

Romania Seeks Former Marine Corps Assault Amphibious Vehicles



CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. (June 30, 2021) U.S. Marines with Co. A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division (1st MARDIV), and Co. B, 3d Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st MARDIV, prepare to evacuate a P7/A1 assault amphibious vehicle (AAV) during a surf qualification at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, June 30, 2021.

[Release from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency](#)

Romania Seeks Former Marine Corps Assault Amphibious Vehicles

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. —The U.S. State Department has approved a possible sale of AAV7 assault amphibious vehicles to the

Government of Romania, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said in a July 2 release.

Romania has requested the sale of 21 AAV-7s, including 16 AAVP-A1 personnel carrier versions, three AAVC-7A1 command vehicles, and two AAVR-7A1 recovery versions. The sale also would include armament, thermal sights, spare parts, manuals, data package, engineering support, and other support. The total cost of the sale would be an estimated \$120.5 million.

The AAV-7 family of vehicles, built by BAE Systems, is being replaced in the U.S. Marine Corps by the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV) family, also built by BAE Systems. The AAV-7 entered Marine Corps service in 1972.

A contract to deliver the vehicles and support to Romania in the event the sale is finalized has not yet been identified.

Romania, a member of NATO that borders the Black Sea, has increasingly joined in military ties and exercises with the United States.

U.S. Department of Transportation Announces First Ships Enrolled in the Tanker Security Program

[Release from the Maritime Administration](#)

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

Creation of the program meets an urgent DOD need and grows the U.S.-flagged fleet

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) announced that nine ships have been enrolled in the Tanker Security Program (TSP). TSP establishes a fleet of active, commercially viable, militarily useful, privately owned product tank vessels of the United States that will meet national defense and other security requirements and maintain a United States presence in international commercial shipping.

The TSP will strengthen the U.S. supply chain and improve the movement of liquid fuel products while creating good-paying jobs. The TSP will also support American-owned, American-flagged, and American-crewed commercial product tankers operating in international commercial shipping. The program will ensure the Department of Defense (DoD) has assured access to critically needed product tankers capable of loading, transporting, and storing on-station bulk petroleum refined products to support national economic security.

"Today we are announcing the first ships to join the Tanker Security Program, which will help strengthen both our supply chains and our national security by delivering fuel to our armed forces around the world while creating hundreds of good jobs for American mariners," **said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.**

"The TSP accomplishes two key maritime sealift objectives: it grows our U.S.-flagged fleet and it significantly expands our ability to deliver vital fuel supplies to support military missions across the globe," **said Maritime Administrator Ann Phillips.** "Implementation of the TSP is a significant milestone for MARAD and the U.S. maritime industry."

The companies selected for enrollment are Overseas Shipholding

Group, Inc. (three tank vessels); Crowley-Stena Marine Solutions, LLC. (three tank vessels); and Seabulk Tankers, Inc. (three tank vessels).

All of the companies have signed operating agreements. Of the enrolled vessels, four are under U.S. flag and are now operating in the program, and five are working with the assistance of the U.S. Coast Guard to expedite reflagging to U.S. registry to begin operating under TSP agreements. Each tank vessel enrolled will receive a maximum \$6 million per year payment, prorated on a monthly basis for qualified service as participants in the program. The vessels will operate in U.S. foreign commerce and be available for use by the United States during times of war or national emergency.

MARAD published a solicitation in the [Federal Register](#) on July 25, 2023, seeking applications for enrollment in TSP from qualified companies. The program is authorized for up to ten tankers and MARAD seeks to fill the remaining operating agreement with a qualified vessel. MARAD published notices in the Federal Register seeking applications for enrollment from qualified participants. To qualify for the program, proposed vessels have to qualify as Medium Range product tankers between 30,000-60,000 deadweight tons with fuel carrying capacity of 230,000 barrels or more, be less than 10 years of age, and available to commit to an emergency preparedness agreement for the duration of the program's authorization. All vessel operators selected for the TSP are required to be enrolled in MARAD's sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response policy program [Every Mariner Builds A Respectful Culture \(EMBARC\)](#).

