

CH-53K lifts F-35C in external load test



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A non-flyable F-35C Lightning II airframe is flown as part of a CH-53K King Stallion external load certification lift Dec. 13, 2022, at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md. The structure is from the first F-35C carrier variant aircraft, CF-1, a former developmental flight test jet from the Patuxent River F-35 Integrated Test Force (ITF). ITF test teams collaborated with Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron One (VMX-1) and a Marine helicopter support team with Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 24, Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group to conduct the lift. (U.S. Navy photo by Kyra Helwick) *

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND PATUXENT RIVER, Md.

—
A CH-53K King Stallion heavy lift helicopter from Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron (VMX) performed an external load certification lift of an inoperable F-35 Lightning II airframe in December at Naval Air Station (NAS)

Patuxent River, Maryland. The lift was to evaluate the load and inform future lift capabilities.

The CH-53K is the most powerful helicopter ever developed by the United States government. This new-build helicopter will continue to fill the CH-53E Super Stallion mission as a pillar of logistics and assault support for the U.S. Marine Corps efforts, but with significant improvements such as state-of-the-art, fly-by-wire technology reducing pilot work load, contributing to aircraft stability, and improving overall safety. The recent full rate production decision for the CH-53K is validation of the aircraft's value to the U.S. Marine Corps and last month's test lift is one more demonstration of its performance and reliability.

The NAS Patuxent River F-35 Integrated Test Force (ITF) test team, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) Cargo Lab, and others ensured a successful lift and flight by conducting load certification testing, sling configuration analysis, and cargo characteristics documentation were completed as required. Data from the tests will inform the flight envelope for future events. An earlier crane test lift verified the sling, rig, pitch and bank attitudes of the jet, and control surface states.

The aircraft lifted is a developmental test carrier variant F-35C fighter jet that had accrued 750 flight hours during 450 test flights between 2010 and 2016. The F-35C and rigging weighed about 22,000 pounds after removal of its mission and propulsion systems, outer wings, and additional equipment.

The CH-53K is currently cleared to conduct a 27,000-pound external lift and is projected to be cleared for a 36,000-pound external lift, nearly three-times more under high, hot conditions than its predecessor, the CH-53E.

In September 2021, the CH-53K performed its first operational mission by lifting a Navy MH-60S Knighthawk helicopter from a

12,000-foot mountain top in California. That aircraft weighed approximately 15,000 pounds and was successfully transported 23 miles to Fallon, NV.

“This type of mission is precisely what the K was designed and built to do,” said Col. Kate Fleeger, program manager for the Heavy Lift Helicopter Program Office (PMA-261). “It continues to prove its value in support of Marine Corps operations, transporting equipment that no other rotary wing platform can lift.”

The CH-53K entered its full rate production and deployment phase in December and is on schedule to declare Full Operational Capability in FY2029.

The F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office (JP0) leads the life-cycle program management of the F-35A, F-35B, and F-35C; the fifth-generation joint strike fighter (JSF) air system of choice for the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, international partners and foreign military sales customers.

Heavy Lift Helicopter Program Office (PMA-261) manages the cradle-to-grave procurement, development, support, fielding and disposal of the entire family of H-53 heavy lift helicopters.

**BAE Systems to support
Columbia-class submarine
effort**



Artist rendering of Columbia-class submarine (US Navy image)
[Release from BAE Systems](#)

BAE Systems won a \$71 million competitive contract award to manufacture and deliver U.S. Navy Columbia-class submarine components.

This is the second contract award received by BAE Systems for work on the U.S. Navy's key nuclear sea-based deterrent, Columbia-class submarines.

"We look forward to continuing to support the U.S. Navy's Undersea Force by providing critical submarine components for this key national deterrent," said Brent Butcher, vice president of the Weapon Systems product line at BAE Systems. "Our decades of experience in supporting submarine programs and our selection for this opportunity demonstrates that the BAE Systems team has the trusted expertise required to manufacture and deliver components that promote the Navy's undersea dominance and excellence."

