

Coast Guard Cutter James offloads More than \$1.06 Billion in Illegal Narcotics



The Coast Guard Cutter James' (WMSL 754) crew offloaded approximately 54,500 pounds of cocaine and 15,800 pounds of marijuana, worth approximately \$1.06 billion, Feb. 17, in Port Everglades, Florida. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Jose Hernandez*

MIAMI – Coast Guard Cutter James' crew offloaded approximately 54,500 pounds of cocaine and 15,800 pounds of marijuana worth approximately \$1.06 billion on Feb. 17 at Port Everglades, Florida, the Coast Guard 7th District said in a release.

The ship's crew set new records during their 90-day patrol for the largest single cocaine interdiction at 10,915 pounds, worth \$206.4 million, and the largest single marijuana

interdiction at 3,962 pounds, worth \$3.59 million, the greatest amount of contraband interdicted during an Eastern Pacific patrol.

The Coast Guard's strong international relationships, specialized capabilities and unmatched authorities, allowed for a unity of effort to disrupt transnational criminal organizations.

The drugs were interdicted in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea by crews from:

- Coast Guard Station San Juan
- Coast Guard Cutter James
- His Netherlands Majesty's Ship Holland
- Coast Guard Cutter Stone
- Coast Guard Cutter Griesser
- USS Milwaukee
- Coast Guard Cutter Northland
- Coast Guard Cutter Diligence
- Coast Guard Cutter Margaret Norvell

"The best part of my job is being able to stand here at the end of a patrol and provide visibility on the incredible efforts from crewmembers who have volunteered for the challenging and dangerous duties to keep our shores safe," said Capt. Todd Vance, the commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter James. "Each interdiction is a complex evolution and no two interdictions are the same. In fact, the James' crew conducted simultaneous interdictions of two go-fast vessels 55 miles apart this patrol, showcasing their dedication and professional execution of the counter-drug mission."

Numerous U.S. agencies from the departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security cooperated in the effort to combat transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Drug Enforcement

Administration and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, along with allied and international partner agencies, play a role in counter-drug operations.

The fight against drug cartels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea requires unity of effort in all phases from detection, monitoring and interdictions, to criminal prosecutions by international partners and U.S. Attorneys' Offices in districts across the nation. The law enforcement phase of counter-smuggling operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean is conducted under the authority of the Coast Guard 11th District, headquartered in Alameda, California, and the law enforcement phase of operations in the Caribbean is conducted under the authority of the Coast Guard 7th District, headquartered in Miami. The interdictions, including the actual boardings, are led and conducted by members of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard Cutter James is a 418-foot national security cutter homeported in Charleston, South Carolina.

Marine General: Exercises Don't Pressure-Test Logistics for Real-World Operations



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. George W. Smith, commanding general of I Marine Expeditionary Force, speaks with Cpl. Brady Abbott, left, regarding I MEF Support Battalion's Mission Readiness Exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Dec. 8, 2021. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Gadiel Zaragoza*

ARLINGTON, Va. – A Marine Corps general who commands one of the Corps' three Marine expeditionary forces said logistics does not get a realistic challenge when military exercises are executed, primarily because of the short duration of the exercises.

"When I focus on a particular concern, I would offer that we're not placing enough emphasis on logistics, and particularly logistics in a distributed and contested maritime environment," said Lt. Gen. George Smith, commander of the I MEF, based in California, speaking on a panel of the West2022 conference sponsored by the U.S. Naval Institute and the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association.

"I say that because it [logistics] is hard to exercise," Smith said. "Exercises truly aren't long enough to truly exercise

and pressure-test logistics. In the war games that I've participated in, far too often forces are where they ideally would like to be with a whole bunch of sustainment piled up. The war games don't last long-enough to test logistics."

Smith said "logistics is undoubtedly the pacing function when we talk about operations in the Pacific. When you look at the vast expanse of the Pacific, and all the attendant challenges, logistics is going to be that pacing function. So, as I MEF looks to shifting to the Pacific and get west of the IDL [International Date Line], our logistics team is looking really hard at updating and developing logistics nodes and distribution sites and looking at a whole new prepositioning constructs for the MEF so that we can seamlessly and effectively transition from competition steady-state campaigning to conflict. Without logistics, without that sustainment, we will not be able to do that.