USS Vermont Arrives at New Homeport in Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam



PEARL HARBOR (July 27, 2023) Traditional Hawaiian dancers and the staff of Submarine Squadron 1 greet the Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS Vermont (SSN 792) as it arrives at its new homeport of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, July 27, 2023.

[Release from Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet](#)

28 July 2023

From Story by Chief Petty Officer B. Biller, Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

PEARL HARBOR – The Virginia-class fast-attack submarine USS

Vermont (SSN 792) and its crew of approximately 130 Sailors arrived at its new homeport at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, July 27, 2023.

Vermont, the first Block IV Virginia-class submarine to enter service, is a new construction submarine that is joining the six Virginia-class submarines already assigned to Commander, Submarine Squadron (CSS) 1. More than half of the U.S. Navy's submarine force is based in the Indo-Pacific region due to the area's strategic importance.

"We are excited to add a seventh Virginia-class submarine to our 'Squadron Wolfpack,' and for Vermont's crew and families to join the Pearl Harbor Ohana," said Capt. Aaron Peterson, commodore of CSS-1. "Vermont will be the newest submarine in the Pacific and certainly enhances our warfighting posture and ability to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region."

Vermont was commissioned administratively April 18, 2020, in Groton, Connecticut, and conducted its post-shakedown availability until the transit to Pearl Harbor. The submarine operated in the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations that same year, where it conducted anti-submarine warfare exercises with a Brazilian Navy submarine and maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft.

Vermont is the third U.S. Navy ship to be named after the Green Mountain State. The first was one of nine 74-gun warships authorized by Congress in 1816. The second, Battleship No. 20, was commissioned in 1907 and first deployed in December of that year as part of the "Great White Fleet."

Vermont is assigned to U.S. 3rd Fleet. An integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet leads naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary to execute the Navy's role across the full spectrum of military operations—from combat operations to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together

with allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security in the Indo-Pacific.

Navy to Christen Guided-Missile Destroyer Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124)

[Release from the U.S. Department of Defense](#)

JULY 28, 2023

The Navy will christen the future USS Harvey C. Barnum Jr. (DDG 124) during a 10:30 a.m. EDT ceremony on Saturday, July 29, at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine.

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy, will deliver the christening ceremony's principal address. Remarks will also be provided by Colonel (ret.) Harvey C. Barnum, Jr., the ship's namesake; the Honorable Janet Mills, Governor of Maine; the Honorable Susan Collins, U.S. Senator, Maine; the Honorable Angus King, U.S. Senator, Maine; Gen. Eric Smith, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps; Vice Adm. William Galinis, Commander Naval Sea Systems Command; and Mr. Charles Krugh, president, General Dynamics Bath Iron Works. The ship's sponsor is Colonel Barnum's wife, Ms. Martha Hill. In a time-honored Navy tradition, Ms. Hill will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

The ship's namesake, Col. Harvey C. Barnum Jr., received the Medal of Honor for heroism displayed during an action outside

Ky Phu, Quang Tin Province, Vietnam. Serving with Company H, 2d Battalion, and 9th Marines, he assumed command after the rifle company commander was mortally wounded by a sudden enemy attack. Rallying his troops, he organized the defeat of the enemy force and the successful evacuation of the dead and wounded.

This is the first U.S. Navy ship to honor Barnum.

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet, providing protection to America around the globe. These highly capable, multi-mission ships conduct various operations, from peacetime presence to national security, providing a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface, and subsurface domains. These elements of seapower enable the Navy to defend American prosperity and prevent future conflict abroad.

Additional information on the ship's namesake can be found at:
<https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/heritage/barnum.html>

Media may direct queries to the Navy Office of Information at (703) 697-5342. More information on guided-missile destroyer programs can be found at:
<https://www.navy.mil/Resources/Fact-Files/Display-FactFiles/Article/2169871/destroyers-ddg/>

Coast Guard celebrates groundbreaking ceremony to

rebuild from Hurricane Maria



[Release from Coast Guard 7th District](#)

Seventh Coast Guard District – 305-415-6680

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – Coast Guard Base San Juan and Coast Guard Sector San Juan held a groundbreaking ceremony, Thursday, for the rebuilding of shore infrastructure impacted by Hurricane Maria.