For over 30 years, BAE Systems has supported the Navy's submarine programs by providing more than 30 Virginia-class

propulsors, Virginia payload module tubes, and Seawolf-class propulsors. Work under the current contract will be performed in Louisville, Kentucky and Minneapolis, Minnesota with a completion expected by the third quarter of 2030.

Marine Corps reactivates base on Guam



[Release by U.S. Marine Corps](#)

ASAN BEACH, GUAM – The U.S. Marine Corps reactivated a new base on Guam in a ceremony, Jan. 26, honoring the long-shared history of the Marine Corps and Guam and establishing a forward presence in the Indo-Pacific that will endure into the future.

Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Blaz is the first newly constructed Marine Corps base in 70 years and serves as a

testament to the U.S.-Japan alliance. Guam was chosen as the location for the new base during the 2012 Bilateral Agreement between the U.S and Japanese governments, under the Defense Policy Review Initiative, which set the framework for the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam. The base is named in honor of Brigadier General Vicente Tomas "Ben" Garrido Blaz, the first CHamorro Marine to attain the rank of general officer.

"Today is an important day that marks the future of the Marines on Guam, and it is also a day to reflect on the century-long history of the Marine Corps in this beautiful place we call home," said Col. Christopher Bopp, Commanding Officer, MCB Camp Blaz. "On this island Marines and their CHamoru brethren have lived in peace and fought in war together and we are proud to carry on this legacy of honor and courage."

Guam's history is marked by the enduring partnership between the U.S. military and the people of Guam. Since the establishment of Marine Barracks Guam in 1899, the Marine Corps has had a nearly continuous presence on Guam. The Marine Barracks was reactivated after World War II and deactivated November 10, 1992.

During the ceremony at War in the Pacific National Historical Park, honors were rendered to the Honorable Lou Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam; Commandant of the Marine Corps; U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environmental; Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs provided remarks. The ceremony ended with a traditional pass and review.

"I believe that on the horizon lies the opportunities that Ben (Blaz) wished for our people," said the Honorable Leon Guerrero. "No longer are we dealing with challenges and isolation, we are cultivating a more sustainable and

comprehensive Indo-Pacific allyship. The future of Guam is inseparable from the future of the broader Indo-Pacific and the success of the Marines is inseparable from the success of Guam's people. Together we are an island and an ocean united; together we are always better and always stronger; together we are always faithful. Semper Fidelis."

Situated on Guam's northern plateau, Camp Blaz will serve as a strategic hub as the Department of Defense realizes the vision of the 2022 National Defense Strategy. The base construction projects currently underway are partially funded by a large monetary contribution from the Government of Japan.

"Forward, persistent presence is key to the regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz is a critical part of that. More than that, it shows our undivided relationship with the Government of Japan," said the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. David H. Berger.

Camp Blaz represents a significant milestone for the future of both the Marine Corps and Guam. The base's forward presence and engagement in the Pacific will play an essential role in strengthening the ability of the U.S. and its allies and partners for a collective defense and to promote regional security.

"The Japan and U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of the people, the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the linchpin of Japan's foreign policy," said Ms. Yoshikawa Yuumi, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Marine Corps is committed to upholding the legacy of Brig. Gen. Blaz's, prioritizing environmental and cultural stewardship, and building on the established relationships with the people of Guam remains integral in all aspects of development of this installation.

"It is right here, today, that we come together to demonstrate the power of partnership and the importance of community,"

said the Honorable Mrs. Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment.

For additional information, visit <https://www.mcbblaz.marines.mil>.

Navy awards contract to buy multi-engine training system aircraft



A T-44C Pegasus (above) stands on the flightline aboard Naval Air Station Corpus Christi before a scheduled flight. The T-54A will replace the T-44C aircraft currently used by the U.S. Navy to train student naval aviators. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by 1st Lt. Pawel Puczko/Released)

[Release from Naval Air Systems](#)

New training aircraft will equip pilots across the services for tomorrow's battlespace

The U.S. Navy announced on Jan. 25 that it awarded Textron Aviation a single, firm-fixed-price contract to develop the T-54A multi-engine training system (METS) aircraft. The T-54A will provide advanced instrument and asymmetric engine handling training to student naval aviators selected for multi-engine fleet communities.