"It must nest within INDO-PACOM's [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's] larger logistics posture and I would add that we're working hard to reduce what is already a strained TRANSCOM [U.S. Transportation Command] capacity and what the expectations of the joint force are," he said.

Smith said the Corps is looking how to "bridge the gap of theater to operational to tactical logistics, often referred to as the last tactical mile," which he said logisticians call the "'last logistical mile.'"

The I MEF commander said his command would team with the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab to bring a stern-[ramp] landing vessel to the U.S. West Coast to exercise "as part of exercising that last tactical mile, that last logistics mile."

Smith said exercising with the vessel "would help us in our future operating concepts to deliver that logistics to the warfighter in these distributed locations."

The Navy is developing two new classes of ships to support Distributed Maritime Operations and Expeditionary Advance Base Operations. The light amphibious warship is being designed to support Marine littoral regiments and other forces and will have bow ramp for discharging personnel and vehicles on a shore. The next-generation logistics ship will be smaller and less expensive than the Combat Logistics Force's replenishment ships.

Noble Fusion 2022 Prepares Maritime Forces for Distributed Maritime Operations in the Pacific



Ships of the America and Essex Amphibious Ready Groups and Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group fall out of formation with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force during operation Noble Fusion. Front row: Landing craft, air cushion from the USS Essex (LHD 2). Second row, left to right: USS America (LHA 6), USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), Essex. Third row, left to right: USS Dewey (DDG 105), JS Kongō (DDG 173), USS Mobile Bay (CG 53), USS Spruance (DDG 111). Back row, left to right: USS Ashland (LSD 48), USS Miguel Keith (ESB 5). *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Thaddeus Berry*

PACIFIC OCEAN – A multi-national and multi-strike group conducted a sweeping series of operations the Western Pacific earlier this month.

Noble Fusion 2022 took place Feb. 3-7, involving two Amphibious Ready Groups with embarked Marine Expeditionary Units along with a Carrier Strike Group. U.S. Army and Air Force units, and units of the Japan Self Defense Forces, also took part.

The exercise was led by Combined Task Force 76/79. According to a Navy statement, Noble Fusion 2022 units operated from

“the Luzon Strait to the Miyako Strait and the East China Sea, encompassing a wide swath of the First Island Chain, including littoral areas in the vicinity of Okinawa.”

“For the first time since 2018, two Amphibious Ready Groups with embarked Marine Expeditionary Units conducted operations together in the Indo-Pacific region,” said Navy spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Sherrie Flippin. “The most recent exercise Noble Fusion highlighted Naval Expeditionary Forces’ capability to rapidly aggregate Marine Expeditionary Unit/Amphibious Ready Group teams at sea with joint force elements, allies and a Carrier Strike Group, in order to conduct sea-denial, seize key maritime terrain, guarantee freedom of movement, and create advantage for U.S., partner and allied forces.”

The exercise commenced with amphibious maneuvers to demonstrate the ability to seize key maritime terrain involving the 11th MEU/USC Essex (LHD 2) ARG and Carrier Strike Group-3’s USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) flying AV-8B Harriers, MV-22B Ospreys and a Navy E-2D Advanced Hawkeye over the Luzon Strait. Abraham Lincoln was escorted by the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Spruance (DDG 111) and the Ticonderoga-class cruiser USS Mobile Bay (CG 53).

Later, the 31st MEU/USC America (LHA-6) ARG conducted strikes in the First Island Chain with F-35B Lightning II fighters. Additionally, F-35B’s of Marine Aircraft Group 12 out of Iwakuni, Japan, as well as F-15C Eagles with the U.S. Air Force’s 18th Wing out of Kadena Air Base, teamed up with a P-8 Poseidon from Task Force 72, to conduct a maritime strike.

“This type of training demonstrates the resilience and interoperability with our joint forces and our partners and allies,” said Col. Michael Nakonieczny, commander of the 31st MEU, speaking to reporters Feb. 16.

“It’s important for us to consider ourselves partners, trying to figure out how we become better warfighters as a combined

team,” said Capt. Greg Baker, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 11, who joined Nakonieczny on the call with journalists.

USS Dewey (DDG 105) and JS Kongo (DDG 173) conducted surface operations to protect and defend the force. Commander Destroyer Squadron 7 was the surface warfare commander throughout the exercise.