The work includes resiliency improvements to the water storage supply and emergency power for the entire base. In addition, new construction includes a 40,000 square-foot multi-mission building, a 5,000 square-foot base facilities building, front gate entrance, shoreline armored revetment, and a boat ramp.

“This groundbreaking ceremony represents the Coast Guard’s steadfast resolve to serve U.S. interests throughout the Eastern Caribbean, and to support our Coast Guard men and women who live and work here,” said Rear Adm. Carola List, Director of Operational Logistics. “For more than a century, the Coast Guard has performed lifesaving and homeland security missions in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Once completed, this new critical infrastructure will improve our resilience and capabilities to maintain mission support services enabling operations throughout the region well into the future.”

The Coast Guard awarded the \$132,596,716 contract to Tutor Perini Corporation for the hurricane rebuild project in September 2022. So far, the service has invested approximately \$365 million dollars in Puerto Rico to reconstitute the shore infrastructure at Coast Guard installations. Earlier, the Coast Guard awarded an \$180 million project for Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen in Aguadilla and a \$15 million project for the Marine Inspections Office in Ponce, to rebuild facilities damaged by Hurricane Maria in September of 2017 and an earthquake in 2019. Construction in San Juan is estimated to be completed by 2028.

Base and Sector San Juan are responsible for conducting Coast Guard missions in the Eastern Caribbean within their 1.3 million square nautical mile area of responsibility. In the previous year, Coast Guard operations were able to save and assist 1,600 mariners, interdict 1,500 migrants, and detain 60 smugglers. The shore infrastructure investment in San Juan is vital towards the success of continued Coast Guard operations in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

Make a difference on land, in the air, or at sea with the U.S. Coast Guard. Visit [GoCoastGuard.com](https://www.go CoastGuard.com) to find out how to be a part of the team.

For breaking news, follow us on [Twitter](#). For additional information, find us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

SECNAV Names Future Expeditionary Sea Base Ship USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr. (ESB 8)

[Release from the Secretary of the Navy Public Affairs](#)

27 July 2023

QUANTICO, Va. – Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro announced today that the future expeditionary sea base ship ESB 8 will be named in honor of Medal of Honor recipient and Korean War veteran Hector A. Cafferata Jr.

The future USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr. is the first ship to bear his name. Naming an expeditionary sea base after Cafferata follows a tradition honoring Marines who served with distinction.

SECNAV Del Toro made the announcement during a ceremony at the National Museum of the Marine Corps on Korean War Armistice Day.

“This venue was not chosen by happenstance. For today, on the 70th anniversary of the signing of Korean War Armistice agreement, we are gathered here to reflect on the legacy of our Sailors and Marines who served as part of the United

Nations force that defended the citizens of South Korea from 1950 to 1953 under harsh combat conditions," said Del Toro. "I would also like to thank the members of the Korean War Veterans Association, The Chosen Few Organization, the Korea Defense Veterans Association, and all of our Korean War Veterans who joined us for this event. Your sacrifices in defense of our Nation and the people of South Korea will never be forgotten."

Cafferata was born on Nov. 4, 1929, in New York City. His father was a Peruvian immigrant who ran a paper mill. The family eventually moved to the Montville, New Jersey area, where his mother grew up. After graduating from Boonton High School, Cafferata played semi-pro football while also working at a manufacturing plant for the Sun Dial Corporation. He joined the Marine Corps Reserve on Feb. 15, 1948, and served with a local unit, until he was called to active duty on Sept. 6, 1950. Cafferata was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division. By mid-October, he was on his way to Korea.

In the early hours of Nov. 28, 1950, Cafferata was serving as a rifleman with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, in action against enemy forces. When all other members of his fire team became casualties, he waged a lone battle with grenades and rifle fire as an enemy attack gained momentum. Making a target of himself under devastating fire from automatic weapons, rifles, grenades, and mortars, Cafferata maneuvered up and down the line and delivered effective fire against the enemy force, killing 15, wounding many more, and forcing the others to withdraw so that reinforcements could move up and consolidate the position. As he fought against a renewed onslaught that same morning, a grenade landed in an entrenchment occupied by wounded Marines. Cafferata rushed into the gully under heavy fire, grabbed the grenade in his right hand, and hurled it free of his comrades before it detonated, severely wounding his right hand and arm. Despite

intense pain, he fought on until he was struck by enemy fire and evacuated for medical treatment.