"The new METS aircraft will give us the ability to train pilots across the services with an advanced platform that better represents fleet aircraft," said Capt. Holly Shoger, Naval Undergraduate Flight Training Systems Program Office (PMA-273) program manager. "The T-54A will include the latest avionics and navigational updates, such as virtual reality and augmented reality devices, to ensure pilots are ready to face any challenges that come their way in tomorrow's battlespace."

The base contract is for \$113.1 million for 10 aircraft. The total contract value, including the base and contract options, is \$677.2 million for the procurement of up to 64 aircraft. The contract also covers support equipment, spares and initial training. The aircraft deliveries are scheduled from calendar year 2024 to 2026.

The T-54A aircraft will replace the T-44 Pegasus aircraft and will feature a pressurized aircraft cockpit with side-by-side seating and a jump seat. The cockpit will be equipped with multifunction displays with a digital moving map; redundant ultra-high frequency and very high frequency radios; an integrated global positioning system/inertial navigation system; automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast; flight management system; weather radar, radar altimeter, and a cockpit data recorder. The METS aircraft will also have tricycle landing gear and a reconfigurable cargo bay in the cabin.

Additionally, the aircraft's technology will capture data that allows for Conditioned-Based Maintenance Plus, a capability that enables the Navy to trend aircraft health over time to facilitate improved maintenance planning and efficiency.

This contract award will provide new aircraft to train Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard pilots to fly non-centerline thrust aircraft such as the V-22 Osprey, E-2D Hawkeye, C-130 Hercules and P-8 Poseidon. The T-44C sundown will begin six months after METS' first delivery.

PMA-273, at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, oversees the METS program. PMA-273 develops and oversees diverse and carrier-capable naval flight training systems where student pilots and undergraduate military flight officers acquire mission-critical aviation skills necessary to carry out current and future missions of the U.S Navy.

National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) Program Achieves Milestone with Steel Cutting of Fourth Ship



TOTE Services, LLC, (TOTE Services), Philly Shipyard, Inc., (Philly Shipyard) and Texas A&M University at Galveston today celebrated the cutting of steel for the fourth National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) destined for the Texas A&M Maritime Academy in Galveston, Texas.

[Release from Philly Shipyard](#)

National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) Program Achieves Milestone with Steel Cutting of Fourth Ship

NSMV IV to be delivered to Texas A&M Maritime Academy in 2025

TOTE Services, LLC, (Tote Services) Philly Shipyard, Inc., (Philly Shipyard) and Texas A&M University at Galveston today celebrated the cutting of steel for the fourth National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) destined for the Texas A&M Maritime Academy in Galveston, Texas.

This event marks another major construction milestone for the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's

(MARAD) NSMV program, designed to provide a purpose-built, state-of-the-art training platform for state maritime academies in New York, Massachusetts, Maine, Texas, and California, respectively. In addition to providing world-class training for America's future mariners, these five NSMVs will be available to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions in times of need. The vessel is contracted for delivery in 2025 to the Academy in Galveston.

"TOTE Services is proud to join MARAD, Philly Shipyard, and the Texas A&M Aggies to celebrate the start of construction of this new vessel that will be used to help train the next generation of officers at the only maritime academy on the Gulf Coast," said TOTE Services President Jeff Dixon. "This vessel will vastly enhance Texas A&M's degree programs and give the Academy a ship that can hold its entire program in a single cruise, providing cadets the opportunity to become skilled in ship-handling, decision-making, and unexpected challenges with the type of comradery that cannot be replicated in a classroom."

In May 2019, MARAD awarded TOTE Services a contract to be the Vessel Construction Manager (VCM) for the NSMV program. Since then, the innovative VCM contract structure has proven to be an effective model in which the government benefits from commercial best practices to design and construct vessels that are built by union labor in a U.S. shipyard with U.S.-made steel and U.S.-made engines.

"Today, marks another significant milestone for TOTE, the Maritime Administration, and the maritime industry as whole," said Maritime Administrator Ann Phillips (Rear Admiral USN, Ret.). "These NSMV's will play a crucial role in the maritime industry – providing future generations of mariners a world-class platform for training and serving as an exceptional resource for emergency response and homeland security for the nation."