“Sea-denial operations with cruisers and destroyers, seizing key maritime terrain with aviation and surface movement, guaranteeing freedom of movement – these are the things we do every day in the Indo-Pacific,” said Navy Capt. Tom Ogden, the DESRON 7 commodore. “This exercise validates the ability of U.S. forces and allies to establish sea control and maintain readiness while also providing security and enabling stability.”

Brig. Gen. Kyle Ellison, commanding general, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade and CTF-79 commander, said Noble Fusion 2022 was about using the sea as maneuver space to achieve positional advantage.

“It was about exercising our ability to maneuver critical capability to locations in the time and space of our choosing,” Ellison said. “We achieved positional advantage with the integration of two ARGs with their associated MEUs enabled by a carrier strike group. These capable warships must remain a critical component of our integrated deterrence strategy. Rest assured, we proved as an integrated, naval, joint and allied force that we are completely committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific region. We are effectively contributing to that goal now and our operational prowess will only improve.”

The capstone event was a night strike in the First Island Chain by F-35C Lightning II aircraft from Lincoln and AV-8B Harriers from Essex, along with F-18E Super Hornets acting as an aggressor force. Night aerial refueling supported the

strike, with 11th MEU AV-8B Harrier attack aircraft being refueled by KC-130J Hercules aircraft of Marine Aircraft Group 12.

“Noble fusion has been an incredible opportunity to rapidly, and at a time and place of our choosing, demonstrate that when our allies and U.S. joint forces come together, we are the premier fighter force in the region,” said Rear Adm. Chris Engdahl, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 7/Task Force 76. “Seamlessly integrating our advanced platforms alongside our professional staffs at sea and ashore allowed us the chance to reinforce our command and control in the air, on the ground, at sea, and below the surface.”

First Sea Lord: Royal Navy Is 'Back to the Modern Era,' Tilting to the Indo-Pacific



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, left middle, meets with Royal Navy Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff of the United Kingdom. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sean Castellano*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The head of the United Kingdom’s Royal Navy said his fleet is modernizing and expanding its reach around the world to respond to the current and future challenges.

“It’s the end of the beginning for us, “Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and chief of staff of the U.K. Royal Navy, speaking Feb. 16 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, commenting on the Royal Navy’s return to operating large aircraft carriers.

Key said he was challenged by the government to grow the Royal Navy and focus on the changing competition in the world, away from a 20-year focus in the Middle East to more of a tilt to the Indo-Pacific region.

The 2021 deployment of the Royal Navy’s Carrier Strike Group 21 – centered on the new carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth and its fifth-generation strike fighters, F-35Bs Lightning IIs – all

the way to Japan and back was termed by Key as a “reaching deployment.”

“We’re merely bringing our history back to the modern era,” Key said, also noting that “we’re back in the big carrier game.”

The HMS Queen Elizabeth and the HMS Prince of Wales were designed from the keel up to support and operate fifth-generation fighters, he noted.

Decades ago, the Royal Navy operated several aircraft carriers and maintained a significant naval presence “east of Suez,” as strategists and historians called the presence.

Key also mentioned the presence in the Pacific of two Royal Navy offshore patrol vessels, HMS Spey and HMS Tamar, which are on long-term multi-year deployments to the region, engaging with partner nations.

“We want to be part of an ongoing dialogue,” he said, noting the need to enforce rules-based order in the maritime domain, including efforts against transnational crime and fisheries enforcement. He said the Royal Navy needs to work alongside the navies and coast guards of the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France and the South Pacific island nations.

Key cited the recent AUKUS agreement “as a good example of opening up rather than closing down” and said that it would reduce barriers to sharing, and not just in the realm of nuclear-powered submarines.

He sees a benefit of Royal Navy presence in the Indo-Pacific region as not only beneficial with navy leadership but also opportunities for the Royal Navy to learn.

Navy Orders Six CH-53K Helicopters for Israel



An artist's rendering of a CH-53K helicopter for the Israeli air force. *SIKORSKY AIRCRAFT*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Navy has ordered six CH-53K King Stallion helicopters for the Israeli air force, following an agreement signed in December.