"Private First Class Cafferata, in the face of daunting circumstances, never hesitated to put his fellow Marines' lives ahead of his own, remaining 'always faithful' to them throughout the Battle of Chosin Reservoir," said Del Toro. "And it is my hope that the Cafferata family will serve in this same spirit, and be 'always faithful' to the USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr. and her crew, serving as the bonds that forever link them to the memory of PFC Cafferata throughout this ship's time in service."

"For the next 40 years and hopefully beyond, there will be 60,000 tons of American fighting power sailing the seas under the name Cafferata," said Gen. Eric M. Smith, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. "The Cafferata name joins our legends and is now forever engrained in the blood, sweat, and history of your United States Marine Corps."

Cafferata retired from the service due to his wounds. He returned to New Jersey and spent the next few decades selling hunting and fishing equipment, working for the state's Division of Fish and Game and owning a bar. In 1965, he married Doris Giblock, and they had four children: Lynn, Deborah, Heather and Dale, who is a retired Air Force Major.

Jessica Cafferata, Dale Cafferata's daughter and the namesake's granddaughter, attended the ceremony.

"This ship, being named for Hector A. Cafferata Jr., will inspire all to serve with courage and to reach for the highest ideal of selfless service," said Jessica Cafferata. "It will remind us of the honor and bravery of the Korean War veterans."

"If my great grandpa was standing here today for this historic event, it would be with honor and pride. Thank you to all veterans for your service to our country," said Remy Lim,

Hector Cafferata's great grandson.

Cafferata died in 2016 and was buried at Quantico National Cemetery in Virginia. His Medal of Honor and Purple Heart were entrusted to the school named in his honor – Hector A. Cafferata, Jr. Elementary School – in Cape Coral, Florida. School principal Dr. Jason Kurtz brought the medals to the naming ceremony.

“It is a privilege to be here today and experience first-hand the continuing legacy of Private First Class Hector A. Cafferata Jr.,” said Dr. Kurtz. “The faculty, students, and staff of Hector A. Cafferata Jr. Elementary School strive daily to emulate his character and values. We remember all that he did for others.”

The ESB ship class is highly flexible that may be used across a broad range of military operations supporting multiple operational phases, similar to the Expeditionary Transfer Dock (ESD) class. Acting as a mobile sea base, they are part of the critical access infrastructure that supports the deployment of forces and supplies to provide prepositioned equipment and sustainment with flexible distribution.

Other ESBs named for Medal of Honor recipients include Lance Cpl. Miguel Keith, Private First Class Robert E. Simanek, Sergeant Major John L. Canley, Warrant Officer Herschel “Woody” Williams, and Lt. Gen. Lewis B. Puller, who, with five Navy Cross awards, is regarded as the most decorated Marine in Marine Corps history.

More information on ESBs can be found [here](#).

GE Marine to Supply LM2500 Gas Turbine Engines in New Lightweight Composite Enclosure for Turkish I-Class MILGEM



İstif-Class Frigate Project, Photo courtesy of STM

[Release from GE Marine](#)

July 25, 2023, Evendale, OH – GE Marine signed an agreement with TAIS OG-STM İş Ortaklığı in Istanbul, Türkiye, to provide the LM2500 marine gas turbine engine in a new lightweight composite enclosure for the İstif-Class frigates, numbers 6, 7, and 8 in the Turkish MILGEM Project. The lightweight enclosure debuted on the U.S. Navy's USS Santa Barbara in

April. Türkiye's Navy converted from the steel engine enclosure for the redesigned frigates to benefit from the many features of the one-piece composite enclosure.

Between the Barbaros, Gabya, and İstif class frigates and the ADA class Corvettes, 31 LM2500 marine gas turbine engines currently power 18 Turkish ships. Under this project, the private shipyards of Türkiye will build a frigate class surface combatant for the first time. The ships will be built at Anadolu, Sedef, and Sefine shipyards in 36 months. GE will support this expedited timeline. The new I-Class Frigate will be 10 meters longer than previous models to account for the increased capabilities in weapons systems. One LM2500 will provide 22 MW of power to propel each new MILGEM frigate.