Construction of the NSMVs will recapitalize our nation's maritime training fleet, strengthen America's industrial base, and directly support more than 1,300 shipyard jobs in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

"We are proud to welcome cadets and staff from Texas A&M Maritime Academy to our shipyard in celebration of the official start of fabrication on their new training vessel," said Steinar Nerbovik, President and CEO, Philly Shipyard. "With this milestone event in the NSMV program, we now have four ships under active construction and strong backlog into the future. I want to thank everyone involved in this project across the board, including all of our advocates, our partners at MARAD and TOTE Services, our suppliers, and of course the staff and workers around me who are supporting and constructing these important vessels that will build America's maritime future."

"This is a significant milestone for Texas A&M University at Galveston, home to the Texas A&M Maritime Academy," said Col. Michael E. Fossum, Vice President of Texas A&M University, Chief Operating Officer of the Galveston Campus and Superintendent of the Texas A&M Maritime Academy. "Having the ability to live, learn and train together on a world-class, specialized training vessel is essential to meeting our mission in educating and training merchant mariners who go on to serve in both our armed forces and the maritime industry. We're incredibly grateful to MARAD, TOTE Services, and Philly Shipyard for their stewardship of the NSMV program."

Construction of the first two vessels is well underway, with contracted delivery of NSMV I to SUNY Maritime College in 2023, NSMV II to Massachusetts Maritime Academy in 2024, and NSMV III to Maine Maritime Academy in 2024.

About the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's (MARAD) NSMV program is designed to provide a purpose-built, state-of-the-art training platform for the state maritime academies in New York Massachusetts, Maine, Texas, and California, respectively.

This next-generation training fleet will address a critical shortage of qualified officers necessary to crew government and commercial owned sealift ships. In addition to providing world-class training for America's future mariners, the NSMVs will be available to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions in times of need.

The NSMV will feature numerous instructional spaces, a full training bridge, and have space for up to 600 cadets to train in a first-rate maritime academic environment at sea. State maritime academies graduate more than half of all new officers each year—the merchant mariners who help keep cargoes and our economy moving. Many also support U.S. national security by crewing military sealift vessels.

In addition to being a state-of-the-art training and educational platform, each ship will feature modern hospital facilities, a helicopter pad, and the ability to accommodate up to 1,000 people in times of humanitarian need. Adding to the NSMV's capability, it will provide needed roll-on/roll-off and container storage capacity for use during disaster relief missions.

Ship specifications will be compatible with the pier length, draft restrictions, and mooring limitations at each of the maritime training academies.

Vessel specifications:

- Length: 159.85 m
- Breadth: 27.00 m
- Draft, scantling: 7.50 m
- Total berthing: 760 people
- Speed: 18 kts
- Deadweight: 8,487 MT

Fairbanks Morse Defense Awarded Sole-Source Service Contract for LCS Freedom- Class Vessels



[Release from Fairbanks Morse Defense](#)

BELOIT, Wis. – January 24, 2023 – [Fairbanks Morse Defense](#) (FMD), a portfolio company of Arcline Investment Management, has been awarded a five-year indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) requirements contract by the U.S. Navy. The agreement makes FMD the sole source for engineering and technical support of the main propulsion diesel engines on the Navy’s Freedom-class Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program.

FMD will provide global maintenance and repair services and OEM parts to improve engine performance and increase operational availability. Additionally, the defense contractor’s Factory-Certified technicians will conduct essential training so that Navy sailors are also equipped to support emergent repair needs for these critical pieces of equipment.

“Supporting our nation’s fleets requires a finely tuned balance of service and speed of delivery. This is something that Fairbanks Morse Defense has mastered over more than a century of configuring the delivery of every customer engagement,” said FMD CEO George Whittier. “We manufactured and delivered the main propulsion diesel engines for the LCS Freedom-class vessels, and no one else knows these engines better than our service team. We stand ready to provide the essential services that ensure our fleet is always mission-ready.”