The Naval Air Systems Command awarded Sikorsky Aircraft a \$372 million fixed-price incentive contract modification under the Foreign Military Sales program “to exercise an option for the production and delivery of four low-rate initial production, Lot 6, CH-53K Heavy Lift aircraft, as well as associated aircraft programmatic and logistical support for the government of Israel,” the Defense Department said in a Feb. 15 announcement.

The Israeli air force and the U.S. government signed an agreement Dec. 4 for the procurement of the CH-53Ks.

The CH-53K is in production for the U.S. Marine Corps as the

service's newest heavy-lift helicopter and is replacing the CH-53E Super Stallion. In Israeli service, the CH-53Ks will replace the 50-year-old CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters, which are named Yasurs by Israel. The King Stallions primarily will support Israeli special operations forces, but also support other vertical lift missions and rescue operations.

Delivery of the Israeli CH-53Ks is expected to be completed by November 2025.

USS Anchorage, 1st Marine Division Exercise Waterborne Capabilities of ACVs



U.S. Marines assigned to the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion,

1st Marine Division, conduct waterborne training with an Amphibious Combat Vehicle from shore to loading amphibious transport dock ship USS Anchorage (LPD 23) at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 12. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Lance Cpl. Willow Marshall*

PACIFIC OCEAN – U.S. Marines assigned to the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division participated in a waterborne training evolution with Amphibious Combat Vehicles aboard amphibious transport dock ship USS Anchorage (LPD 23) in the Pacific Ocean, Feb. 12-13, Expeditionary Strike Group 3 said Feb. 15.

The two-day training evolution focused on the safety and ship-to-shore capabilities for both the Marine Corps and Navy, part of a larger training plan to refine tactics and doctrine for amphibious operations.

“The safety of our Marines and Sailors is a top priority, especially as we continue to test the capabilities of the newest Marine Corps platform,” said Rear Adm. Wayne Baze, commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 3. “The Sailors and Marines involved have received extensive training on operation of the craft, providing the Navy and Marine Corps team the opportunity to rehearse together for real-world events.”

During the evolution, the ACV demonstrated its survivability, maneuverability and robust swim capabilities by participating in a series of open-ocean swims between USS Anchorage and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California. USS Anchorage and designated safety boats remained in close proximity of the ACVs throughout the entirety of the amphibious operations, ensuring safety in all aspects of training.

“As we strengthen naval warfighting as a force and pivot to operating in a contested littoral environment, conducting safe, realistic training on this platform advances our ability to respond swiftly to global threats in austere maritime conditions,” said the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, Maj. Gen. Roger B. Turner. “The Amphibious Combat

Vehicle is purpose-built to provide expeditionary lethality for Marines on the move.”

The Marines with 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 1st Marine Division worked alongside Anchorage’s crew to successfully demonstrate the ACV’s ability to launch and recover from the well deck.

“This underway period is a true testament of the rigorous training our Sailors and Marines are doing to prepare for ACV waterborne operations,” said Baze. “They spend countless hours preparing, which is evident in the professional manner in which they conducted themselves throughout this evolution. I could not be more proud of each and every one of them.”

The ACV is an eight-wheel drive, armored vehicle with open-ocean capabilities and land mobility. It’s a unique combination of previously fielded amphibious vehicles and new technological advances to the fleet’s capabilities. The ACV’s ability to use the ocean and waterways to carry Marines and equipment provides expeditionary readiness to Marines on the move, wherever their mission takes them, across a variety of operating environments.

**U.S. Pacific Fleet Will
Leverage Knowledge, Expertise
of Naval Postgraduate School
With New Nimitz Research**

Group



The Naval Postgraduate School and U.S. Pacific Fleet announced the establishment of the Nimitz Research Group on Feb. 16. Under the aegis of NPS' Naval Warfare Studies Institute, the new organization will leverage NPS' interdisciplinary education and research capabilities and institutional knowledge in new ways to meet the needs and emerging challenges of the Pacific Fleet. *U.S. NAVY*

MONTEREY, Calif. – The Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey, California, and Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet are joining forces to harness educational and research knowledge and expertise specifically as it pertains to the Indo-Pacific region with a new effort, the Nimitz Research Group.

Nimitz Research Group will fall under NPS' Naval Warfare Studies Institute, which will provide NPS faculty and students who will “serve as an extension of the PACFLT staff in Hawaii by participating in fleet exercises and events and providing additional research capacity and subject matter expertise,” according to an Naval Postgraduate School press release.