This engine selection builds on the April 2023 announcement of GE Marine's newest collaboration in Türkiye with TEI (TUSAS Engine Industries, Inc.) as an in-country service provider for the maintenance, repair, and overhaul of GE's LM2500 marine gas turbines. "We want GE Marine's strong relationships in Türkiye, along with the new engine selection on the I-Class MILGEM, to demonstrate our commitment to supporting Türkiye's naval programs, including domestic sustainment of naval capabilities," said Mark Musheno, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for GE Marine.

GE's new state-of-the-art composite gas turbine enclosure replaces its steel predecessor. It provides a safer engine room environment, improved access for sailors, and a significant weight reduction for ship designers. Other benefits include:

Reduced engine room noise: 60% (4dBA) less noise than steel enclosure

Cooler engine room temperatures: Enclosure wall temperatures are 25oF to 50oF degrees cooler, approximately 50% less heat is rejected into the engine room.

Superior operational and life cycle benefits: The composite walls are constructed from a single corrosion-resistant piece.

Significant weight reduction: The walls and roof assembly are 2,500 kg (5,500 lbs) lighter, which is a 50% weight reduction, allowing ship designers more flexibility for increased payload, fuel, or systems.

Better access to the engine: Improved crew access to inlet plenum and a lightweight main door for easy handling.

Ease of engine removal/reinstallation: The gas turbines can be removed and reinstalled through the intake path.

The LM2500 is renowned for its reliability onboard 638 naval ships and is the gas turbine of choice for 40 navies worldwide due to its superior performance on diverse military applications, from patrol boats, corvettes, and frigates to destroyers and aircraft carriers. As the new lightweight composite enclosure debut demonstrates, GE Marine offers a wide range of products backed by continual infusion of new technologies to meet ever-changing customer needs.

Marine Infantry Packs a Logistics Punch on Australian Beach



[Release from the U.S. Department of Defense](#)

Marine Infantry Packs a Logistics Punch on Australian Beach

July 27, 2023 | By David Vergun , DOD News

Several hundred U.S. Marine Corps infantrymen of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit landed yesterday on the beach at Midge Point in Queensland, Australia.

With them were trucks, spare parts, mechanics, fuel, communications gear and everything else needed to support the infantry in a fight as part of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2023 – the U.S.-Australia exercise that included a dozen other partner nations.

During the first decades of the 21st century, Marines and other forces in Iraq and Afghanistan relied on massive logistics sites, known as “iron mountains,” for beans, bullets, bandages and everything else needed to conduct

operations, said Marine Corps Lt. Col. Matt Verdin, commander of Combat Logistics Battalion, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, based at Camp Pendleton, California.

Not anymore, he said.

When Marines came ashore in Navy landing craft air cushions, or LCACs as they are better known, they took with them all the supplies and other materiel needed to push inland against entrenched enemy forces in the exercise scenario, he said.

It's getting back to the roots of what the Marine Corps does best, he said: sustaining themselves in austere, contested environments and moving quickly to secure objectives without waiting for the logistics tail to catch up to the fighters.

Exercises like Talisman Sabre bolster rapid crisis response capability that has been a Marine Corps hallmark for centuries, he said.

This year marks the 10th iteration of Talisman Sabre, a biennial exercise designed to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific by strengthening partnerships and interoperability among key allies. The spelling of the name – sabre vs. saber – reflects which country is leading the exercise: Talisman Sabre when Australia leads and Talisman Saber when the U.S. leads.

Marines who landed yesterday had sailed from Okinawa, Japan, aboard the amphibious transport dock ships USS Green Bay and USS New Orleans. Accompanying those vessels was the amphibious assault carrier USS America, the lead ship of the America Amphibious Ready Group.

Landing with the Marines were detachments from the Japan Ground Self Defense Force's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade and a German naval infantry from the Bundeswehr Sea Battalion.

Later in the day, Marines from the USS America landed further

inland from Midge Point, arriving aboard V-22 Osprey aircraft. Those aircraft can land vertically like helicopters, but they fly much faster. Others landed in CH-53 helicopters. Upon landing, they all encountered an opposition force made up of Marines dressed in desert camouflage uniforms to identify them as “enemy.”