The U.S. Navy has turned to FMD for a full array of marine technologies and ship service systems for nearly 100 years. Approximately 80% of U.S. Navy ships with a medium-speed power application are powered by Fairbanks Morse Defense.

SECNAV awards Navy Cross to retired Korean War veteran



SAN DIEGO (Jan. 20, 2023) – (from left) Adm. Samuel J. Paparo, U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa, retired U.S. Navy Capt. E. Royce Williams, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, and Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell render honors during a ceremony awarding Williams with a Navy Cross Jan. 20. Del Toro was in San Diego for various fleet engagements, awards ceremonies and ship events.

[Release from U.S. Navy](#)

[By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aleksandr Freutel, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, 23 January 2023](#)

SAN DIEGO – Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro awarded the Navy Cross to retired Navy Capt. Royce Williams for his exploits during the Korean War at a ceremony at the San Diego Air and Space Museum, Jan. 20.

The Navy Cross is an upgrade of the Silver Star Medal previously awarded to then-Lt. Williams on May 7, 1953, while assigned to the "Pacemakers" of Fighter Squadron (VF) 781, for combat action against seven Soviet Mikoyan Gurevich (MiG) 15 aircraft.

"Royce Williams was a Lieutenant in the United States Navy when he took the lead of an incredibly critical mission during the Korean War, resulting in the protection of Task Force 77 from enemy attack," said Secretary Del Toro. "His actions almost 70 years ago earned him recognition, and he was awarded the Silver Star Medal. However, as the Secretary of the Navy, I have the authority to consider proposals to upgrade awards. Among the many cases I have reviewed, Captain Williams' case stood out. It was very clear to me that his actions were extraordinary, and more closely aligned with the criteria describing a higher award...and sir, what a tremendous honor it was to tell you in person, that after all these years, your courageous actions would finally get the recognition they deserve."

On Nov. 18, 1952, Williams was flying with two other members of VF-781 from Essex-class aircraft carrier USS Oriskany (CVA 34) when they encountered seven MiG-15 aircraft. Before they could engage, the team's flight leader had to return to Oriskany due to a fuel pump issue, leaving only Williams and his wingman. After Williams downed the first MiG, his wingman chased the falling aircraft, and Williams found himself alone in air-to-air combat with the remaining MiGs.

"In the moment I was a fighter pilot doing my job...I was only shooting what I had," said Williams in a previous account of the fight. "They had me cold on maneuverability and acceleration – the MiG was vastly superior on those counts to the F9F. The only thing I could do was out-turn them."

Out-manned and piloting what was considered an inferior

aircraft to the MiG-15, Williams engaged the enemy for 35 minutes, shooting down four of them in the longest dogfight in U.S. military history. Additionally, no other American fighter pilot has ever shot down four MiG-15s in one fight.

The Navy Cross is only awarded to service members who distinguish themselves for extraordinary heroism in combat with an armed enemy force, and is the U.S. Navy's second-highest military decoration. Williams retired from the Navy in 1980, and his medals include the Navy Cross and two Distinguished Flying Crosses.

Sikorsky Delivers 5,000th “Hawk” Helicopter



Sikorsky marks the delivery of the 5,000th “Hawk” helicopter, a UH-60M (pictured), at its headquarters in Stratford, Conn.,

Jan. 20, 2023. Photo courtesy Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company.

[Release from Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky](#)

STRATFORD, Conn., Jan. 20, 2023 – Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company (NYSE: LMT), today delivered its 5,000th "Hawk" variant helicopter, a U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk. The iconic aircraft will continue to support medium-lift requirements for the U.S. military and international operators for decades into the future.

Sikorsky celebrates its [100th anniversary](#) this year.

"Sikorsky, as a company, has been forged by the Black Hawk," said Sikorsky President Paul Lemmo. "The Black Hawk and its variants deliver when reliability and performance are nonnegotiable. Hawk aircraft continue to demonstrate their versatility and readiness with the latest technological advancements and ongoing U.S. and global investment in the aircraft."

View the latest Hawk [video](#).