The Nimitz Research Group was launched Feb. 16 by the NPS president, retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau, and Adm. Samuel

Paparo, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

“The establishment of the Nimitz Research Group marks a further evolution in our outstanding partnership with the U.S. Pacific Fleet,” said Rondeau. “We have always seen NPS as a center of excellence and innovation, a place where our faculty and students work together to solve the operational challenges of our fleet and force. Through the Nimitz Research Group, we will be able to provide those solutions by deploying our talent and our experience in direct support of our Pacific Fleet partners.”

According to NPS spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Ed Early, the Nimitz Research Group is modeled after Naval Warfare Studies Institute’s Bucklew Research Group, which already provides similar support to Naval Special Warfare. Early said the Navy SEAL officers who are Bucklew scholars attending NPS on a two-year master’s degree program serve as an extension of Naval Special Warfare Group commands, who in turn benefit from the SEALs’ education, research efforts, interactions with the academic community, and proximity to Silicon Valley.

“The example set by the Bucklew Research Group proved to be an ideal model for PACFLT’s requirements.,” Early said. “As a result, the Nimitz Research Group was conceived with the goal of providing coherence and unity of action for NPS’ support to PACFLT.”

Paparo, himself a graduate of NPS’ Systems Analysis program, wanted to leverage the Bucklew Research Group model to focus the unique capabilities of Naval Postgraduate School faculty members as well as the operational experience of NPS’ 2,500 mid-career officers, senior noncommissioned officers and civilians to support the commander of Pacific Fleet’s priorities and research needs.

“The Nimitz Research Group links the intellectual rigor of NPS, its key location in the nation’s hub of technical

innovation and the expertise of innovative warfighters in the Pacific Fleet to research, develop and implement new and dynamic combat capabilities,” said Paparo. “Together we will build critical advantages over our competitors to maximize our strengths – battlespace awareness, agility, maneuverability and collective capabilities of the joint forces.”

Cutter Stratton Visits Fiji during Operation Blue Pacific Patrol



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton conducts patrols in Fiji's exclusive economic zone with Fijian law enforcement

personnel in February. The Coast Guard's mission to combat IUU fishing is essential in protecting maritime governance and a rules-based international order to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

SUVA, Fiji – The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Stratton visited Fiji in February after being underway for 50-days in the Pacific combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the Coast Guard 14th District said Feb. 15.

During the visit, Capt. Stephen Adler, the Stratton's commanding officer, met with members of the Fijian media to discuss the Coast Guard's partnership with Fiji and their combined effort to protect fisheries resources.

"Our relationships with our partner nations are more important than ever in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing," said Adler. "We are pleased to work with our Fijian partners to maintain maritime sovereignty and security throughout the region."

While in the country, the Stratton's crew welcomed aboard three Fijian ship riders who, with the assistance of Stratton's law enforcement boarding teams, will ensure compliance with applicable Fijian fishing laws within Fiji's exclusive economic zone.

The Coast Guard's mission to combat IUU fishing is essential in protecting maritime governance and a rules-based international order to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The fisheries industry is a significant source of food and income throughout the Pacific. Protecting this renewable resource is a priority for the United States and Pacific Island Countries as IUU fishing in the Pacific has global impacts and effects.

Recently IUU fishing has replaced piracy as the leading global

maritime security threat and has the potential to have a global effect if unchecked.

Prior to visiting Fiji, the Stratton's crew had been working with British, Australian, New Zealand, and French allied naval forces as well as the U.S. Navy in support of the Tongan government following the volcanic eruption on Jan 15.

The crew also conducted a number of drills and exercises with allied partners including helicopter operations with the Armed Forces in French Polynesia, fueling at sea with the Royal New Zealand Navy Ship Aotearoa, and multiple maneuvering exercises with the Royal Navy HMS Spey.

The Stratton is a 418-foot national security cutter capable of extended, worldwide deployment in support of homeland security and defense missions. NSCs routinely conduct operations throughout the Pacific and Atlantic oceans; their unmatched combination of range, speed, and ability to operate in extreme weather provides the mission flexibility necessary to conduct vital strategic missions.

Operation Blue Pacific is an overarching multi-mission Coast Guard endeavor, promoting security, safety, sovereignty, and economic prosperity in Oceania while strengthening relationships between partner nations in the Pacific.