The V-22s were protected overhead by Cobra attack helicopters.

The America Amphibious Ready Group made a port visit last month to Brisbane, Australia, just to the south of where the landings took place.

The United Kingdom is also participating in Talisman Sabre. The U.S., U.K. and Australia comprise what’s known as AUKUS, which is a trilateral security pact formed in 2021.

“All of this is yet another reminder that our unbreakable alliance is capable of great things. It has, indeed, endured for generations, and it remains vital to regional peace and security,” Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III said of AUKUS earlier this year during a visit by Australian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, who also serves as his country’s defense minister.

At that meeting, Austin said: “We also pledged to find new ways to work closely with Japan as we pursue a common vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, as a region where all countries can chart their own course and all states respect international rules and norms and where all disputes are resolved peacefully.”

Austin met with British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace just weeks earlier.

CNO Travels to Colombia, Australia, Singapore, and Japan



[Release from Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs](#)

From Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs

YOKOSUKA, Japan – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Gilday and his wife, Linda, visited Colombia, Australia, Singapore, and Japan, to meet with partner navies, government and military leaders, and Sailors, July 16-27.

The overseas trip began in Cartagena, Colombia, and was

followed by visits to Sydney, Australia; Singapore; Tokyo and Yokosuka, Japan.

Gilday visited Colombia, where the Colombian Navy hosted UNITAS 2023, the world's longest-running multinational maritime exercise, which featured 26 warships/vessels, three submarines, 25 aircraft, and approximately 7,000 people from 20 partner nations. This year's exercise marked the first time unmanned systems were operationalized at scale, integrating an unmanned and AI-supported family of systems to provide persistent Maritime Domain Awareness capability in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility.

In Cartagena, Gilday toured the UNITAS maritime operations center, where he observed deployed unmanned systems and artificial intelligence tools, as well as preparations for a live-fire sinking exercise.

"Colombia is a maritime nation like the United States, and shares common goals in keeping the seas free and open," said Gilday. "One of the most important aspects of this year's UNITAS is the introduction of unmanned platforms in the air, at sea, and under the sea." He added, "Unmanned platforms are synchronizing with manned platforms and providing us additional sensors in the maritime environment so that countries like Colombia and other neighbors have better insight into illegal activity."

Separately, CNO met with the Commander of the Colombian Navy Adm. Francisco Hernando Cubides Granados, who presented Gilday with the Order of Naval Merit "Almirante Padilla" for his work and leadership as the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations.

"I'm incredibly honored to receive the Colombian Order of Naval Merit from my friend and ally Adm. Cubides," said Gilday. "Colombia has been an incredible host during UNITAS 2023, and I am proud of our long-standing friendship and partnership."

CNO and Linda then traveled to Sydney for the commissioning of the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra (LCS 30).

The commissioning aligned with the opening ceremonies for Talisman Sabre 2023, a bilateral exercise with multinational participation that focuses on crisis-action planning and contingency responses. CNO attended the opening ceremony for the exercise held aboard HMAS Canberra (L02), where he met with senior leaders from the Australian government and military.

“Trained, ready forces help us preserve peace and prevent conflict,” said Gilday. “Realistic exercises like Talisman Sabre allow our forces to work with partner nations to increase interoperability and strengthen relationships to ensure we are ready in the event of conflict or crisis.”

Australia hosted the commissioning of USS Canberra, which is one of the first U.S. Navy warships to be commissioned in an allied country. The commissioning took place at Royal Australian Fleet Base East in Sydney, July 22.

“Today we commission USS Canberra into service as a combat unit that will integrate with the Australian fleet and with the combined maritime force of allies and partners who stand united across the entire Indo-Pacific,” said CNO. “The Sailors of the USS Canberra are the men and women who underwrite our Navy’s commitments: to safeguard our country, to defend our allies and partners, and to honor the nation of Australia, who has embarked with us on our voyage through the seas of history to defend freedom and democracy around the world.”

Afterward, CNO and Linda traveled to Singapore, where CNO met with Singapore’s Minister for Defense Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Chief of Defense Vice Adm. Aaron Beng, and Chief of Navy Rear Adm. Sean Wat. Throughout the meetings, the leaders discussed their shared commitment to promoting safety and stability in the

region.