Customers worldwide depend on the Black Hawk platform and its derivatives, including MH-60R/S maritime operations helicopters, MH-60T multi-mission helicopters, HH-60W rescue helicopters and internationally built S-70 Black Hawks to include the baseline FIREHAWK, which have all proven their versatility and capability across a spectrum of challenging mission sets.

Sikorsky's highly skilled and experienced workforce manufactures the latest generation of Hawk aircraft built in Stratford, and there is high international demand for the Sikorsky S-70 Black Hawk, manufactured by Lockheed Martin's PZL Mielec facility in Poland. More than 35 international customers operate the Black Hawk thanks to its global support

network and continued modernization.

The U.S. Army, the largest Black Hawk operator, noted the key role the aircraft continues to fulfill during military and civil operations around the world, in addition to its significant contribution towards Joint All Domain Operations.

“For more than 40 years the Black Hawk has remarkably supported Soldiers in every major contingency operation the Army has executed,” said Col. Calvin Lane, the utility helicopter project manager for the Program Executive Office Aviation. “Even though the helicopter has been around longer than most of the Soldiers it now supports, the Army plans for it to be in front line service another 40 years and beyond. And everyone who contributes to the delivery of this aircraft in any way, contributes directly to providing combat capability that protects Soldiers and helps the Army accomplish its mission.”

The Future of the Black Hawk

As U.S. Army Future Vertical Lift aircraft are fielded, the Black Hawk will remain the foundational tactical air assault and utility aircraft for the U.S. Army. Modernization efforts that improve Black Hawk availability and reliability by lowering direct operating costs include:

- A Modular Open Systems Approach allowing rapid integration of emerging technologies to maintain relevance in future operations by increasing reach, survivability, lethality and sustainment;
- Improved Turbine Engine to increase lift capability and range;
- Advanced Digital Vehicle Management Systems supporting Degraded Visual Environment and automated operations; and
- Digital tools including predictive analytics that reduce

aircraft downtime and maintenance costs.

In February 2022, Lockheed Martin flew its first uninhabited [Optionally Piloted Vehicle \(OPV\)](#) Sikorsky UH-60A/S-70 Black Hawk testbed helicopter powered by Sikorsky's MATRIX™ autonomy technology in collaboration with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. [Subsequent flights](#) at U.S. Army's Project Convergence 2022 demonstrated future utility missions for the platform, which shows no signs of relinquishing its preeminent medium-lift capability through continuous innovation and investment.

"We are committed to all H-60 and S-70 operators and look forward to enduring partnerships on the Hawk program in the years to come," added Nathalie Previte, vice president of Army and Air Force Systems at Sikorsky. "It remains our priority to fulfill our customers' requirements and meet the needs of current and future operational units. With unmatched versatility and global interoperability, Hawk aircraft continue to advance 21st century security."

For more information about the Black Hawk, visit our website: www.lockheedmartin.com/blackhawk.

**Marine Corps, Navy Cease
Administrative Actions to
Dismiss COVID Vaccine
Refusers**



5/12/22: Covid Vaccine – Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Mark Forrey administers a COVID-19 vaccine to Navy Seaman Micah Dayoub aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, in Yokosuka, Japan, Sept. 9, 2022. The Ronald Reagan, Carrier Strike Group 5’s flagship, is the Navy’s only forward-deployed aircraft carrier. (Photo By: Navy Seaman Natasha Chevalier Losada)

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have halted administrative actions to discharge Sailors and Marines for refusing mandatory vaccination against the COVID-19 coronavirus variant.

In accordance with updated guidance from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III, “Commanders will immediately discontinue administrative separation processing of Marines solely for declining to receive the COVID-19 vaccine,” Capt. Ryan Bruce, a Marine Corps spokesperson, told Seapower in a Jan. 20 email.

A [Marine administrative message](#) (MARADMIN) signed Jan. 18 by Lt. Gen. D.J. Furness, the Marine Corps deputy commandant for

Plans, Policies and Operations directed commanders to, “immediately suspend any new or ongoing adverse administrative actions associated with declining the COVID-19 vaccine.”