Bell to Advance U.S. DoD High-Speed VTOL Capabilities



An artist's conception of Bell Textron's entry in the AFWERX High-Speed Vertical Take-Off and Landing Concept Challenge.
BELL TEXTRON

Fort Worth, Texas – Bell Textron Inc. has advanced to the next phase of the AFWERX High-Speed Vertical Take-Off and Landing Concept Challenge, a crowdsourcing effort for the U.S. Air Force and Special Operations Command, the company said Feb. 16.

Bell is one of 11 companies from more than 200 challenge entrants selected to receive market research investments aimed at advancing solutions that enable optimal agility in austere environments.

“Bell is thrilled that our HSVTOL concepts have been selected for the next phase of the U.S. Air Force’s AFWERX Challenge,” said Jason Hurst, Bell’s vice president of Innovation. “In entering this next phase, Bell’s teams will continue to lay the groundwork for the production of another revolutionary military aircraft and provide USSOCOM and the U.S. Air Force with conceptual designs and development roadmaps to accelerate this capability to the warfighter.”

Bell’s HSVTOL vehicles blend the hover capability of a

helicopter with the speed, range and survivability features of fighter aircraft. This family of scalable aircraft concepts is designed to support a range of missions, including personnel recovery, autonomous ISR/Strike and tactical mobility, with low-downwash hover capability and jet-like speeds of more than 400 knots.

Bell's concepts are envisioned as part of a broader HSVTOL mission system framework that provides the next generation of speed, range, and survivability. These concepts provide the flexibility to carry out USAF and USSOCOM missions across the full spectrum of conflict and political scenarios. It emerged as a top-tier entrant in the HSVTOL Concept Challenge by meeting or exceeding rigorous evaluation criteria focused on technical merit, reliability, scalability, and other factors.

"The HSVTOL Concept Challenge has surfaced an impressive range and caliber of solutions to help us understand how to build a new class of air vehicles," said Dr. Reid Melville, chief innovation officer, Air Force Research Laboratory Transformational Capabilities Office. "We believe the organizations selected to receive market research investments at this stage have the potential to deliver truly groundbreaking innovation."

Over the next six months, Bell will further develop its HSVTOL solution, working closely with the USAF, USSOCOM, and Collaboration.Ai, the prime contractor facilitating the HSVTOL Concept Challenge.

U.S., U.K. Navy Chiefs Meet,

Discuss Cooperation and Interoperability



Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, left middle, meets with Royal Navy Adm. Sir Ben Key, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff of the United Kingdom. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sean Castellano*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday met with his U.K. counterpart, Royal Navy First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff Adm. Sir Ben Key, at the Pentagon, Feb. 15, the CNO's public affairs office said in a release.

During the meeting, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deepen cooperation and discussed a wide range of issues including strategic competition, interoperability, capabilities and innovation.

"Today's global challenges and security environment emphasize the importance of partnerships and interoperability," said Gilday. "Our enduring and strong partnership with the United Kingdom helps us to ensure security, stability and

prosperity.”

This meeting marked the first between the First Sea Lord and CNO and was emblematic of the strong partnership between the two countries. Discussions were substantive and productive.

Gilday and Key exchanged views about security issues in Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific, underscoring the importance of the U.S.-U.K. bilateral relationship and defense cooperation, as well as NATO alliance.

“I am delighted to be in Washington to see my U.S. counterparts. As the Chief of Naval Operations has said, our two navies share an incredible bond, which was most amply demonstrated last year with the many miles we sailed together on the Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment,” said Key. “We train, exercise and operate together because of our shared outlook, our shared values and our shared desire for peace and prosperity across the globe.”

“The strength of our alliances and partnerships has never been more important and will continue to be imperative to take on the challenges of the 21st century,” said Gilday. “I look forward to the continued cooperation between our two countries and our two navies.”

The two leaders emphasized their navies shared commitment to uphold and advance the rules-based international system.

The U.S. and Royal Navy operate together around the globe regularly. Most recently, USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) took part in a six-month deployment as part of Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG21) with HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08). Both navies also conducted multilateral naval training with Australia and Japan during Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) 2021 in October.

Key took office in November. The Navy Chiefs spoke via video conference on Key’s first day in office.