The visit concluded with Dr. Eng Hen presenting CNO with the Pingat Jasa Gemilang, Singapore's Meritorious Service Medal, for his work in advancing the relationship between the two navies during his tenure.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to meet with Singaporean government and military leadership, and I am humbled to receive this award," said Gilday. "Our partnership with Singapore is rooted in our shared common values and commitment to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific."

After their stop in Singapore, CNO and Linda traveled to Tokyo, where they participated in an honor guard reception and wreath laying ceremony at Ichigaya.

CNO also met with government officials and military leaders to include Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Minister for Defense Yasukazu Hamada, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Adm. Ryo Sakai.

On behalf of the Japanese emperor, Hamada conferred the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun upon CNO for his contributions in strengthening the national defense relationship between the United States and Japan.

Established in 1875 by Emperor Meiji, the Order of the Rising Sun recognizes individuals who have accomplished distinguished achievements in international relations, the promotion of Japanese culture, and the preservation of the environment. After World War II, the Japanese government began presenting the award to individuals who demonstrated exemplary military service or contributed to national defense.

"I am overwhelmed and honored to be bestowed the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun today," said Gilday. "I'm grateful for this strategic partnership, deep friendship, and

mutual commitment to peace and security.” He added, “I have no doubt that the strong bond between our two nations will only continue to grow.”

After his engagements in Tokyo, Gilday traveled to Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, where he met with and presented awards to Sailors aboard the guided-missile destroyers USS Higgins (DDG 76) and USS Milius (DDG 69). Aboard Milius, he presented the crew with the Spokane Award. The Spokane Award is presented annually to the most combat ready ship in the Pacific Fleet area of responsibility.

While aboard Higgins, Linda spoke with Sailors about the Women In the Navy (WIN) initiative and exchanged dialogue about mentorship, leadership and service.

“The United States Navy is committed to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific,” said CNO. “Every day, our Sailors are standing the watch, operating forward, strengthening our strategic partnerships, and increasing interoperability.

“I am continually impressed and proud of the incredible talent and dedication from our Sailors and their families,” he added.

The visit to Japan marked the conclusion of Gilday’s last international trip as the CNO. Gilday became the 32nd Chief of Naval Operations Aug. 22, 2019, and is scheduled to relinquish office in mid-August.

NEDU Saturation Dive Team

Joins DPAA Recovery Mission



[Release from Naval Sea Systems Command](#)

July 26, 2023

By NAVSEA Office of Corporate Communication

A team of divers from the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Navy Experimental Diving Unit (NEDU) supported a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission off the coast of Papua New Guinea as part of a recovery mission for service members lost in World War II.

The team of approximately 15 divers from NEDU's Saturation Detachment (NSD), supplemented by two additional Navy divers from Undersea Rescue Command, joined the DPAA team in their work to recover evidence and remains from the wreckage of a

B-24 bomber named "Heaven Can Wait."

"Our mission objective was to make the fullest possible accounting of 11 U.S. Army Air Force service members lost on March 11, 1944, when their B-24 was shot down by anti-aircraft fire off Awar Point, Papua New Guinea, while on a bombing run as part of WWII Allied operations in the Pacific," said Army Capt. Weston Iannone, DPAA mission commander.

Planning for the mission began in 2018 as a discussion with DPAA to explain NEDU's saturation diving capability and how it could contribute to their organization.

"That simple conversation set in motion what became this mission, and the NEDU team began working with DPAA underwater planners to develop a scope of work, timeline, and budget for the 'Heaven Can Wait' recovery," said Navy Capt. Sal Suarez, NAVSEA Supervisor of Salvage and Diving (00C) and Director of Ocean Engineering. "Previously, the water depth and size of this wreck site precluded it from being excavated in any major capacity with traditional surface supplied diving."

Mission plans were temporarily delayed by unforeseen circumstances including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Category 5 Hurricane Michael, which devastated NEDU and the surrounding Panama City community.