The MARADMIN also instructed commanders to cease any ongoing reviews of requests by current service members for a religious, administrative, or medical exemption, including pending appeals.

Furness’s directive came a week after similar guidance for Navy commanders issued by Vice Adm. Richard J. Cheeseman, Jr., deputy chief of naval operations for Personnel, Manpower, and Training, N1.

Cheeseman told all commands to discontinue administrative separation processing of vaccine-refusing Sailors and, “suspend immediately any new adverse administrative actions associated with refusing the COVID-19 vaccine.”

Thousands of Sailors and Marines have been separated from the sea services for vaccination refusal, following Austin’s Aug. 24, 2021 memo making COVID vaccination mandatory for all active duty and Reserve members of the armed services and the National Guard.

Austin said the vaccination mandate was necessary to protect the force and maintain readiness. However, language in the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), enacted in late December, [required the defense secretary to rescind the mandate](#), which had sparked complaints from lawmakers and lawsuits from service members.

The legislation stopped short of requiring the Pentagon to reinstate troops who were dismissed for refusing the shot. It also did not mention giving them back pay.

However, on Jan. 17, Pentagon Press Secretary Brigadier Gen. Pat Ryder told reporters, “Right now, we are not currently pursuing back-pay to service members who were dismissed for

refusing to take the COVID vaccination.”

As of Dec. 20, 2022, the latest [Defense Department COVID-19 statistics](#), almost 2 million service members have been fully vaccinated, including 389,177 in the Navy and 200,186 Marines.

General Dynamics NASSCO Christens the Third Ship in the T-AO Fleet Oiler Program for the U.S. Navy



[Release from General Dynamics NASSCO](#)

SAN DIEGO – General Dynamics NASSCO christened the future USNS Earl Warren (T-AO 207), the third ship for the U.S. Navy’s John Lewis-class fleet oiler program, today. Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Carlos Del Toro, served as the principal speaker at the ceremony, in addition to remarks from NASSCO and U.S. Navy representatives. Following brief remarks, the ship’s sponsor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, christened the ship with the traditional champagne bottle break alongside the hull.

“Along with its namesake, this majestic vessel will be instrumental in shaping the future of our nation. The shipbuilders of NASSCO are proud to have ensured Earl Warren’s legacy will live on in this ship,” said David Carver, president of General Dynamics NASSCO. “On behalf of the 48-hundred employees of General Dynamics NASSCO, I am proud to present the USNS Earl Warren for christening to our sponsor the Supreme Court Justice, Elena Kagan.”

The ship honors Earl Warren, 14th Chief Justice of the United States of the Supreme Court. During his 16 years as Chief Justice, a period of time when the Supreme Court was known as the “Warren Court”, civil rights and civil liberties were dramatically expanded, marking this period as one of the most important periods in the history of American constitutional law.

“Indeed, the ship’s motto could not be more appropriate: ‘I Will Find a Way or I Will Make One,’” said Del Toro. “That’s exactly what a young Earl Warren did when he overcame obstacles to joining the Army during the First World War, and that’s what he continued to do in the fight for equality, democracy, and social justice throughout his life.”

General Dynamics NASSCO was awarded with a contract to design and build the first six ships, T-AO 205 – T-AO 210, by the U.S. Navy for the next generation of fleet oilers, the John Lewis-class in 2016. In 2022, the Navy awarded NASSCO with a

contract modification for the construction of two additional John Lewis-class fleet oilers (T-AO 211 and 212), with the option for the Navy to procure an additional oiler, T-AO 213 which was included in the 2023 defense budget.

In addition to the christening of this ship, two ships in the T-AO class fleet oiler program for the U.S. Navy – the future USNS Robert F. Kennedy (T-AO 208) and the future USNS Lucy Stone (T-AO 209), – are currently under construction. The second ship, the future USNS Harvey Milk (T-AO 206) will be delivered to the Navy later this year. The lead ship, the USNS John Lewis (T-AO 205) was delivered to the Navy in 2022.

The 742-foot-long oilers are designed to transfer fuel to U.S. Navy carrier strike group ships operating at sea and have the capacity to carry 157,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and up to a speed of 20 knots.