effects from JUMP 20 UAS



AeroVironment's Switchblade 300 loitering munition, which can now be integrated with the larger JUMP 20 unmanned aircraft.

AEROVIRONMENT

ARLINGTON, Va., Nov. 3, 2021 – AeroVironment has successfully demonstration of integrating Switchblade 300 loitering missiles and JUMP 20 medium unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for increased mission autonomy and efficacy, the company said Nov. 3.

This Air Launched Effects (ALE) proof-of-concept demonstration took place in August 2021 with the goal of launching an inert Switchblade 300 from the JUMP 20 and successfully recovering

both air vehicles.

The systems were integrated by fixing the inert Switchblade 300 tube-launch system to the existing JUMP 20 platform's vertical lift boom with a custom-made bolt-on mount and firing system. Switchblade 300 was remotely fired using the JUMP 20 ground control solution with in-flight control taken by a separate Switchblade ground element. Both vehicles were successfully recovered, proving the demonstration event to be the first Switchblade 300 integration and air launch from a JUMP 20 Group 3 vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) platform.

"This end-to-end integrated solution enables customers with greater time on station than if they were to deploy a Switchblade on its own, resulting in the ability to conduct persistent real-time surveillance to increase the chance of identifying the correct target and minimizing collateral damage," said Brett Hush, AeroVironment vice president and product line general manager of tactical missile systems.

"It combines the combat-proven Switchblade loitering missile's lethality, reach and precision strike capabilities with low collateral effects and the VTOL, fixed-wing JUMP 20's advanced multi-sensor ISR services and 14-hour endurance."

**Coast Guard Offloads \$3.5
million in Seized Cocaine,
Transfers 3 Suspected**

Smugglers



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez offloaded \$3.5 million in seized cocaine and transferred custody of three suspected smugglers in San Juan, Puerto Rico Oct. 29. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez offloaded \$3.5 million in cocaine Friday and transferred custody of three smugglers to federal agents in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said Nov. 1.

The USS Sioux City, operating with a Coast Guard LEDET 102 onboard, apprehended three men and seized 115 kilograms of cocaine after interdicting of a drug smuggling go-fast vessel Oct. 26 in the Caribbean Sea, approximately 100 nautical miles south of Isla Saona, Dominican Republic.

The apprehended smugglers, two Dominican Republic nationals and one Colombian, are facing federal prosecution in Puerto Rico on criminal charges of Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance Aboard a Vessel Subject to the Jurisdiction of the United States and Possession of a Firearm During and in Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime. The charges carry a minimum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life. 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 interdiction is the result of multi-agency efforts in support of U.S. Southern Command's enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area programs, and the Caribbean Corridor Strike Force. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

Following the interdiction, the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez embarked the three-suspected smugglers and seized contraband for transport to San Juan.

Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while the USS Sioux City is a littoral combat ship homeported at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Florida.

Cutter Bertholf Returns to Homeport following North Pacific Patrol



A Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) crewmember embraces his daughter after Bertholf returned home following a nearly three-month patrol, Nov. 1, 2021. The crew patrolled more than 27,000 miles alongside partner agencies to support international cooperation for Operation North Pacific Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard's annual Northern Pacific illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing patrol. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Chief Petty Officer Matt Masaschi*

ALAMEDA, Calif. – The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) returned to homeport in Alameda Monday, following a 105-day deployment throughout the North Pacific, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said Nov. 1.

The crew patrolled more than 27,000 miles for approximately three months alongside partner agencies to support

international cooperation for Operation North Pacific Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard's annual Northern Pacific illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing patrol.

An integrated international law enforcement boarding team inspected 28 fishing vessels in the North Pacific Ocean and identified 42 violations of conservation and management measures under the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and North Pacific Fisheries Commission. The team discovered a total of 702 shark fins and 20 salmon during the inspections.

The detection of violations within both regional fisheries management organizations trigger processes to hold countries accountable for ensuring their fishing fleets comply with conservation and management measures designed to conserve important fish stocks. Coast Guard boardings and inspections are critically important as the only at-sea enforcement presence across vast ocean areas, helping to ensure the sustainable harvest of fisheries resources.

Operation North Pacific Guard is an annual multi-mission effort between the Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Pacific Rim countries and three regional fisheries management organizations to include the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, the North Pacific Fisheries Commission, and the North Pacific Anadromous Fishing Commission. Operation North Pacific Guard 2021 was jointly planned and executed with support from Canada, Republic of Korea, and Japan. Each nation provides surface and air patrols and shares information that guides patrol assets to detect and intercept the most likely illicit fishing activity.

"The crew of the Bertholf displayed remarkable perseverance throughout the duration of the patrol," said Capt. Timothy Brown, commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf. "Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is a major global

maritime security threat, and I'm incredibly proud of the Bertholf crew for their roles in confronting predatory and irresponsible actions in international fisheries."