"In early 2022 NEDU reinitiated planning, and in June 2022 we finalized the scheme of maneuver to be executed in February 2023," Suarez said. "In November 2022 NEDU began deploying our Saturation Fly-away Dive System (SATFADS) to Singapore from Panama City, Florida, with personnel deploying in January and February 2023."

The SATFADS is a fly-away capable saturation diving system based at NEDU that is designed to accommodate six divers under pressures down to the equivalent of 1,000 feet of seawater for up to 30 days. The system has a dive bell that is designed to mate with the Dry Deck Chamber (DDC), where the divers live,

and transport the divers from the DDC over the side of the ship to their work site on the sea floor. NEDU's saturation fly-away diving system (SATFADS) enables the U.S. Navy to maintain its saturation diving proficiency and future development of equipment and procedures.

"SATFADS, and saturation diving, brings the ability to put a 'human in the loop' for complex deep diving operations that cannot be accomplished effectively by traditional surface supplied mixed-gas diving, or when a remote operated vehicle (ROV) cannot accomplish a necessary task," said Cmdr. Dustin Cunningham, NEDU Commanding Officer. "Saturation diving also provides the capability to work at depth for longer periods more safely, with little to no risk of decompression sickness, oxygen toxicity, or hypothermia."

While all of the divers at NEDU already have extensive diving experience and mechanical aptitude to operate and fix their own equipment on site in remote locations, this mission required approximately 1,200 additional man-hours of specialized training.

"All divers who were going to perform dives and underwater work on this mission went through a two-month training program at NEDU," Cunningham said. "This included diving equipment familiarization; maintenance training; watch supervisor training to control the Launch and Recovery System for deploying the dive bell; simulated dives leaving the bell, or what is referred to as 'locking out;' and simulated seafloor work with hydraulic cutting tools, rigging gear and dredging equipment."

The well-trained team and state-of-the-art equipment enabled NSD to use new techniques during the deployment while also reaching a number of milestone achievements. New techniques included conducting underwater crane and lifting operations on a large magnitude and performing complex hydraulic cutting operations of the aircraft wreckage on the sea floor.

“In addition to being the longest dives the NEDU Saturation Detachment had ever done, the two dives conducted were the longest working dives that anyone in the Navy has accomplished in the last 20 years,” Suarez said. “This operation became the longest working saturation mission in the last 20 years, completing a total of 37 diving days, accumulating over 367 hours of working ‘bottom time,’ 5,304 total man hours under pressure, and 102 diver excursions, making it the longest consecutive working saturation dive on a U.S. Navy diving platform in history. The amount of recovered evidence also exceeded any terrestrial or underwater mission ever performed for DPAA.”

While the technical achievements of the operation are many, for the divers on the assignment, their experiences focused on their role in supporting DPAA’s mission to provide the fullest possible accounting for missing personnel to their families and the nation.

“It was the most honored I have ever been in my career to get to do this type of mission and hopefully bring the families some sense of closure about their loved ones,” said Navy Diver 1st Class Nathan Fisher, NEDU diver.

The divers from the mission described feeling a sense of brotherhood and connection with the crew of “Heaven Can Wait” that motivated their mission.

“The nature of our job at NEDU is inherently dangerous, so when I think about these guys who gave the ultimate sacrifice while knowingly going into danger, I think we owe it to their legacy to bring them home if possible,” said Navy Diver Chief Nicholas Lee, NEDU diver.

For Master Chief Master Diver Bryan McCurley, NSD Assistant Officer in Charge and Master Diver, it was rewarding to see his team of divers come together for the effort.

“I got to see the whole team benefit as they worked on this

selfless effort in a difficult environment with high temperatures and long work days that did not end with their dives.”

The mission for NEDU concluded with participation in two repatriation ceremonies, one in Papua New Guinea and a second ceremony in Singapore. The focus of these ceremonies is repatriating possible remains found during the mission, while also acknowledging the support of foreign national and local governments in the mission execution. Now the material evidence recovered will return to DPAA labs for analysis.

“NEDU and the Saturation Detachment were indispensable in this pursuit,” Iannone said. “Their efforts also proved the legitimacy of this mission’s groundbreaking concept: recovering evidence from depths DPAA never has before. This blazes the trail for numerous future opportunities where unaccounted for service members were previously considered unrecoverable due to the water depth at their last known location.”